The Project Gutenberg eBook of Samuel Boyd of Catchpole Square: A Mystery, by B. L. Farjeon

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: Samuel Boyd of Catchpole Square: A Mystery

Author: B. L. Farjeon

Release date: July 12, 2013 [EBook #43198]
Most recently updated: February 22, 2017

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Charles Bowen from page images provided by
Google Books. (New York Public Library)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SAMUEL BOYD OF CATCHPOLE SQUARE: A MYSTERY ***

Transcriber's Notes:

1. Page scan provided by:
Google Books: http://books.google.com/books?id=FwQoAAAAMAAJ
(New York Public Library)

SAMUEL BOYD

OF CATCHPOLE SQUARE

A MYSTERY

By B. L. FARJEON

Author of "The Iron-Master"

NEW YORK

NEW AMSTERDAM BOOK COMPANY

LONDON

HUTCHINSON AND CO.

1899

* * * * * * * * *

Printed by Hazell, Watson, & Viney, London and Aylesbury, England.

CONTENTS.

* * * * * *

SAMUEL BOYD
OF CATCHPOLE SQUARE.

* * * *

A MYSTERY.

* * * *

CHAPTER I.

ABEL DEATH AT WORK.

At six o'clock in the evening of the first day of March, in the year of Grace, 1898, Abel Death, a man of middle age, with a face appropriate to his name--which should never be given to any living human being--was sitting at his desk, employed in the task of writing the last of a number of letters, in accordance with the instructions of his employer, Mr. Samuel Boyd, of No. 6, Catchpole Square, in the North district of London. The letters all referred to Money: to Money due for principal and interest, and to warnings and threats of what would be done in case prompt payment was not made at such and such an hour on such and such a day. Uncompromising and relentless to the point of cruelty, debtors were told in plain terms that ruin was their portion if Mr. Boyd's demands were not complied with.

Abel Death appeared to be just the kind of man for the task he was executing, being hollow cheeked and sunken eyed; his hands were long and lean, his movements eager and restless. Clad in shabby and badly fitting clothes, he did not belie the position he occupied, that of an ill paid drudge working long hours for a hard taskmaster.

The room in which he sat, and in which his daily duties were performed, could scarcely be called an office. From the number of singular articles it contained it might have been a curiosity shop, or the store-room of a dealer in the miscellaneous goods of the earth to whose net everything that presented itself was more or less marketable fish. Here was a massive safe fast bedded in the wall and securely locked; here a grand piano, locked; here weapons and armour of all nations, and pictures in which lay dumb stories of fruitless genius and disappointed ambition; here pieces of valuable china and *bric-à-brac*; here some dozens of wine of a rare vintage; here hangings of old tapestry; here (the oddest feature in the heterogeneous collection) a waxwork figure, holding in its outstretched hand a cane stick of the reign of Charles the Second; and, scattered in all directions, but still with some kind of method in the order of their disposal, a great variety of other oddments: all taken for debt, and all representing, in different degrees, despairing hopes and reckless extravagance and prodigality which had come to a bad end.

The apartment was large and lofty, with panelled walls and doors of oak. The ceiling was covered with paintings of flying angels, and nymphs, and festive landscape-scenes after the style of Watteau, barely discernible through the accumulated dust of years; the mantel and fireplace were richly carved in many a quaint and curious device, the beauty of which was defaced by smoke and ill usage and neglect. The house itself was very old, and these evidences of decay forcibly illustrated how low it had fallen from its once high estate. For assuredly in years long since passed by it had been inhabited by persons of wealth and fashion and good taste. Time was, indeed, when these walls resounded to gay music and revelry, when satin-slippered feet glided over the polished floor, and bright eyes smiled, and bold lips murmured into beauty's ears. Here shone the sunny aspects of life; here gladness reigned; here all the luxurious ways of fortune's favourites were in their outward show at their best and bravest. Nothing of this was apparent

now. The men and women who had trod these flowery paths were dust and ashes, and the dwelling was the abode of one who held fashion and good taste in contemptuous disregard, and whose principal aim in life was the driving of hard bargains and the making of money.

Having finished the last letter Abel Death descended from his stool to stretch and refresh himself. From the pocket of a threadbare coat which hung upon a nail he took a paper containing a couple of sandwiches, and cast a longing look at the bottles of wine, a thirsty movement of his lips betokening the nature of his thoughts. But he did not venture to lay his hand upon them, knowing full well that strict account was kept, and that if he appropriated but a single bottle the offence would be detected the moment his employer entered; so he took his fate in his hands by extracting from his coat a twisted paper of tea and another twisted paper of brown sugar which he emptied into a teapot. A very small fire was burning, and he stood and watched the boiling of a tiny kettle of water. As he poured the water into the teapot he heard a knock at the street door, which he did not take the trouble to answer.

"A trap," he muttered, pouring the tea into a chipped cup. "No, no, Mr. Boyd. You don't get me to open the door for you."

He suspected a ruse. He had received instructions not to answer a knock, nor to admit any person into the house during Mr. Boyd's absence, and the conditions of his engagement were strict and onerous, the most trifling transgression of the rules laid down being visited with a fine. When, therefore, the knock was repeated a second time he shook his head with a smile, and proceeded with his scanty meal.

It did not take him long to get to the end of it; and presently, when he heard the opening and the shutting of the street door, followed by steps on the stairs, he mounted to his stool, and bent his head over the books.

"Is that you, Mr. Death?"

He almost fell off his stool, for it was not the voice he expected to hear.

A young man of gentlemanly appearance confronted him with an ingenuous, open countenance; with an honest eye and a graceful manner. In the teeth of these advantages there was an expression of anxiety on his face which denoted that his errand was one upon which grave issues depended.

"You, Mr. Reginald!" exclaimed Abel Death, staring open mouthed at the visitor.

"As you see, Mr. Death," replied Mr. Reginald. "You are still in the old place."

"Yes, Mr. Reginald, yes, still in the old place."

Mr. Reginald's eyes travelled round the room. "Where's my father?" he asked.

Abel Death answered in Irish fashion.

"How did you get in?"

Mr. Reginald held up a key.

"You don't mean to say----" stammered Abel Death.

"That I stole it?" said Mr. Reginald. "No. It is the old key which I took away with me when I left this house----"

"For ever," interposed Abel Death.

"Not exactly, or I should not be here now."

"That is what he told me."

"That is what he told *me*."

"His word is law in this house, Mr. Reginald."

"We will not discuss the subject. I ask you again, where is my father?"

"Out."

"When will he be back?"

"I don't know--I can't tell you. He has his ways. He likes to leave people in uncertainty."

"Is he well?"

"Yes, Mr. Reginald. As well as ever. There is no change in him--no change!" He said this in the tone of a man who would not have grieved at a change for the worse in his employer's health.

Mr. Reginald drew a silver watch from his pocket. "It is six o'clock. My time is my own. I will wait."

"I earnestly beg you not to, Mr. Reginald."

"Why?"

"It would be difficult for me to get another situation."

"I understand. I have no wish to injure you. I will call later."

"I should not advise you. Earnestly, I should not advise you."

"I don't ask your advice. I must see him, I tell you. I intend to see him."

"Then I give it up. I am sorry you have come down in the world, Mr. Reginald."

The young man looked at the clerk with a curious contraction of his brows. "How do you arrive at that conclusion?"

Abel Death tapped his waistcoat pocket. "It used to be a gold one."

"Now I call that clever of you," said Mr. Reginald, half merrily, half lugubriously, "but *your* lines have not been cast in pleasant places; you should know something of the process."

"I do," said Abel Death, in a dismal tone.

"If the watch I now wear is an indication of my having come down in the world, why, then, I *have* had a tumble. Am I interrupting your work?"

"I have the books to make up."

"I'll leave you to them. Would it be unfair to ask you to tell my father that I will call again at ten o'clock? He is sure to be disengaged at that hour."

"Very unfair, Mr. Reginald. I wouldn't venture to tell him that I'd seen you."

"In that case I'll not trouble you."

"And if you do call again, Mr. Reginald, I beg you, as a particular favour, not to mention your present visit."

"You have my promise." He turned to go, but paused to glance at the strange collection of goods in the room. "My father gets plenty of odd things about him. I see stories of wreckage in them."

"Not our wreckage, Mr. Reginald."

"No," said Mr. Reginald under his breath as he left the room, "other people's."

CHAPTER II.

SAMUEL BOYD SETS A TRAP FOR HIS DRUDGE.

Abel Death experienced a feeling of relief when he heard the street door slammed in token that Mr. Reginald was gone. Whatever his thoughts may have been with reference to that young gentleman he did not give audible utterance to them, but an occasional shake of his head as he worked at the books, and an occasional pause during which he rested his chin upon the palm of his hand in reflection, were an evidence that though Mr. Reginald was out of sight he was not out of mind. At first he worked rapidly to make up for lost time, but at the end of an hour or so his pen travelled more slowly over the paper, his task being nearly completed. He had lighted two candles stuck in common tin candlesticks, and had pulled down the blind, for night was coming on. The feeble glimmer of these candles, which were long and thin, threw light only upon the desk at which he was working; the distant spaces in the room were in deep shadow, and an occasional shifting of a candle seemingly imbued many of the objects by which he was surrounded with a weird and fitful life. This was especially the case with the wax figure, which was that of a Chinaman who might have come straight from the Chamber of Horrors, so ghastly was its face in this dim light. Being not quite firm on its legs any hurried movement in its

direction caused it to quiver as though it were set on wires; and once, when Abel Death threw a heavy ledger from his desk on to the table, the oscillation of the figure was sufficiently fantastic to have engendered the fancy that it was preparing to leap upon the living man and do him violence. Neither Mr. Samuel Boyd nor Abel Death could have informed a curious inquirer who the figure was intended to represent. It came from the house of a modeller in wax, to whom Mr. Boyd had lent a small sum of money, and who, when he was pressed for payment, himself brought it to Catchpole Square as the only asset he could offer in discharge of the debt. "It is all I possess," said the man mournfully, who had hoped to soften the heart of his creditor by his tale of distress. "Then I'll take it," said Mr. Samuel Boyd. "You'd take my blood, I believe," cried the man savagely. "I would," retorted Mr. Boyd, "if there was a market for it." "Keep it, then," said the man, flinging himself from the room. "It's brought me nothing but bad luck all the time I have been at work on it. May it bring the same to you!" Mr. Boyd laughed; he did not believe in omens, nor in sentiment, nor in mercy to any person in his debt. He believed only in Money.

The day's work over, Abel Death sat awhile so deep in thought and so still and quiet that he might have been taken for one of the inanimate objects in this strangely furnished apartment. He had removed the candles from the desk to the table, where they flickered in the draught of a broken window, into which some rags had been thrust to keep out the wind. Within the radius of the flickering light the shadows on the walls and ceiling grew more weird and grotesque, each gust of air creating insubstantial forms and shapes as monstrous as the fancies of a madman's brain. Catchpole Square was a blind thoroughfare--being, as has been elsewhere described, like a bottle with a very narrow neck to it--and was therefore undisturbed by the tumult of the city's streets; and the prevailing silence, in which there was something deathly, was broken only by the sobbing and moaning of the rising wind which, having got into the Square, was making despairing efforts to get out. These sounds were in unison with the spectral life within the house, which seemed to find interpretation in the mystic voices of the air. It might have been so in very truth, for what know we of the forces of the invisible world through which we move and play our parts in the march from the cradle to the grave? Unfathomable mystery encompasses and mocks us, and no man can foretell at what moment he may be struck down and all his castles overturned, and all his plans for good or evil destroyed.

Abel Death started to his feet. A stealthy step was on the stairs. The man coming up paused three or four times either to get his breath or for some other purpose; and presently he entered the room.

Mr. Samuel Boyd was a tall man, and bore a close resemblance to his son in certain expressions of countenance and in certain little mannerisms of gesture which in the younger man were indications of an open-hearted nature, and in the elder of a nature dominated by craft and cunning.

"You're back in time, sir," said Abel Death, in a cringing tone.

Mr. Boyd made no immediate reply, being employed in looking distrustfully around to convince himself that nothing had been removed or disturbed. Even when he was assured of this the look of distrust did not die out of his eyes.

"Are the letters all written?" he inquired, seating himself at the table.

"They are, sir."

"Have you posted up the books?"

"Yes, sir. Everything is done."

"Has any one called?"

"No one, sir," promptly replied Abel Death.

"Any knocks at the street door?"

"No, sir."

"You lie! There was a letter in the box."

Abel Death's lips shaped themselves into the word, "Beast!"

"What did you say?" demanded Mr. Boyd, upon whom no movement on the part of his servant, however slight, was lost.

"I was going to say that the postman was no business of mine."

"You are getting too clever, Abel Death--too clever, too clever! The men I employ must do their work without spying, without blabbing, without lying."

"You have never found me unfaithful."

"I have only your word for it. When did you know me take a man's word?"

"Never, sir."

"And you never will. So--you did not go down to the postman when he knocked?"

"No, sir."

"And you have not been out of the house during my absence?"

"No, sir."

"Nor out of this room?"

"No, sir."

"Ah! Is that so--is that so? You have your office coat on, and your office slippers. Had you not better change them?"

"I was going to do so, sir," said Abel Death. Mr. Boyd's keen eyes were upon him while he made the change. "May I hope, sir, that you will grant the request you kindly promised to consider? It may be a matter of life or death, it may indeed. It means so much to me--so much! I humbly beg you, sir, to grant it."

"Let me see. You asked me for a loan."

"A small loan, sir, of ten pounds. I have trouble and sickness at home, I am sorry to say."

"It is inconceivable," said Mr. Boyd coldly, "that a man in regular employment should need a loan unless it is for the gratification of some unwarrantable extravagance. Your wages are paid regularly, I believe."

"Yes, sir. I don't complain, but it is not an easy task to keep a wife and family on twenty-two shillings a week. I don't know how it is," said Abel Death, rubbing his forehead as though he were endeavouring to rub some problem out of it, or some better understanding of a social difficulty into it, "but when Saturday comes round we have never a sixpence left."

"Very likely. It is the old story of improvidence. Thrift, Abel, thrift. That is the lesson the poor have to learn, and never will learn."

"Ten pounds, sir, only ten pounds," implored Abel Death.

"Only ten pounds!" exclaimed Mr. Boyd. "Listen to him. He calls ten pounds a small sum. Why, it is to millions of men a fortune!"

"It is truly that to me, sir."

"And if I lend it to you," said Mr. Boyd, with a sneering smile, "you will call down heaven's blessing upon me, you will remember me in your prayers?"

"Yes, sir, yes," replied Abel Death confusedly.

"There is the question of security, Abel."

"I am a poor man, sir, but I will do anything you wish. I will give you a bill--I will sign any paper you write out--I will pay you any interest you like to charge. You can deduct five shillings from my wages every week till the debt is cancelled. I shall be eternally grateful to you, sir." His agitation was so great that he could not proceed.

"Gratitude is no security," said Mr. Boyd, still with the sneering smile on his lips. "Prayers and heaven's blessing are no security. No business man would lend a shilling on them. They are not Property. You remarked a moment ago that I had never found you unfaithful. I will put it to the test. Let me see the slippers you have taken off."

"My slippers, sir!" stammered Abel Death.

"Your slippers. I wish to see them." Puzzled by the singular request, and with inward misgivings, Abel Death lifted the slippers from the floor. "Lay them on the table before me, soles upward."

Ruefully wondering what connection there could possibly be between his frayed and worn slippers and the question of unfaithfulness which Mr. Boyd had raised, he obeyed the order. His wonder increased when Mr. Boyd proceeded to examine the soles through a magnifying glass.

"That will do," said Mr. Boyd, leaning back in his chair. "You can pack them up with your office coat, and take them home with you."

"But I shall want them to-morrow, sir."

"Not in my office, Abel Death. I discharge you."

"Sir!"

"I discharge you. Here are your wages for a half week. You can claim no more. The conditions of your engagement with me were that in the event of the slightest violation of my orders you were to be immediately discharged without further notice."

"In what way have I violated your orders, sir?" cried Abel Death, despairingly. "Good heavens! This will be the ruin of me!"

"You have brought it on yourself. It is an ungrateful world, Abel, an ungrateful world. Robbery on all sides of us, treachery whichever way we turn. Do not send to me for a character; it will not assist you to obtain another situation." Abel Death gazed at the hard taskmaster in speechless consternation. "I have suspected you for some time past, Abel----I beg your pardon, you were about to speak."

"I was not."

"You were. Come, come--be honest, Abel, be honest. It is the best policy. I have found it so."

"It was in my mind to say, sir," said Abel Death, in a shaking voice, "that you suspect everybody."

"It is the only way to protect oneself from being robbed. Keep this axiom before you; it is as good as capital, and will return you good interest. Suspecting you as I have done I laid a trap for you this afternoon--a simple, artless trap. Observe this thin piece of brown paper, observe this little piece of wax which I place upon it. Any person treading on it will carry away with him on the sole of his shoe both the paper and the wax. Do you follow me?"

"Yes, sir," said Abel Death, staring at the paper and moving his tongue over his dry lips.

"Before leaving the house this afternoon," continued Mr. Boyd, "I deposited on the stairs eight very small pieces of this paper, each with a very small piece of wax on the top of it, and placed them on those parts of the stairs which a person coming up or going down would be most likely to tread. Is this quite clear to you?"

"Quite clear, sir."

"It is a singular thing, Abel, that upon the soles of your slippers I do not see one of those pieces of paper or any trace of wax."

"It proves, sir," interposed Abel Death eagerly, "that I spoke the truth when I declared that I had not left the room during your absence, and that I did not go down the stairs."

"But it does not prove, you dog, that no person came up the stairs during my absence!" Abel Death fell back, confounded. "Upon my return a few minutes ago I examined the stairs, and found only two of the eight pieces of paper I deposited there so carefully--so very carefully! Six pieces of the eight I placed there had affixed themselves to the soles of the shoes or boots worn by the person who entered this room while I was away. I asked you if any one had called. You answered no. It was a lie, a deliberate lie, a lie not to be explained away."

"If you will listen to me, sir," said Abel Death, reduced to a state of abject fear, "I think it *can* be explained away."

"I am listening, Abel Death."

"I made a mistake, sir--I confess it."

"Oh, a mistake, and by such a clever man as you are!"

"I am not clever, sir--far from it. Every man is liable to error. A person *has* been in this room, but I did not open the door to him. He opened it himself."

"What!" cried Mr. Boyd, starting from his chair in mingled anger and alarm.

"Yes, sir, he opened it himself. How could I help that, sir--I ask you, how could I help that?"

A few moments elapsed before Mr. Boyd spoke; and during the silence he took a revolver from a drawer, which he unlocked for the purpose. Then he said slowly, "Who was the man?"

"Your son, sir, Mr. Reginald."

"My son! He was forbidden the house!"

"I can't help that, sir. He knocked three times at the street door, and bearing your instructions in mind I did not answer the knocks. When he came into the room I asked him how he had got in, and he produced the key he was in the habit of using when he lived here. He wanted to see you, and I told him you were not in. He said he would wait, and I begged him not to, because I knew you would be angry if you saw him here. Then he said he would call to see you later, and I begged

him not to mention that he had been here; he gave me the promise and left the house. That is the whole truth of the matter, sir."

"Why were you so anxious that this visit should be kept a secret from me?"

"I feared you might suspect that we were in--in----" He could not hit upon the right word.

"In collusion," said Mr. Boyd, supplying it in accordance with his humour to place the worst construction upon the interview. "In league to rob me. A fair and reasonable suspicion which the explanation I have dragged out of you does not remove. Have you anything more to say?"

"Nothing more," replied Abel Death, in a hopeless tone.

"Take up your money. You can go."

"But you will withdraw the discharge, sir--I entreat you to withdraw it. Think what it means to me--what it means to my family! Starvation, sir, starvation!" He wrung his hands in despair.

"You have lied deliberately to me. Go--go and starve!--and never set foot inside this house again."

Convinced now that any farther appeal would be unavailing, the look of misery in Abel Death's face changed to one of fury. He made a step towards the man who had doomed him to ruin, and who, thus threatened, held the revolver straight before him, with his finger on the trigger. Muttering, "God help me!" Abel Death took up the few shillings which Mr. Boyd had placed upon the table, and backed out of the room, followed by his employer, still armed with the revolver, and holding a candle above his head. Thus they went down to the street door, which Abel Death slowly opened. But before he left the house he turned and said,

"Do you believe in God?"

"No," snarled Mr. Boyd, "I believe in nothing!"

"Men have been struck dead for less," said Abel Death, pointing a shaking finger at him. "Remember that, Samuel Boyd!" And went his way with misery in his heart.

Mr. Boyd, undisturbed and with a smile of self-approval on his lips, closed the door and put up the chain. Then, with deliberate steps, and with no misgivings, he returned to his room.

CHAPTER III.

A LADY OF FASHION PAYS SAMUEL BOYD A VISIT.

A close and crafty face, masking a soul which knew no mercy and gave none. The grave holds its secrets, and holds them no less securely than Mr. Samuel Boyd, in his outward presentment to his fellow man, believed he held his. Whether the pursuit of pleasure for the delights--be they fair or foul--that pleasure brings, or the pursuit of wealth for the power it confers, was the dominant principle of this man's life, no human being could truthfully say, for no human being was admitted into his confidence. But one thing was certain. By whatever motive he may have been guided he held his way with absolute dependence on his own resources to triumph easily over every obstacle that might present itself. As to the manner in which these triumphs were obtained it mattered little to him whether he merely brushed aside the persons who opposed him, or trampled them into the dust. Their mortification, their sufferings, their destruction, concerned him not and did not trouble him. There are men who, in the contemplated execution of a crime, or in the pursuance of a base desire, listen to the voice of conscience before it is too late. Not so Mr. Samuel Boyd. He was harassed by no troubled dreams, by no weak fears of consequences, by no whisperings of an inconvenient conscience, by no spiritual warnings of Divine punishment for sinful deeds. For him, the entire range of the moral affections and of moral sentiments and conditions was expressed in one word: Self. It was for Self he lived and for Self alone.

Such being the man it was not to be supposed that he was in any way affected by the sentence he had pronounced upon Abel Death, or that he gave a moment's thought to the poor clerk who was trudging home almost broken-hearted at the loss even of the miserable wage he received for duties faithfully performed.

The letter he had taken from the letter box was from a lady who stated that she would call upon him at eight o'clock this evening. He had not long to wait, for by his watch he saw that it

wanted but two minutes to eight; and punctually to the hour there came a rat-tat-tat at the street door.

With no indication of haste he went down, and laughed slyly to himself when the knocking was repeated, more impatiently and peremptorily the second time than the first. He drew the door ajar leisurely, still keeping it on the chain.

"Who wants Samuel Boyd?" he inquired.

"Who wants Samuel Boyd?" answered a lady's voice. "Upon my word! To keep a lady waiting in such a dreadful place as this, the entrance to which is so narrow that a carriage can't get into it! Open the door at once, man, and let me in!"

"As quickly as I can, my lady," said Mr. Boyd, fumbling at the chain. "It is Lady Wharton, is it not?"

"Who else should it be, pray?" replied the lady. "And if Lady Wharton had known what kind of thoroughfare this was she would have thought twice before she'd have ventured into it." There was nothing querulous in the voice; it was hearty and bluff, with a cheerful ring in it very pleasant to the ear.

"Might a man so humble as Samuel Boyd inquire whether it is too late now for Lady Wharton to think better of it?" asked Mr. Boyd, continuing to fumble at the chain.

"Man alive! Of course it is. Oh, you've got it opened at last. Well, that's a blessing. If it takes as long to get out of the house as to get in I sha'n't be home till midnight. Remain where you are, John, and wait for me. If I don't make my appearance before ten o'clock shout for help at the top of your voice." These last words were addressed to a footman, who, holding a large green umbrella over her ladyship's head, had accompanied her from her carriage to the door of Mr. Boyd's dwelling. "John is my confidential man," she was now addressing Mr. Boyd. "I don't put my trust in women. They're a pack of artful, designing creatures. What men see in us to marry us passes my comprehension. If I were a man I'd want a sackfull of diamonds before I'd marry the handsomest among them."

"If your ladyship will kindly follow me," said Mr. Boyd, ascending the stairs.

"Bless my soul!" she exclaimed. "The passage is as dark as a railway tunnel, and that parody of a candle in your hand makes matters worse. The stairs are safe, I hope? There are no trapdoors in them through which a defenceless woman might suddenly disappear?" These words were accompanied with a ringing laugh which awoke the echoes in the almost deserted house.

"They are quite safe, my lady, quite safe. Permit me to welcome you to my poor abode."

They were now in the room, around which Lady Wharton stared in amazement. She was a large-framed woman, well proportioned and with a perfect figure. There was a hearty good nature in her face which matched well with her brisk voice. Her eyes were bright, her movements quick and decided. Eminently a woman of management, of kindly heart, and one whose healthy physique and amiable disposition guided her to take a cheerful view of difficulties.

"Heaven and earth, Mr. Boyd!" she exclaimed. "This is the oddest abode a man of means could select." Here she caught sight of the wax figure of the Chinaman, which caused her to retreat a step or two and to give utterance to a little scream.

"Don't be frightened, my lady, he's only wax. I took him for a debt; he was better than nothing, if only for melting down. All these things have been taken for debt. That is the way we are robbed; and the law gives us no redress, no redress."

"Poor Mr. Boyd!" said Lady Wharton, with twinkling eyes "How very sad! Shall I lend you a five pound note?"

"I should be very grateful, my lady."

She burst into a merry laugh. "Singular creature! Shall we proceed to business?"

"Yes, my lady. Time is money. You will be comfortable in this chair."

A strange contrast did they present as they sat on opposite sides of the table, the crafty, cringing face of the man looking into the cheery, good-humoured face of the lady.

"Now, Mr. Boyd, I am going to be quite frank with you." She placed her satchel on the table, and took some papers from it. "My husband owes you a large sum of money. Look over these figures and tell me if they are correct."

"Quite correct, my lady, but calculated only up to the last day of February, which was yesterday. One day's interest has to be added if you are prepared to pay to-night. Strictly speaking, it is two days' interest, it being now past the hour of business."

"Of course you know I am not prepared to pay to-night, and of course you know that I have

come in the place of my husband because in matters of business he is a mere child."

"I have not found him so, my lady," said Samuel Boyd. "In my experience of his lordship I have seen nothing in him to cause me to think he is weak-minded. He came to me to borrow money, and I lent it to him on bills signed in his name. It was a risk, and I took it."

"Very well, Mr. Boyd," said Lady Wharton, cheerfully. "We have not met to contradict each other, or to raise up difficulties, but to come to such an arrangement as may be agreeable to you."

"If your ladyship pleases," said Mr. Boyd.

"At the same time," she continued, "I wish to state how far my understanding went, when, Lord Wharton being ill in bed, I opened up a correspondence with you. I am very fond of my husband, Mr. Boyd."

"His lordship is to be envied."

"Indeed I think he is," said Lady Wharton, with a little laugh, "and I am to be envied, too, for having a husband so amiably inclined. But he is altogether too easy and careless in money matters; when he wishes for a thing, he will promise anything, consent to anything, sign anything, so long as he gets it. He is really like a child in these matters, and having made up my mind that he was not to be worried, I opened a letter which you wrote to him, and I replied to it. Now, Mr. Boyd, it was from that letter that I learned, for the first time, that Lord Wharton was in your debt."

"Indeed, my lady."

"Yes, indeed. I was not astonished. Nothing that Lord Wharton does astonishes me. He can get through a great deal of money. So can I. He is extravagant. So am I. What are you to do, Mr. Boyd, when you have been brought up to it?"

"Nothing but spend," said Samuel Boyd.

"You are a man of sense. We can do nothing but spend--and between you and me, Mr. Boyd"--here she laughed long and heartily--"we *do* spend. Why not, when we can afford it?"

"Why not, indeed?" murmured Mr. Boyd, in ready acquiescence.

"But rich as people may be they are sometimes in need of ready money, and that, I suppose, is where gentlemen of your profession come in. Having now, in a manner of speaking, cleared the ground, we can go on easily. There are bills coming due."

"There are, my lady."

"I asked you in a letter what they amounted to; you answered, twelve thousand pounds. Now, Mr. Boyd, I should not like you to think that I want to take advantage of you."

"Thank you, my lady. I have been taken in so often that I am almost beginning to despair of human nature."

"Don't, Mr. Boyd, don't. There is a great deal of good in human nature, and we can get a lot of fun out of life if we set about it the right way. I have consulted another person in this business, and he has advised me. My brother, Lord Fairfax. You have heard of him, perhaps. Yes? I thought you must; he is almost a celebrity, with his indolent and easy ways. It is in our blood; we object to be troubled. All we ask is that the world should go round as usual, and that our little wishes should be gratified. Lord Fairfax suggested that I should put the business into the hands of a lawyer." Mr. Boyd, with a scarcely perceptible motion, lifted his eyebrows. "I said, no. We have a rooted objection to lawyers in our family; they make your head ache. 'Quite right,' said Lord Fairfax. 'Have nothing to do with lawyers.' He never disputes, Mr. Boyd. The moment you say a thing he agrees to it. Then he said, 'Find out how much it amounts to.' I wrote to you, and you told me. You also sent me some bills, for the purpose of doing away with the old obligations, and putting the whole of the business on a new footing. These bills were to be accepted by Lord Wharton, and you strongly urged me to get another responsible name at the back of them. Lord Wharton signed the bills when I put them before him. The dear man hardly as much as looked at them. Then I went to Lord Fairfax, and *he* put his name on the back. *He* hardly as much as looked at them. And to cut a long matter short, Mr. Boyd, I have brought them with me."

She took them from her satchel, and handed them to Mr. Boyd, who examined them carefully, and jotted down figures on a piece of paper. Satisfactory as the transaction was to him no sign of satisfaction escaped him.

"Are they in order, Mr. Boyd?"

"Yes, they appear to be in order. I am making a great sacrifice for you, my lady."

"We are under a great obligation to you. And now, Mr. Boyd, for a little piece of business on my own account. I want a thousand pounds for my private purse."

"A thousand pounds, my lady, a thousand pounds!" murmured Mr. Boyd.

"I will *not* worry Lord Wharton with my dressmaker's bill, and she has begged me to let her have something on account. There are also one or two other little bills I wish to pay. Don't be alarmed; I am going to give you security. I have been looking through my jewellery, and I found some things that have gone out of fashion. I will not sell them, but I am willing to deposit them with you. Here they are. Oblige me by looking over them. Some of the cases would not go into my satchel, so I took them all out, and wrapped them in paper. I hope you won't mind."

"Not at all, my lady," said Mr. Boyd, opening the papers, which contained jewels of various kinds, bracelets, necklaces, ear-rings, brooches, and other gewgaws. Many of the precious stones were in old settings, and he saw at a glance that they were worth considerably more than the thousand pounds which this reckless lady of fashion wished to raise upon them. Among them were two ornaments of conspicuous beauty--a pearl necklace, and a device for the hair in the shape of a peacock's tail.

"I am reposing a great confidence in you," said Lady Wharton. "The pearl necklace and the peacock's tail were presents from my father--they cost a great price, I believe--and I would not part with them for any consideration. In a few months I shall--shall--what is the word for it? Oh, yes, redeem them."

"You don't want the thousand pounds immediately, my lady?" said Mr. Boyd.

"My good man, I want it now, this minute."

"Impossible, my lady. I could not get it together in less than five or six days. If that will suit you----"

Lady Wharton beat an impatient tattoo on the table with the tips of her fingers. "Are you sure you could not get it earlier?"

"Quite sure, my lady."

"It *must* suit me, then, but it is really very provoking. Lord Wharton is ordered into the country, and we are going to-morrow."

"I can send you a cheque through the post."

"I should prefer to receive it personally from you, and in bank notes. You can bring it to me in the country, I suppose?"

"There will be no difficulty, my lady. To what part of the country?"

"We are going to our place in Bournemouth, The Gables. We give a ball there every year on the 7th of March. Of course I may rely upon having the money before that date."

"Pardon me a moment, my lady," said Mr. Boyd, pretending to make certain calculations on paper, and presently adding, "I can't positively promise, but you shall be sure to have it *on* that date."

"Oh, very well, very well," said Lady Wharton, "I see that I am expected to agree to everything. And now, Mr. Boyd, our business is over, I think. Bless my soul, how dismally the wind sounds in this house! If I don't get out of it quickly John will think I've been spirited away. Don't trouble to come down; one of your servants can see me to the door."

"I keep no servants, my lady," he replied. "A charwoman comes when I send for her. That is my life."

"Do you mean to tell me that you live here quite alone?"

"Quite alone, my lady, quite alone, and safer and more secure than if my house was full of servants."

"Mr. Boyd," said Lady Wharton, tapping him lightly on the arm, "you should marry."

"What did your ladyship say yourself about women when you entered the house," he answered slyly.

She laughed heartily at this retort, and following him down the stairs as he led the way with a light, bade him good night at the street door.

"John," she said to her confidential man as he conducted her to her carriage, "the house is like a grave."

"I was thinking that myself, my lady," said John.

CHAPTER IV.

SILENCE REIGNS.

Was it indeed a grave, and were the phantom shapes thrown upon the walls and ceiling by the flickering light the phantoms of the dead that were buried there? How easy to imagine this--how easy to imagine that, animated by a spirit of revenge for past wrongs and injuries, they moved and shifted, and glided hither and thither, and took fantastic and monstrous form, for the purpose of striking terror into the heart of the enemy who had filled their lives with suffering and brought them to an untimely end!

Silence reigned.

Were those shapes and forms the only phantoms in the lonely house? Or, in the spaces that were unlighted--say in the passages and on the stairs leading to the room in which its owner transacted his business, and into another room in which he slept--were other phantoms moving, as dumb as they, as silent as they, with thoughts as murderous and with power more sure? This phantom, now, unseen by reason of the darkness, pausing with finger at its lips, all its senses merged in the sense of hearing as it listened for a sound to warn it that the time was not yet ripe? Had this phantom escaped from the lighted room in fear lest, were it visible to mortal eyes, its dread purpose would be frustrated, and that a frenzied cry ringing out upon the air, might reach some chance and aimless wanderer, and thus mar the murderous design lurking in its breast? Even of this the risk was small, for rarely indeed did any such wanderer find himself in Catchpole Square, or any man, who, being there without design, did not gladly and quickly grope his way out of it. The very guardians of the night avoided it, and contented themselves with the slightest and swiftest scrutiny, as of a place which bore an evil reputation and had best be left alone. It happened at odd times that some houseless and homeless vagrant, slinking in, curled himself up in a dark corner and dozed till daylight came, creeping away then with no feeling of gratitude for the shelter it had afforded him. Once a hapless child, sleeping there during a fierce snowstorm, had been found dead in the morning, covered with a white shroud. But that was long ago.

But this one phantom was in the house--now pausing, now creeping slowly along, now pausing again, now crouching with its head against a panel, and so remaining for many dumb minutes. And another phantom was at its heels.

And when the lights were out, and the rooms, like the stairs and passages, were in darkness and the master in his bed, they were still there. So stealthy were their movements that no sound proceeded from them; their breathing was so faint that it would scarcely have disturbed a wintry leaf.

Silence reigned.

The sobbing and the moaning of the wind continued. Could it have carried the news to the wider thoroughfares, trodden by men and women whose business or pleasure kept them out so late, what message would it have conveyed? In its whispering voices would the word MURDER have found a place?

At no great distance from the Square stood Saint Michael's Church, its clock proclaiming the hour.

Ten!

Eleven!

Twelve!

How long these hours took to strike! A measured pause between each stroke, and in that pause the passing away of a life in the life of the great city, or the ushering in of one. This life at an end, this with a feeble cry at the journey before it.

One o'clock!

Samuel Boyd was asleep. No prayer on his lips, no prayer in his heart, before he retired to rest. He slept in peace, undisturbed by fear or remorse.

Suddenly he awoke. His heart beat wildly, a cold perspiration broke out on his forehead.

With a powerful hand pressed upon his mouth, and another at his throat, no man can cry aloud. But while strength remains he can gasp, and moan, and fight for dear life--and may struggle out of bed, still with the hand upon his mouth, and another at his throat--and may

summon to his aid all the despairing forces of his body--nay, even while thus imprisoned, succeed in dragging his adversaries this way and that--and may in his agony prolong the execution of the ruthless purpose. Though not avert it.

The door between the two rooms is open while this muffled struggle is going on. Furniture is overturned and displaced, tapestry torn from the walls, and smaller articles tossed in all directions. On the part of one of the men there is displayed a cold, cruel, relentless method in the execution of his design; on the part of the other a wild, despairing effort to obtain possession of a weapon. He succeeds. A pistol is in his hand.

A shot rings out! Another!--and the wax figure of the Chinaman collapses into a chair with a bullet in its heart.

Again Saint Michael's Church proclaims the hour.

Two o'clock!

Silence reigns.

CHAPTER V.

CONSTABLE APPLEBEE AND CONSTABLE POND FOREGATHER.

In the course of the next few days the weather exhibited its vagaries in a more than usually astonishing fashion. On the night of the 1st of March the sobbing and the moaning of the wind continued till early morning, when it pleased the air to become mild and balmy, almost promising the advent of spring. A few bold buds awoke and peeped out of their little brown beds, and over the atmosphere hung a hazy veil of dim, delicious sapphire. On the following day this promise was destroyed, and another change took place; and on the night of the 5th a fog which had been overlooked in the early winter took its revenge for the neglect by enveloping the City of Unrest in a mist so dense that Mrs. Pond, in a conversation with Mrs. Applebee the next day was driven to the use of a familiar illustration.

"If you'll believe me, Mrs. Applebee," she said, "it was that thick you could have cut it with a knife. I could hardly see my hand before me."

"But what took you out in it, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Applebee.

"I couldn't help thinking of Pond," replied Mrs. Pond, a young woman of two and twenty, whose wifely experiences were tame in comparison with those of Mrs. Applebee, the mother of eight, "trapesing up and down in the cold while I was setting before a blazing fire as comfortable as you please. 'A cup of hot coffee 'll put life in him,' says I to myself, and I was soon on my way outside with a bottleful tucked under my cloak. It took me a good hour to get to him."

"And by that time the coffee was cold," Mrs. Applebee remarked.

"No, it was just lukewarm. Thinking of Pond I cuddled it close; but I don't mind confessing I was almost giving him up."

"How did you find him at last, my dear?"

"I'll tell you a secret," said the young wife, with a little blush. Mrs. Applebee, who dearly loved a secret or anything mysterious, pricked up her ears. "When Pond was put on the night beat we agreed upon a signal. It was his idea; he's that clever you wouldn't believe."

"May it ever continue," ejaculated Mrs. Applebee.

"What?"

"Your opinion of him."

"Oh, it will," said Mrs. Pond, nodding her head confidently. "What Pond thinks of is a bird-call, and he buys two, and gives me one. 'If it should chance to happen,' says Pond, 'that you're my way--say about ten o'clock--when I'm on duty, just you give a soft blow. When I hear it out comes my bird-call, and I give a soft blow. Only one, Polly, because it might be noticed and against the regulations.' It does often chance to happen that I'm Pond's way on a dark night," added Mrs. Pond, with a sly look, "and I give a soft blow and he gives another. He says it's like company

when he hears it, and he resooms his tread with a light heart. As for me, I go home as happy as happy can be. Thankful I was last night when Pond answered my call, and thankful *he* was for the coffee. 'Polly,' he says, 'you're a angel.'"

"How many kisses did he give you, my dear?"

"Oh, Mrs. Applebee," said Mrs. Pond, archly, "against the regulations, you know."

"I've heard of it being done," said Mrs. Applebee, pensively, "even by policemen on night duty. It was a dreadful night for our men to be out, but duty's duty and the pay's regular. It's a good thing you got home safe. Is your room let yet?"

"No, the bill's still in the window. Twenty-five pounds is a lot to pay for a house, but Pond says, 'Don't you fret, Polly; we'll soon get a lodger, and there's half the rent paid.' I must run home now in case he wakes up."

Mrs. Applebee's lord and master was at that moment in his bed, dreaming of fogs and shadows. Mrs. Pond's lord and master was also enjoying repose. They lived in adjoining streets, and their husbands being in the Force and at present on the night beat, it was their habit to foregather for a social gossip while their good men were in the arms of Morpheus.

There had been forewarnings of this visitation of the heaviest fog of the season. When people woke up on the morning of March 5th they thought it was the middle of the night. The comfortable illusion being dispelled by a consultation of watches and clocks they found that the sky was not visible, and that they could not distinguish the houses on the opposite side of the way. They crawled to their places of business in a discontented frame of mind, through a white blinding mist which made them uncertain of the direction they were taking. To add to their perplexities the trams and omnibuses were not running, and jubilant cabmen, bent (paradoxically) on making hay while the sun shines, walked at their horses' heads, holding the bridles, and demanded gold instead of silver for taking a fare anywhere. These creeping shadows, the muffled cries that fell upon the ear, and the lighted links which seemed to move through space without the aid of hands, were more like a scene in the infernal regions than a representation of the anxious, throbbing life of our modern Babylon.

As the day wore on the fog lifted a little, but at night it became worse. Theatrical managers were sad and low-spirited, for their patrons were not disposed to leave their firesides in such weather, and the actors performed their ghostly parts to indistinct and scanty audiences, upon whom the brightest flashes of comedy fell with depressing effect. The fairies in the pantomimes which were still running were shorn of bright fancies, and even the bad spirits derived no pleasure from the perpetration of evil deeds. The few monomaniacs who believed that the end of the world was coming, were on their knees, waiting for the blast of Michael's trumpet. Topers standing at the bars of their favourite publichouses drank their liquor with a distinct absence of conviviality, and the verbal and visual inanities between barmaids and their admirers were shorn of that vacuous vivacity which generally distinguishes the intercourse of those parties. Dejection and dulness reigned in all the waking world.

In no part of the city were matters quite so bad as in the vicinity of Catchpole Square, North district, where, an hour after midnight, Constable Pond was cautiously feeling his way towards the border-line of his beat, hoping there to meet with human companionship in the person of Constable Applebee, who, himself animated by a similar hope in respect of Constable Pond, was advancing from an opposite direction. On this miserable night one crumb of comfort--oh, but it was more than a crumb; it might have been called a whole loaf--had fallen to the share of Constable Pond. He had not thought it likely that his wife would have ventured from the house, nor, lonely as he was, did he wish it; but when, an hour or so before midnight, he heard the familiar bird-call, he joyfully responded.

"Why, Polly, Polly!" he exclaimed, passing his arm around her. "My senses don't deceive me, do they?"

"I hope they don't," said Polly, drawing his arm tighter. "You wouldn't do this to another woman, I'm sure of that."

"You may be, Polly, you may be. Not to Queen Victoria herself with her gold crown on. Well, this *is* a surprise! Such a surprise, Polly, as makes up for all."

He gave her a great hug. He did not consider the regulations--not he!

"I'm afraid it's cold," said Polly, putting the bottle of coffee into his hand, and paying good interest for the hug. "It was boiling hot when I started."

"What a brick you are!" said Constable Pond, extracting the cork with his teeth, and applying himself to the refreshment. "It's ever so much better than three-star. Here, take a pull yourself." She did. "Polly, you're a angel!"

She laughed, but did not dispute it, and they remained a short time in fond dalliance. A strange hour for Cupid's pranks, but that urchin has no conscience. Polly proposed to walk the beat with her husband all through the night, but this was such an alarming infringement of the

regulations that he would not listen to it. So he escorted her to the end of his beat, and would have escorted her farther, but *she* would not listen to that.

"Can you find your way home?" he asked, in doubt.

"Blindfold," she answered promptly.

"You may as well have the empty bottle," he said. "Hold it by the neck, and if anybody comes up to you give him a crack on the head with it. Another kiss, Polly!"

As she walked away she blew on her bird-call every few yards, to which her husband did not fail to respond; and if desolation did not fall upon him when he could hear it no longer it was because of the impression which Polly's thoughtful love had produced upon him. "Good little woman," he said. "A regular trump, that's what she is." But a couple of hours' loneliness sent his spirits down again, and now he was seeking his brother-constable Applebee to cheer him up with the friendly word. With the advance of the night the fog continued to deepen, and he got into a state of muddle as to his whereabouts. His progress was painfully slow. The white mist blinded and deceived him; his footsteps were noiseless; and but for the striking of the hour from a neighbouring church he might reasonably have fancied that he was traversing a city of the dead.

"Saint Michael's Church," he soliloquised, with a feeling of relief. "I didn't hear it when it struck last. Where could I have been--and where am I now? It can't be fur off, though whether it's to the right of me or the left of me, or before me or behind me, I'll be hanged if I can tell. What street am I in--Riley Street or Silver Street? If it's Riley Street I ought to come upon Applebee in a minute or two, unless he's at the other end of the beat. If it's Silver Street I'll have to tack."

That he should be puzzled was not to be wondered at, for the streets he named were so precisely alike in every detail and feature that they might have been turned out of one mould. Their frontage was the same, their height was the same, their depth was the same, and each had the same number of rooms of exactly the same shape and dimensions, and the same number of chimney pots placed in exactly the same positions. When this mathematical demon of architecture receives its death-blow a joy will be added to existence.

While Constable Pond stood debating whether to tack or creep straight on he saw in the distance what might be likened to a dead star--the misty glimmering of a despondent light; and on the chance of its indicating the presence of Constable Applebee he boldly challenged it.

"Hallo, there!" he cried.

"Hallo, there!" came the echoing answer.

There was little life in their voices; they seemed to linger, as though they had not sufficient power to effectually pierce the thick air.

"Is that you, Applebee?"

"Yes, it's me. Is it Pond?"

"Yes."

"Your voice sounds strange. Come slow."

Each advancing with caution, a friendly grasp of hands presently united them.

CHAPTER VI.

IT WAS GONE! THROUGH DEADMAN'S COURT.

"What a night!" then exclaimed Constable Pond.

"The worst *I* ever saw," responded Constable Applebee. "It's a record, that's what it is. We had a bad spell in December--lasted two days--you remember it, Pond?

"Should think I did."

"It was nothing compared to this. I'd sooner walk through a foot and a half of snow than through such a fog. It gets into the eyes, and into the chest, and into the head; you can squeeze it through your fingers. When it's snow you know where you are; there it is, at your feet; it don't

mount. It gives a man fair play; this don't. I've been looking for you everywhere. Where did you get to?"

"Hard to say. As fur as I know I haven't been off my beat."

"Same here. Anything to report?"

"No. Have you?"

Constable Applebee gave no direct reply, but branched off into what, apparently, was another subject. "Look here, Pond. Are you a nervous man?"

"Not particularly," answered Constable Pond, with a timid look around.

"But you don't like this sort of thing?"

"Who would?"

"Ah, you may say that. If fog was fog, and nothing else, I'd put up with it. And why? Because we've got to."

"A true bill," said Constable Pond, assenting.

"But it brings something else along with it. That's what I complain of--and what I mostly complain of is shadders."

"What do you mean?" inquired Constable Pond.

"What I say. Shadders. I don't call *my*self a nervous man, but when you see something stealing along a yard or two ahead of you, and you go to lay hold of it and it vanishes--yes, Pond, vanishes--it's enough to give a man the creeps."

"It'd give *me* the creeps."

"Very well, then," said Constable Applebee, as though a matter which had been in dispute was now settled. "Put a substantial body in my way and I'll tackle it. But how *can* you tackle it when it melts and disappears? You call out, 'Now, then, what are you up to?' and you don't get a whisper in reply. Ain't that enough to aggravate a man?"

"More than enough; I know how I should feel over it. But look here, Applebee, it ain't imagination, is it?"

"Imagination!" exclaimed Constable Applebee, in a voice of scorn. "What! Me! Why, I don't suppose, from the day I was born to this blessed night of white fog, that if it was all reckoned up I've had imagination enough to fill a two-ounce bottle."

This new view of the quality of imagination in relation to quantity seemed to impress Constable Pond, who turned it over in his mind without feeling himself equal to offer an opinion on it.

"A fog like this always serves me the same way," said Constable Applebee. "There was a black fog when I was born I've heard my mother often say. That's why, perhaps."

"But what happened?" asked Constable Pond. "You haven't told me that."

"This happened. I see a shadder creeping along the wall. I foller it till I'm within half-a-dozen yards. Then I stop and hail it. The minute it hears my voice it gives a start, and when I run forward to lay hands on it, it vanishes."

"You've got," said Constable Pond, admiringly, "the heart of a lion. I don't bring to mind that there's any orders about taking up shadders. Bodies, yes. Shadders, no."

"I ain't exactly a mouse," said Constable Applebee, stiffening himself. "It happened a second time. There it was, creeping ahead of me. This time I don't give it a chance. I run after it and call out, 'Stand up like a man!'"----

"It might have been a female shadder," suggested Constable Pond.

"Perhaps you know more about it than I do," said Constable Applebee, testily.

"No, Applebee, no. Go on."

"'Stand up like a man!' I call out. What's the consequence? It vanishes again, and there I stand, dumbfoundered."

"Does it come a third time, Applebee?"

"No, it don't come a third time. When I was a little boy my mother took me to the Polytechnic to see 'Pepper's Ghost.' You saw it, and it wasn't there. You run a sword through it, and it grinned

in your face. I was that scared I couldn't sleep for a week afterwards. It's my belief, if I'd got close enough to run a knife into the shadder, it'd have served me just the same. Step up, we're in the gutter."

"It's singular, that's what it is. It's singular. Shall you report it?"

"I'm doubtful of it. They might think I was off my head. Let it be between us, Pond."

"It don't pass my lips, Applebee."

They entered a hooded court, and halted there.

"Where are we?" asked Constable Pond.

"In Deadman's Court." Constable Pond shivered. "Leading to Catchpole Square, and leading nowhere else. You wouldn't catch *me* living in a cooldersack."

"What may be the meaning of that, Applebee?" asked Constable Pond.

"You couldn't have been much of a dab at school to ask that question. Now, me!--but I won't boast. Cooldersack is French for blind thoroughfare. A man that sleeps as sound as I do 'd find himself in a trap, with a entrance like this. Suppose you live in the end house where Mr. Samuel Boyd lives, and there's a fire in the middle of the night. How's the fire engines to get to you? You wouldn't have half a chance. A man might as well be shut up in a bottle. Do you know the Square at all, Pond?"

"No. Never been in it to my knowledge."

"Couldn't have been in it without," said Constable Applebee, chuckling at his wit. "It's the rummiest built place *you* ever saw. Just step in a minute. Not that you can see much of it with this fog on, but I could describe it blindfold. Six houses with the street doors in front of us--we're standing facing 'em now--and only one of 'em let, the one at the end corner, Mr. Samuel Boyd's. The others have been empty I don't know how long. Now right about face, and what do you see?"

"As fur as I can make out," said Constable Pond, peering before him, "it's a blank wall."

"It *is* a blank wall, the backs of six houses, without any back entrance to 'em."

"Where's the front entrance?"

"In Shore Street. If we had Samuel Boyd's money we'd do better with it, wouldn't we, Pond? We'd have a house with a bit of garden in front and a bit of garden at the back, with a rose tree or two, and flowers in the winder--because what's the use of money if you don't enjoy it?"

"That's what I say. Life's short. Only tempery."

"Temporarily, Pond, temporarily," said Constable Applebee, in correction. "You *must* have made a mess of it at school. My missis'd go wild with delight if she had a house like that. She's as fond of flowers as bees of honey."

"So's mine," said Constable Pond, standing up for his own like a man.

"They all are. And if I had my wish I'd never leave the house in the morning without one in my buttonhole. It mellers a man, Pond, that's what it does, it mellers him, and whether you're rough or whether you're smooth it shows you've got a good heart. I never saw Samuel Boyd with a flower in *his* buttonhole, and if I lived to a hundred I never should. And I never had a civil word from him."

"Nor anything in the way of a tip, I'll bet," remarked Constable Pond.

"You'd win it. It was a different pair of shoes with his son, Mr. Reginald. There he was, as handsome and free a young chap as you'd set eyes on in a day's march, with a flower in his coat and a smile or a cheery word to brighten you up. 'A wild night, constable,' he'd say, 'have a cigar?' And he'd slip one in my hand, and sometimes the price of a pint. It's nigh upon two years since I set eyes on him--wus luck!" These reminiscences came to a sudden stop. Constable Applebee clutched his comrade's arm, and whispered hoarsely, "Look there! The shadder!"

A figure was creeping along the wall, as though in the endeavour to escape observation. They darted forward, and Constable Applebee laid his hand upon it, crying, "Now, then, give an account of yourself!" It was not a shadow, for shadows have no substance. It was not a shadow, for shadows have no voice. The sound of a sob escaped from the figure. Constable Applebee's grasp was nerveless rather than vigorous, and a less powerful effort than it made would have enabled it to escape. It was gone! Through Deadman's Court!

"Quick, Pond, quick!" cried Constable Applebee. In a state of confusion they scrambled out of Catchpole Square, and came into violent collision. Ruefully rubbing their heads they looked about them, and saw nothing but the thick white fog.

"Vanished!" exclaimed Constable Applebee. The collision had knocked Constable Pond's helmet off. Stooping to recover it he saw something white beneath it--a lady's handkerchief, trimmed with lace. With a sly glance at Constable Applebee he put it into his pocket.

"It'll do for the missis," he thought. "She's fond of a bit of lace."

CHAPTER VII.

IN BISHOP STREET POLICE STATION.

Availing itself of the privilege to creep through every chink and crevice, to steal up backstairs and take advantage of every keyhole, and to make its dismal presence felt equally within the habitations of man as without, the white fog had insinuated itself into the Bishop Street Police Station, where it lay in the form of a semi-transparent shroud, and where Inspector Robson looked more like the ghost of a man than the man himself. In the brightest of weather the office was not a cheerful apartment; under the thrall of the white fog, an hour after midnight, it assumed a funereal aspect inexpressibly depressing.

Busily employed in making out the charge sheet for the following day, Inspector Robson still found time to cast an occasional eye upon another ghostly form who, with one foot resting on the end of a wooden bench, was leaning against the wall in a negligent attitude, engaged in the insubstantial occupation of chewing a ghostly straw. The Inspector wrote a fine copperplate hand, and his steel pen neither scratched nor spluttered. On the present occasion he was taking extraordinary care over his task, as though more than usually important issues hung upon the perfect outlines of his pothooks and hangers. The absence of sound within the office and the shroud which lay upon it, rendering objects within a few yards of him indistinct, imparted so strong an air of unreality to the scene, that his slow and measured movements bore some resemblance to the movements of an automaton. The other ghostly person in the office chewed his straw and moved his lips with so regular and unintelligent a motion that *his* movements, also, bore some resemblance to the movements of an automaton. But for the difference in their ages these two men might have been posing to an invisible artist for a picture of the Industrious and the Idle Apprentices.

That there was something in the negligent figure that discomposed the Inspector was evident from the expression on his face when he raised his head from the charge sheet and glanced in that direction, and it was quite as evident that his discomposure was powerless to arouse the cause of it from his apparent insensibility to all external objects and impressions. He was young and good-looking, his age probably twenty-four or five; Inspector Robson was old enough to be his father, and on his features were stamped the effects of long years of official responsibilities and steady application to duty. In this relation of the Idle and the Industrious Apprentices the marked contrast they presented was capable of a dramatic interpretation.

"Do you intend to remain much longer?" inquired the Inspector, goaded at length into breaking the oppressive silence. "Because I'd like you to know I'm pretty well tired of you."

"I'm pretty well tired of myself," replied the young man, in a listless tone. "As to remaining much longer I can't exactly say."

"You have no right to be in this place, you know, unless you are here upon business. Now, the question is, are you here upon business? If you are, I'm ready to take it down."

The young man turned the straw in his mouth, and appeared to reflect. Coming to a conclusion he languidly said, "I can't think of any particular business."

"That's a pity," said the Inspector.

"That's a pity," echoed the young man, with distinct indifference.

"Well, then," said the Inspector, bracing himself up for a great effort, "as you have no business to be here unless you have business to be here----" This was so involved that it brought him to a full stop; scratching his head with whimsical perplexity he extricated himself from the difficulty by adding, "The best thing you can do is to clear out."

The young man, deciding that he had sufficiently rested one foot, lowered it, and lifted the other upon the bench. This was the only movement he made.

The Inspector resumed his writing with the manner of a man driven to a helpless pass. A

peculiar feature of the defeat he had met with was that it did not seem to anger him. Presently he spoke again.

"I don't often get into a temper, Dick."

"Not often."

"But when I do," said the Inspector, with an anticipatory chuckle, "it's a thing to remember."

"When you do, uncle, I'll remember it."

The Inspector finished the charge sheet, tidied up his papers, and looking over his shoulder at Dick, suddenly burst out laughing.

Dick's face cleared; a light stole into his eyes; his lips quivered. These tokens of serious emotion were like the passing of a cloud. The next moment he joined the Inspector in the laugh, and the storm was at an end.

"Where are you going to sleep, Dick?"

"Let me see," Dick answered. "Buckingham Palace sounds tempting; there must be several beds unoccupied there. Could a fellow get between the sheets of one? Do you think it might be managed? I hope they keep a fire in the rooms and the sheets well aired."

"Don't be a fool."

"Can I help it?"

"No, Dick, no," said the inspector, advancing and laying his hand kindly upon Dick's shoulder. "Upon my soul I don't believe you can."

Dick lifted his eyes, with an implied suggestion that the Inspector, by the barest possibility, might be mistaken; but he did not put this into words.

"I can't take you home with me," said the Inspector. "Aunt Rob won't have it. She's put her foot down, and when she puts her foot down, why, there it is."

The comic helplessness expressed in this obvious statement seemed to amuse Dick, but he said, gravely enough, "Yes, there it is."

"And there's Florence."

At the introduction of this name a look of sad tenderness stole into Dick's eyes, but he said calmly, "Ah, and there's Florence."

"Now, Dick, let us have this out, once and for all."

"I'm agreeable."

"It's altogether too bad," exclaimed the Inspector. "What with you and Florence, bless her! *and* Aunt Rob, I haven't a moment's peace of my life. What Aunt Rob says is this. 'Here's Dick Remington,' she says, 'that you've behaved as a father to, and that I've behaved as a mother to. Ever since he was left an orphan, having lost his father, then his mother--you were three years old when my poor sister died--he's lived with us as one of our own, and so we've treated him. He had a claim upon us, and that claim we've met.' And she says--her foot being down--'It's time Dick looked after himself.' She gave you a hint, which you took pretty quick. I'll say that of you; you took it almost too quick."

"What else could I do?"

"It was a mistake, Dick, to get into a huff as you did. The minute she began to speak you took her up sharp--and if there's one thing more than another that puts her back up it is to be took up sharp. You see, Dick, it's a delicate matter. Aunt Rob says, 'We must think of Florence. She comes first.' And she's right, Dick."

"She is, uncle. Florence comes first--always first!"

"'Here's Dick,' says Aunt Rob, 'that I'm as fond of as if he was my own son, what is he good for? What prospects has he got? He's been in one situation and another, and never keeps to one thing for more than a few weeks at a time. Here he is, a grown man, and here is Florence, almost a grown woman.' To think of it!" said Inspector Robson, pensively, breaking off. "It was only yesterday that she was in short frocks, going backward and forward to school, and climbing up on my knee to pull my whiskers, and cuddling up in my arms, and singing her little songs in a voice as sweet as music. And now! a grown woman! To think of it--to think of it!"

"Loving you no less as a woman, uncle, than she did as a child."

"I know it, my lad, I know it, but it sets a man on the think."

And Inspector Robson fell forthwith into a brown study which lasted quite five minutes, during which the image of his only child, most tenderly and dearly beloved, presented itself to him in its sweetest and most engaging aspects.

CHAPTER VIII.

AUNT ROB THINKS FLORENCE OUGHT TO MARRY A MARQUIS OR A PRINCE.

Dick Remington waited patiently to hear the full sum of the reproaches which Aunt Rob brought against him. He, too, saw with his mind's eye the image of the young girl for whom he would have laid down his life, and if his thoughts of her brought a pang to his heart they were at the same time charged with exceeding tenderness.

Inspector Robson shook himself free from dreams, and returned to his subject.

"That is what Aunt Rob says. 'Here is Dick a grown man, and here is Florence almost a grown woman. When Dick comes down in the morning he kisses Florence and she kisses him; and when he bids her good night he kisses her again. And,' says Aunt Rob, 'I don't know that this is a thing that ought to be allowed to go on.' I dare say it's puzzled other people as well as us when kissing ought to be left off. So long as you were little it was as natural as natural could be. You were playmates and chums, and you rolled on the floor together and played coach and horses and London Bridge is Falling Down, and you'd carry her on your shoulder and lift her as high as the ceiling, and throw her up and catch her, she screaming with delight and crying, 'Again, Dick, again!' You grew up, Dick, and when you were eighteen Florence was only twelve, and the kissing went on, and there was nothing to object to. But you got to be twenty and Florence fourteen, and the kissing went on. Then her frocks were lengthened, and the pair of you continued to grow up till she was nineteen and you twenty-five--and all this time the kissing went on. Now, Dick, there *must* come a time when, even between cousins, kissing must stop. Sometimes it's done gradual, sometimes all of a sudden, which makes things a bit awkward--but one way or the other it's got to be done. You must see that yourself, Dick."

"Yes, I suppose so, uncle."

"And Aunt Rob has got an eye to the future. Pretty girls like Florence don't grow on every gooseberry bush. Show me the girl that can compare with her. Do *you* know of one, Dick?"

"Not one in all the wide world," replied the young man. "God bless her, and make her happy!"

"She's been brought up sensible," said Inspector Robson. "She can make a beef steak pudding and play the piano; there's nothing she can't turn her hand to, and the man that gets her will be a lucky chap. Aunt Rob thinks a gentleman born would not be too good for her. 'Why not say a marquis, or a prince?' says I to her, speaking sarcastic like. And she bridles up and answers, 'Why not? He might do worse; he couldn't do better.'"

"No gentleman in the land," said Dick, with a tremor in his voice, "could be too good for Florence. She's equal to the best, and could hold her own among the best, even if they were born in a palace."

"That's what Aunt Rob thinks," said Inspector Robson, his eyes glowing with loving pride, "and that's what we all think, and who that knows Florence could think differently? But let's come back to you, Dick, for that's the main point. Why don't you stick to one thing, my lad?"

"Perhaps because it won't stick to me," Dick replied.

"Nonsense, nonsense, lad, it's the other way about. Do you recollect the morning you went to your first situation, and how we all stood at the street door to see you off? There was Florence and Aunt Rob waving their handkerchiefs and kissing their hands to you till you were out of sight. You kept that situation seven months, and then you threw it up. You didn't like the place, you said. All right. You got another situation, as traveller on commission in the sewing machine line. You commenced well, and was earning your fifteen shillings a week. What was our surprise when you came home one night and told us you'd left because it wouldn't suit you? The next thing you took to was the stage, and you gave us tickets to come and see you act. We rehearsed at home, and Florence gave you the cues. As for your make-up as you call it, you did it so cleverly that we didn't know you when you come on the stage. 'That's what he's cut out for,' I said. 'One of these days he'll have a theatre of his own.' But Aunt Rob shook her head. You wrote a little piece in one act, and got it played--actually got it played. We thought it beautiful, and the way Florence

laughed and cried over it--well! But it wasn't a success for all that. Still, you know, Dick, if at first you don't succeed, try, try again. You didn't try again. You gave up the stage----"

Dick interposed with, "Or it gave up me."

"Anyway you left it. Your next move was clerk to Mr. Samuel Boyd of Catchpole Square."

"Ah!" said Dick, and there was a look of inquiry in his eyes as he fixed them upon the Inspector.

"You may well say 'Ah,' for from what's known of him he's not the kind of man one would be proud to serve. What made you go to him?"

"I was hard up, and had been trying for a couple of months to get in somewhere. I was curious about him, too: thought he would do for a character that I could make up like if I ever went on the stage, or could use if ever I wrote another play." He spoke with apparent carelessness, but with a covert observance of the Inspector while he gave this explanation.

"It didn't surprise me that you remained with him only three months. When you left him you took to writing for the papers, and we read your paragraphs and articles with wonder at your cleverness. You don't do much in that way now, Dick?"

"Not much," said Dick, with a smile, "but I haven't given it up entirely. There is always the future."

"Ah, Dick, Dick," said Inspector Robson, very seriously, "we don't live in the future, we live in the present. When we're hungry a future dinner won't satisfy our stomachs. Aunt Rob sums it up in three or four words. 'Dick's got no stability,' she says, and, against my will, I've come round to her way of thinking. I suppose, Dick, all this time you haven't saved a penny--eh?" The young man made no reply, and Inspector Robson cried, half angrily, half admiringly, "What business had you to be making us presents and bringing things home for Aunt Rob and me and Florence when you ought to have been looking after yourself? What did you do it for?' Here's Dick brought home an immense turkey,' says Aunt Rob to me at Christmas; and at other times, 'Here's that stupid Dick brought home a couple of chickens, or a veal and ham pie,' and I don't know what all. 'I wish,' says Aunt Rob, 'that you'd tell him to stop it, and put his money into the savings bank.' But not you! At the least mention of such a thing you fired up and wanted to know what we meant by it."

"I could not have acted differently," said Dick. "I was living upon you--yes, I was. You wouldn't take anything for my board and lodging, and I had to try and make it up in some way. It was little enough I did, but if I hadn't done that little I should have been ashamed to look you in the face. Besides, how many times have you said to me, 'Dick, you must be in want of a bit of pocket money,' and forced a half sovereign upon me, and sometimes more?"

"Welcome you were to it," said Inspector Robson, in his heartiest tone, "though it's my firm belief if you had a thousand a year you'd never have a shilling in your purse, you're that free with your money. A sailor come ashore after a two year's cruise is a fool to you." He paused a moment. "Dick, my lad, I've been too hard on you, in what I've said: I'm downright ashamed of myself."

"It isn't in you, and it isn't in Aunt Rob, to do anything of which you need be ashamed. I have been thoughtless and inconsiderate----"

"No, no, Dick!"

"Yes, yes, uncle. I've been too much wrapped up in myself, and given no thought to the best friends a young ne'er-do-well ever had. If I could only make it up to you!" He turned his face to the wall, so that the Inspector should not see the tears that rushed into his eyes.

"Dick, my lad," said Inspector Robson, "have you got yourself into any money difficulty? Say the word, and I'll see what we can do to get you out of it."

"What a trump you are!" exclaimed Dick. "No, uncle. I owe no one a shilling except you and Aunt Rob."

"Don't keep on harping on that string or you'll get my temper up. If it isn't money, is it a woman?"

"If you mean whether I've entangled myself with a woman, or done anything wrong that way, I can answer honestly, no."

"I knew it, my lad, I knew it," said Inspector Robson, triumphantly. "Whatever your faults may be I was sure there wasn't a bit of vice in you. And now I tell you what it is; you shall come home with me to-night, your room's ready for you, and I'll make it all right with Aunt Rob. Make it all right! It *is* all right. 'The place isn't the same, father,' she says to me, 'with Dick out of it.' If you knew how we've missed you, my lad, you'd grow an inch taller."

"Who is it that has kept my room ready for me?"

"Aunt Rob and Florence, to be sure."

"And Florence," whispered Dick to himself, a wave of exceeding tenderness flowing over him.

"Florence it was who said to Aunt Rob, 'Mother, we mustn't let Dick think when he comes back that we've been neglectful of him.' 'Of course not,' said Aunt Rob, and up they go to see that everything is sweet and clean. You know the pride that Aunt Rob takes in the house. You might eat off the floor. And there's Florence of a morning sweeping out your room, and looking in every corner for a speck of dust. There's the canary and the cage you gave her, *and* the goldfish--why, if they were her own little babies she couldn't look after them better. So home we go together, and we'll let bygones be bygones and commence afresh."

"No, uncle, I can't come home with you," said Dick, shaking his head. "I thank you from my heart, but it can't be."

"Not come home with me!" exclaimed Inspector Robson, in great astonishment. "Why, what's the matter with the lad? You don't mean it, Dick, sure*ly!*"

"I do mean it, uncle."

"Dick, Dick, Dick," said Inspector Robson, shaking a warning forefinger at the young man, "pride's a proper thing in the right place, but a deuced ugly thing when it makes us take crooked views. I say you *shall* come home with me. Do you know what kind of a night it is, lad? I wouldn't turn a dog out in such weather, unless it was a blind dog, and then it wouldn't matter much. Come, come, Dick, think better of it."

"Nothing can alter my resolution, uncle--nothing. I did not come here to-night to annoy you; I wanted a shelter, and I hoped the fog would clear; but it seems to have grown thicker. However, it can't last for ever. In three or four hours it will be morning, and then----"

"Go on. And then?"

"The night will be gone, and it will be day," said Dick, gaily.

"And to-morrow night?"

"It will be night again."

"And you'll sleep in Buckingham Palace, for it stands to reason a man must sleep somewhere, and they don't charge for beds there that I'm aware of. How's the treasury, lad?" Dick laughed. "It's no laughing matter. Here's a sovereign; it'll see through the week at all events."

"I'm not going to rob you, uncle," said Dick in a shaking voice.

Inspector Robson caught Dick's hand, forced it open, forced a sovereign into it, and closed the young man's fingers over it, holding the hand tight in his to prevent the money being returned. In the execution of a ruthless action the Inspector's muscles were of iron.

"If you drop it, or try to give it me back," he said, "I'll lock you up and charge you with loitering for an unlawful purpose. What will Florence think when she sees your name in the papers and my name charging you? Be sensible for once, Dick, if you've any feeling for her."

The blood rushed up into Dick's face, and he staggered as if he had been struck; but he recovered himself quickly, and was the same indolent, easy-mannered being as before.

"Thank you, uncle; I'll keep the sovereign. Before the week's out I daresay I shall get something to do. The mischief of it is, there's nothing stirring; stagnation's the order of the day. If I could hit upon something startling and be first in the field, I should get well paid for it. Would you object to my dashing on the colour in an article headed, 'A Night in an Inspector's Office.'? I think I could make it lurid."

Before the laughing Inspector could reply a constable entered, holding by the arm a poorly dressed woman of woebegone appearance. Her gestures, her sobs, the wild looks she cast around, were those of a woman driven to distraction. Clinging to her skirts was a little girl as woebegone and white-faced as her mother.

Inspector Robson instantly straightened himself; he was no longer a private individual, but an officer of the law prepared for duty in whatever complicated shape it presented itself.

"She's been here half-a-dozen times to-night, sir," said the constable, "and last night as well, and the night before. She's lost her husband, she says."

"My husband--my husband!" moaned the woman. "Find him for me--find him for me! He's gone, gone, gone! Merciful God! What has become of him?"

Inspector Robson saw at a glance that here before him was no woman maddened by drink, but a woman suffering from terrible distress; and by a motion of his hand he conveyed an order to the constable, who instantly took his hand from the woman's arm.

"What is your husband's name?" asked the Inspector in a gentle tone.

"Abel Death, sir. Oh, for God's sake find him for me--find him for me--find him for me!"

Tears rolled down her face and choked her voice. Every nerve in her body was quivering with anguish.

"How long has he been gone?" asked the Inspector.

"Five days, sir, five long, long days."

"Was he in employment?"

"Yes, sir, yes. Oh, what can have become of him?"

"What is the name of his employer?"

The agony the woman had endured overcame her, and she could not immediately reply.

"Mr. Samuel Boyd, sir, of Catchpole Square," said the child.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ABEL DEATH.

She spoke in a hoarse voice, and very slowly, a scraping, grating cough accompanying her words. "Mr. Samuel Boyd, sir, of Catchpole Square," might, according to her utterance, have lain in a charnel-house among the bones of the dead when she fished him up for the information of Inspector Robson. Such a rasping cough, forcing what little blood she had in her poor body up into her pallid face, where it stood out in blotches of dull, unhealthy red! Such a wearing, tearing cough, as though some savage, malignant beast, lurking in her chest, was clawing at it in sheer devilry, and scraping it clean to the bone! But she did not seem to mind it, nor, by her manner, did she invite pity for it. The cough was an old companion, "and goes on so," she said to a juvenile friend, "when it takes me unawares, that it almost twists my head off." This was not said in a tone of complaining; it was merely a plain statement of fact.

The name of Samuel Boyd had scarcely passed the girl's lips, when Inspector Robson darted forward to catch the woman, who, but for his timely help, would have fallen to the ground. Assisted by Dick he bore her to a bench, and there they succeeded in restoring her to consciousness.

The attitude of the child was remarkable for its composure, which sprang from no lack of feeling, but partly from familiarity with suffering, and partly from a pitiful strength of character which circumstances had brought too early into play. Too early, indeed, for she was but twelve years of age, and had about her few of the graces which speak of a happy child-life. How different is the springtime of such a child from that of one brought up in a home of comparative comfort, where the pinching and grinding for the barest necessaries of life are happily unfelt! What pregnant lessons are to be learned from a child so forlorn--say, for instance, the lesson of gratitude for the better fortune and the pleasant hours of which we take no account!

But Gracie Death did not murmur or repine. She simply suffered, and suffered in dull patience. It was her lot, and she bore it.

The introduction of the name of Samuel Boyd of Catchpole Square brought a startled look into Dick's eyes, and he glanced at Inspector Robson to see if it made any impression upon him. The Inspector gave no indication of this, but devoted his whole attention to the woman, who, the moment she revived, was in full possession of her senses.

"My husband!" she moaned. "My husband!"

"Has he run away from you?" asked the Inspector.

"No, sir, no," replied Mrs. Death. "He was too fond of us for that. The best husband, the best father! If you have any mercy in you, find him for me! What shall I do without him? What will the children do without him?"

"We shall starve," said Gracie, answering the question, coldly and impassively.

Inspector Robson coughed behind his hand, and his cough awoke the demon in Gracie's chest to emulation so strong that it straightway set to work, and the spectators had a practical

illustration of her statement that it was "enough to twist her head off."

"The child has a bad cough," said Inspector Robson, with a look of pity; "she oughtn't to be out on such a night."

"I *would* come with mother," said Gracie. "It ain't her fault, it's mine."

The Inspector coughed again, and Gracie's demon followed suit.

"Did your husband drink?" asked the Inspector.

"No, sir, no," said the woman, reproachfully. "How can you ask it? Gracie will tell you. Did father drink, Gracie?"

"Yes," she answered. "Tea. Very weak. I like it strong," and added, "when I can get it."

"I wish I had a cup to give you," said Inspector Robson.

"So do I," said Gracie, "and a cup for mother."

"If there's anything you wish to tell me," said the Inspector, addressing the woman, "I will see what can be done. Take your time, and don't hurry. He was employed by Mr. Samuel Boyd, you say."

"Yes, sir, of Catchpole Square. He was Mr. Boyd's clerk, and a hard time he had of it. We did the best we could upon his miserable salary, but what with one thing and another we were worried out of our lives."

"Did I worry you, mother?" asked Gracie. "I'd stop coughing if I could, but I can't. If it didn't worry mother, gentlemen, I wouldn't mind. It ketches me that tight that I can't hold it if I try ever so. I *do* try, mother!"

"You do, my dear. A little while ago"--to the Inspector again--"we borrowed three pounds of a money-lender and signed a paper, and though we've paid it twice over he makes out that we owe him more than we did at the beginning. Our bits of furniture aren't worth much, but it's all we have, and every time he comes he threatens to sell us up."

"I wish he'd sell my cough up," said Gracie, with a queer little laugh, "I'd let it go cheap. It wouldn't fetch much, I reckon, but he can have it and welcome, because it worries mother."

"That's the way she talks of it, sir. She never thinks of herself."

"Oh, don't I, though? You mustn't believe everything mother says, gentlemen."

"Let me go on, dear, and don't interrupt, or you'll make the gentlemen angry."

"I'd be sorry to do that. You *will* help mother won't you, please!"

"We'll try," replied Inspector Robson, kindly and patiently.

"Then I won't say another word till she's done," said Gracie.

"Last Friday night he came home in a terrible state," continued the woman, fondling Gracie's cheek with her trembling hand. "He hoped to get the loan of a few pounds from Mr. Boyd, so that we could pay the money-lender off, and buy a chest protector for Gracie, and a little warm clothing for the other children."

It was as much as Gracie could do to refrain from protesting that she didn't want a chest protector, or any nonsense of that sort, but when she passed her word she was not in the habit of breaking it, so she contented herself with shutting her thin white lips tight, and looking defiantly at the mist that filled the room. Which revenged itself by tickling her throat to such a degree that she almost choked.

"He went out in the morning full of hope," said Mrs. Death, when the fit of coughing was over, "and came home full of despair. Instead of getting the loan which was to set us free and give the children a chance, he had been discharged. Discharged, gentlemen, discharged, at a moment's notice! It came upon me like a thunder-clap, and when I saw my husband sitting at the table with his face hidden in his hands, I wondered what we were sent into the world for. Look at my little Gracie here, gentlemen. She doesn't weigh half her proper weight, and she hasn't an ounce of flesh on her bones. She's more like a skeleton than anything else, and so are we all. Look at her, and look at me, and think of our little children at home almost at the point of death, and you'll understand why my poor dear husband was filled with despair. Oh, it's bitter cruel, bitter, bitter cruel! One tries, and tries, and tries, and never a spark of light to comfort us. Nothing but misery, nothing but misery, nothing but misery!"

It was terrible to hear the repetition of her words, terrible to witness her agony and her just rebellion against her cruel fate. Gracie did not speak, but slid her little hand, cold as ice, into the hand of her mother, who clasped it convulsively. Quietly and impassively the child watched the

faces of the listeners to note the effect the appeal had upon them.

"Would it be a breach of duty to introduce a mug of hot tea into a police station?" asked Dick of the Inspector.

"No, it would not," said Inspector Robson. "There's a can in the cupboard there. Here's a shilling. Get it filled."

"I must stop and hear the end of this story," said Dick. "I've a reason for it. The constable can go, can't he?"

Inspector Robson nodded, and the tin can and the shilling being given to the constable, he departed on the errand.

By this time the woman had sufficiently recovered to proceed.

"There my poor husband sat, the picture of misery, and never said a word, and I hadn't a word of comfort to give him. To tell him to bear up--what would have been the use of that? I put before him what little food there was in the cupboard, but he pushed it away and wouldn't touch it. All at once he started up and said, 'I'm going out.' 'Where to?' I asked, and I put my hand on his arm to keep him at home, for his face was dreadful to see, and I was afraid of--I don't know what. He guessed what was in my mind. 'No,' he said, 'don't think that of me. You've got enough trouble to bear as it is; I won't bring more on you. I'll fight on to the bitter end.' You know what was in my mind, I dare say."

"Yes, I know."

The woman resumed. "'Where are you going?' I asked him again. 'To Catchpole Square,' he answered. 'I'll make another appeal to Mr. Boyd.' I didn't think there was any hope for us, but I knew it would dishearten him if I said as much, and I let him go. As near as I can remember it was half past nine, and I expected him back before eleven, but at eleven there was no sign of him. I did not dare to leave the house, for the children hadn't got to sleep yet, and if he returned while I was away it would put everything in confusion. I waited and waited till I could bear it no longer, and then I went out to look for him, thinking that perhaps Mr. Boyd had relented, and had given my husband work to do which kept him in the office all night. It was past two when I reached Catchpole Square, and looked up at the windows. There's never any life to be seen there, and I didn't see any then. There was a bell-pull at the door that wouldn't ring, so I knocked and knocked and kept on knocking without any one coming. I hung about the Square for an hour and more, and knocked again and again as loud as I could, and at last I came away and ran home, hoping to see my husband there. Gracie was awake, and said nobody had come while I was away. Can you understand my feelings, sir?"

"I can," replied Inspector Robson, as the constable entered the office with an empty cup and the can of hot tea. "Take a drink of this before you go on. It'll warm you up." He filled the cup with the steaming liquid and gave it to her.

Gracie's eyes glittered, but she did not move, and when her mother offered her the mug she said, "No, mother. After you's manners," in quite an elegant way, as though their mission to the police station was to take afternoon tea with the Inspector. Mrs. Death, too well acquainted with her child's character to attempt any persuasion, therefore drank first, deep sighs of satisfaction betokening her gratitude. Refilling the cup Inspector Robson handed it to Gracie, who, before she put it to her lips, said, in her best society manner,

"'To you and yours, sir, and gentlemen all, and may none of you ever feel the want of it. The Lord make us truly thankful! Hallelujah!"

A form of grace which, but for the pathetic side of the picture, might have caused some amusement to those who heard it.

Nothing of Gracie's face could be seen except her coal black eyes glittering like dusky stars above the white rim of the mug as she tilted it, and though the tea scalded her throat she made no pause till the last drop was finished. Then she sidled up to her mother and stood quietly there, her child-soul filled with thankfulness which was not expressed in her thin, sallow face.

"Saturday passed, sir," said the woman, pressing Gracie to her side and resuming her story, "and he didn't come home, and nobody could tell me anything about him. It was the same all day Sunday and all yesterday; I was never off my feet. Half-a-dozen times every day have I been to Catchpole Square, knocking at the door without being able to make anybody hear. What am I to do, what *am* I to do? If somebody don't help me, I shall go mad!"

"The only thing I can suggest just now," said Inspector Robson, "is that your husband's disappearance should be made public. Come to the magistrate's court to-morrow morning at twelve or one o'clock. I will be there, and will see that you get a hearing. Some of the reporters will take notice of it, and it will get into the papers. It's the best advice I can give you."

"I'll follow it, sir," said the woman, but it was evident that she had given up hope. "Thank you kindly for listening to me so patiently. Come, Gracie, we'll go home. Will it be sure to get into the

papers, sir, if I come to the magistrate's court?"

Inspector Robson looked at Dick, who nodded. "I think I can promise that. Now get home as quickly as possible, and put your little girl to bed. Her cough is dreadful."

In a voice as hoarse as any raven's, and quite composedly, as if the Inspector were the object of compassion, Grace said, "Don't let it worry you, please. *I* don't mind it, not a bit." She drew her breath hard as she added without any show of feeling, "You *will* find father, won't you? Mother'll never forget you for it. You've been ever so good to us. I never tasted such tea, and, oh my! wasn't it hot neither? Come along, mother.

"You had better leave your address," said Dick, who had listened to the woman's story with absorbed attention.

"We live at Draper's Mews, number 7, second floor back." While Dick was writing it down Inspector Robson slipped a sixpence into Gracie's hand. Then, patting her shoulder, he gave her an encouraging smile, which she acknowledged, as she did the sixpence, though her fingers closed quickly and tightly over the coin, with the same gravity as distinguished all her movements. Emerging into the street she began to cough with great violence, and gasped and fought with her little fists, as though the demon in her chest, now that he had got her outside, was bent upon tearing her to pieces. The men in the police station listened compassionately until the child and her cough were lost in the fog through which she and her mother were slowly creeping.

CHAPTER X.

UNCLE ROB AND DICK ARGUE IT OUT.

"Is that in your line, Dick?" said Inspector Robson. "You were wishing for something startling, and I should say you've got it."

"It is hardly startling enough yet," Dick replied, "but there's no telling what it may lead to. Have you formed an opinion?"

"I haven't heard lately of any dead bodies being found that couldn't be identified, but it looks to me as if the man has made away with himself."

"No, uncle. I'll take his own word for it that he'd do his duty and fight it out to the bitter end."

"Mightn't he have said so to his wife to quiet her? And even if it wasn't in his mind then, it might have come suddenly afterwards. When a man's in the state he was, there's no telling what he might do on the spur of the moment. I don't throw doubt on Mrs. Death's story, though I've heard some queer stories in my time and believed in them at the time they were told, only to find out a little later that there wasn't one word of truth in them. The lengths that people'll go to whose minds are unsettled is astonishing. Astonishing!" he repeated reflectively. "How often do you hear of men giving themselves up as murderers when they're as innocent as the babe unborn!"

"Suppose we try and follow Mrs. Death's story out, uncle," said Dick.

"Go ahead. Upon my word, Dick, I almost fancy I hear that poor child's cough now--the ghost of a cough travelling through the fog. It will make a ghost of her, I'm afraid, before she's many weeks older."

"Poor little mite!" said Dick, and paused a moment. "Uncle Rob, you've the kindest heart that ever beat."

"Pooh, pooh, my lad, the fog's got into your foolish noddle."

"You don't deserve," pursued Dick, very earnestly, "to have trouble come upon you unaware----
"

"Dick!" cried Inspector Robson, startled by the unusual earnestness with which the words were spoken no less than by the words themselves. "Trouble come upon me unaware! Do you know what you are saying, my lad?"

"I was thinking," said Dick, in some confusion, "of the trouble that comes unexpectedly to

many people without their being prepared for it."

"Oh, that! Well, when such trouble comes we've got to bear it and meet it like men."

It was in Dick's mind, though not upon his tongue, "But if it comes upon you through the one you hold most dear, through Florence, dear to me as to you, how will you bear it then?"

"Go on with the story of Abel Death, Dick. The last we see of him is when he sits at the table in his lodgings with his head in his hands, and starts up to make one more appeal to Samuel Boyd. The first question is, does he go straight to Catchpole Square, or does he go into a public and get drunk?"

"He goes straight to Catchpole Square, and knocks at Samuel Boyd's door."

"Admitted--for the sake of argument."

"The next question is, does he get into the house?"

"And there," said the Inspector, "we come to a full stop."

"Not at all. Let us consider the possibilities. There are a dozen doors open."

"All opening on different roads, and leading to confusion. Better to have one strong clue than a dozen to distract your mind."

"Granted," said Dick; "but in the absence of that one strong clue I shall leave all the doors open till I see what is behind them. Let us suppose that Abel Death gets into the house."

"Openly or secretly, Dick?"

"Openly. Samuel Boyd admits him. He takes delight in playing with those whom he oppresses, in worrying and torturing them, in leading them on to hope, and then plunging them into despair. Abel Death being in the house, the question arises did he ever get out of it?"

"What are you thinking of, Dick? Murder?"

"The man is gone, and left no trace behind. If he had committed suicide it is a thousand to one that his body would have been found and identified."

"True."

"How do men commit suicide?" continued Dick. "I will confine myself to four methods: by poison, by hanging, by shooting, by drowning. It would have been difficult for Abel Death to purchase poison; his nerves were unstrung, and an inquiry for poison across the counter would have caused suspicion; the state of agitation he was in would have prevented the invention of a plausible explanation. We put poison aside. A pistol he could not have possessed, because of his poverty. We put shooting aside. Hanging comes next; but if he had resorted to that means of ending his life a very few hours would have sufficed to make the matter public. There would be no mystery to clear up. This reduces us to drowning. The water-ways of London do not hide many secrets of this nature, and had he sought death in the river his body would have been washed ashore."

"Therefore, Dick," said Inspector Robson, looking at his nephew in admiration, "not suicide."

"Therefore, uncle, not suicide."

"He may have run away."

"With what object? His pockets were empty, and the idea of unfaithfulness to his wife is preposterous."

"Very well. Let us get back to the main point. What has become of Abel Death. We left him in Samuel Boyd's house, and we decide that he did not come out of it. I am going to have my say now."

"Fire away."

"The man not coming out of the house, the natural conclusion is that he is dead, and if he did not meet his death by suicide there has been murder done. To be sure," he said, reflectively, "there are other probabilities. He might have had heart disease--might have fallen down in a fit which put an end to him. Assuming this, what course would Samuel Boyd, or any sensible person, pursue? He would give information--his own safety depended upon it. A doctor's certificate as to the cause of death would clear him. He does nothing of the sort. He keeps himself locked up in the house, and refuses to answer the repeated knocks at his street door. I have heard you say he lives alone, and that no servant sleeps in the house."

"That is so."

"Catchpole Square leads to nowhere. It is, in a certain sense, out of the world. Can you tell me,

of your own knowledge, whether Samuel Boyd keeps sums of money in his house?"

"Of my own positive knowledge I cannot tell you; but I am convinced that he does."

"What we've got to look to in these cases," said Inspector Robson, sagely, "is motive--motive. The mainspring in a watch keeps it going; motive is the mainspring in a man, and it keeps *him* going. Now, what motive had Samuel Boyd for murdering Abel Death--always supposing, Dick, that there was a murder? He had nothing to gain by it, and it was not he who went to Abel Death's house, but Abel Death who went to his. And went with anger and despair in his heart. Put it the other way----yes, by the Lord!" he cried, as if a light had suddenly broken upon him. "Put it the other way. There was a motive for Abel Death murdering Samuel Boyd. He was poor, and in desperate need of money; his master was rich, and had refused to give it to him. The motive was robbery, by fair means or foul. If this is what occurred Abel Death's disappearance is explained. He's in hiding somewhere, or has managed to get on board a ship bound for foreign parts." He broke off with a laugh. "What nonsense am I talking? My wits are going wool-gathering. You've fairly muddled me, Dick, by the serious way you've spoken of this affair, in which, after all, I don't see anything mysterious. I've known scores of cases where people have disappeared, and have come back after a few days or weeks, or months even, in the most natural manner possible. Be careful of what you do, my lad, or you're likely to get yourself in a tangle."

"I'll be careful, uncle. You will see me at the magistrate's court in the morning. Good night."

"Can't I persuade you to come home with me?" said Inspector Robson, in his kindest tone.

"No; my mind's quite made up on that point."

He walked towards the door, Inspector Robson looking ruefully and affectionately after him, when he turned and said,

"By the way, uncle, have you seen Mr. Reginald lately?"

"Not since last Sunday week, when he dropped in, as usual. Him and Florence went out for a walk together."

"As usual," said Dick, lightly.

"As usual," said Inspector Robson, gravely. "He's a gentlemanly young fellow."

"Yes."

"Been to France and Germany, and to good schools for education."

"Did he tell you that himself?"

"Florence told us."

"Dear little Florence!" Such wistful tenderness and regret in his voice!

"Aunt Rob thinks all the world of him," said Inspector Robson, his voice also charged with tenderness and regret.

"I know she does."

Inspector Robson stepped to Dick's side, and laid his hand caressingly on the young man's shoulder. "Dick! Dick!"

"No nonsense of that sort, uncle," said Dick, gently shaking himself free. "I've been going to ask you once or twice whether you put any other name to Reginald."

"Now you mention it, Dick, I never have."

"Has Aunt Rob, or Florence?"

"Not that I'm aware of. We've always called him Mr. Reginald. It's not a bad name, Dick."

"Not at all a bad name, but most people have two. Good night, uncle."

"Good night, Dick, if you *must* go." Other words were struggling to his lips, but before he could utter them Dick was off.

"It never struck me before," mused Inspector Robson, sadly. "Can that be the reason----" He did not say the reason of what, and his cogitation ended with, "Poor Dick! I hope not--I hope not!"

CHAPTER XI.

DICK REMINGTON REVIEWS THE PAST.

Dick Remington also mused as he made his way through the white mist. His thoughts, put into words, ran in this wise:

"Come, old man, let us review the past, and see how we stand. If I'm not mistaken Aunt Rob has hit the nail straight on the head, and Uncle Rob made a clumsy blow at it. But my secret is mine, and I will guard it jealously.

"Dear little Florence! My chum, my comrade, almost from the day of her birth. Boys aren't generally fond of babies, but I was of her from the first; and when as a child she promised to be my wife when she grew up I did not think of it as a thistledown promise that time would lightly blow away. At that age we do not think; our hearts, our souls, are like a prism which leaps into light and colour when light and colour shine upon it. Had I been wiser I might have believed that a more enduring flower than thistledown would grow up in its place, a flower that would bloom and shed its sweetness and fragrance upon me through all the years to come. Thank God I was not wiser, for we were very happy then. It was only when graver responsibilities forced themselves upon me that I knew, as I know now, that she and she alone could bring happiness into my life. Fate willed it otherwise. It can never be.

"Would it have been otherwise had I myself been different from what I am, been firmer of purpose, had won respect and esteem for sterling qualities that are not in my nature? Who can tell? We are the sport of circumstance, and drift, and drift, and drift--as I have drifted. You are quite right, Aunt Rob. Your nephew, Dick Remington, has no stability--but he can keep his secret.

"Does Florence suspect it? Sometimes I have thought she has a fear that the love I bear for her is not the love a brother bears for his sister; sometimes I have thought there was a dumb pity in her eyes as she looked at me. And when, with this impression upon me, I have launched into light speech and manner, as though I were incapable of deeper feeling, I have noticed the relief it gave her to learn that she was mistaken. Of one thing she may be sure. That there is no sacrifice I would hesitate to make to secure her happiness--that she may rely upon me and trust me with implicit confidence--that I am her faithful watchdog, ready to die in her service without hope of reward. Yes, dear Florence--so dear that my heart aches when I think of her--be sure of that.

"She grew into beauty incomparable, and to observe this was a daily delight to me. But I love her chiefly for her gentleness, her purity, her dear womanly ways which find their best expression in her kindness and sweetness to all around her. We lived our quiet life, disturbed only by my harum-scarum habits, and then Mr. Reginald stepped into the picture--Mr. Reginald Boyd, son of Samuel Boyd of Catchpole Square. That was before I took service with the old hunks, and it was because of the son that I sought and obtained a situation in the father's office. For I said to myself, 'Here is this young gentleman introducing himself simply as Mr. Reginald, when I, from my previous knowledge of him (of which he was not aware) know him to be the son of that man. What reason has he for the suppression?' There was no acquaintance between us. Happening to be in conversation one day with a constable in the neighbourhood of Catchpole Square a young gentleman passed with a flower in his coat. There was something in him that struck me as bearing a resemblance to myself, the advantage being on his side. A free and easy manner, a certain carelessness of gesture, an apparent disregard of conventionality, a bright smile (which I have not), a grace (which I have not). He gave the constable a friendly word and walked on without looking at me. 'Who is that gentleman?' I inquired. 'Mr. Reginald,' the constable answered, 'son of Samuel Boyd, though you would hardly believe it if you knew the pair of them.' I thought no more of the matter, and saw no more of Mr. Reginald, till he made his appearance one evening in Aunt Rob's house. He did not recognise me, but I knew him immediately.

"We were introduced by Florence. 'My cousin, Dick Remington,' she said, 'Mr. Reginald.' There was a blush on her cheek, a shy look in her eyes. I waited for his other name. Why did it not come? Because the name of Samuel Boyd was held in general detestation? It was a fair inference that that was his reason for concealing it.

"He became a regular visitor to the house, and I perceived that his visits were eagerly looked forward to by Florence. Have I delayed too long? I thought. Have I been foolishly silent as to the real feelings I entertain for the dear girl, and given another man the chance of occupying the place in her heart which it was my dearest wish to fill? The thought was torture; I seemed to awake from a dream. For had I spoken in time my love for her might have awakened a responsive echo in her breast. I cannot speak with certainty as to this, but it might have been. One day I saw Florence and Mr. Reginald walking out together, he speaking with animation, she listening modestly with head cast down. I was careful that they should not see me. They passed from my sight through the garden of hope and love, I pursued my way through an arid waste."

Some spiritual resemblance between the arid waste of his hopes and the arid waste of white mist through which he was walking seemed to strike him here. It brought a sudden chill to his heart. Love that was hopeless could have found no more emphatic illustration than the silence and desolation by which he was surrounded. The light of heaven had died out of the world. No star shone, no moon shed its peaceful rays upon the earth, and for a few moments he allowed the deathlike lethargy of nature to overpower him. Through the silence stole a muffled voice:

"Lost, lost for ever is the love you hoped to gain. Not for you the tender look and word, the sweet embrace, love's kiss upon your going and returning, the prattle of children's voices, the patter of little feet, the clinging of little arms. Not for you the joys of Home!"

So powerfully was he affected by these melancholy thoughts that he involuntarily raised his hand, as if to avoid a blow.

CHAPTER XII.

DICK CONFESSES HOW HE BEHAVED HIMSELF IN THE SERVICE OF SAMUEL BOYD.

But Dick's nature was too elastic for morbid reflections such as these to hold possession of him for any length of time.

"Come, come, old man," ran again the tenor of his musings, "this sort of thing won't do, you know. What's the use of crying for the moon? Leave that to children. Now where did I leave off? Ah--where Mr. Reginald was a regular visitor at Aunt Rob's house. All that time the name of Boyd was not mentioned by Florence or her parents. Nor did it pass my lips.

"I took service with Mr. Samuel Boyd in order to obtain a clue to his son's suppression of his name. Before I had been with him a week I gauged his character. Devoid of the least sign of generous sentiment, crafty, tricky, mean, overbearing to those in his power, fawning to those above his station from whom he hoped to obtain some advantage--such is the character of this odious man, whose son was then winning, or had won, his way into Florence's heart. If there is any truth in the adage, 'Like father, like son,' what a fate is in store for her! Fervently do I trust that this is not so, though there are tricks of inheritance from which it is impossible to escape.

"Not once did I see Mr. Reginald in his father's house, nor did Mr. Boyd make the slightest reference to him. Had Mr. Boyd any other residence in which he and his son were in the habit of meeting? No--he lived in Catchpole Square, had his meals there, slept there, transacted his business there. Yet his son was in London, within easy distance of him. It was obvious that they were not on friendly terms. I set my wits to work to ascertain the cause, but cautious as I was, I found myself baffled at every turn. Convinced that Mr. Boyd would turn me out of the house the moment his suspicions were aroused, the task I had undertaken proved more difficult than I had anticipated. If I kept secret watch upon him he kept secret watch upon me. That he had no confidence in me is not strange, for he has no confidence in any man. And the cunning tricks he played! He would leave me alone and go downstairs and slam the street door, to make me believe that he had left the house. Then, though not another sound had reached my ears, he would suddenly enter the room, treading like a cat, and with a sly smile on his lips, and his cunning eyes would wander around to assure himself that not an article had been shifted or removed.

"I remained with him three months, and discovered--nothing. During the first two months I did not tell them at home where I was employed, and they teazed me about making a secret of it. A week or so before I left Mr. Boyd's service I fired a shot straight at Mr. Reginald. It was on a Sunday, and we were sitting together, chatting as usual, when I said suddenly, 'I don't see, Aunt Rob, why I should continue to make a mystery of the work I am doing. I am clerk to Mr. Samuel Boyd, of Catchpole Square.' Mr. Reginald flushed up, but I took no notice, and went on to say that I had resolved not to stay much longer in the place--that the pay was miserable, that the kind of business done there was disreputable and execrable, and that Samuel Boyd was one of the trickiest and cunningest fellows in all London; in fact, I gave him the worst of characters, and my only excuse is that he thoroughly deserved it. 'That's another situation thrown up,' said Aunt Rob. 'Oh, Dick, Dick, a rolling stone gathers no moss.' 'Would you advise me to stop with such a man, and gather dirt?' I asked. 'No, I would not,' she answered emphatically. 'That Samuel Boyd must be an out-and-out rascal.' 'He is,' I said. 'You would hardly believe the things I've seen in his office, the pitiless ruin he brings upon people.' Mr. Reginald said never a word; the flush died out of his face, and it turned white. I looked at Florence--no sign upon *her* face that she knew anything of the man we were speaking of. Here was proof positive that Mr. Reginald had introduced himself under false colours.

"As all Mr. Boyd's other clerks had done, *I* left at a moment's notice, but I did not give him the opportunity of discharging me. I discharged him. He had played me one of his usual tricks, pretending to leave the house and sneaking in noiselessly behind my back and looking over my shoulder. It happened that, with my thoughts on Florence and Mr. Reginald, I had idly scribbled his name on a piece of paper, Mr. Reginald Boyd. Before I could put the paper away he had seen it. 'Ah,' he said, without any show of passion, 'I have found you out at last, you scoundrel!' 'Scoundrel yourself,' I cried. 'Mr. Samuel Boyd, I discharge you. I've had about enough of you.' 'I've had more than enough of you,' he snarled. 'You came here to spy upon me, did you? You and your Mr. Reginald are confederates, are you, and you wormed yourself into my service in pursuance of some plot against me. I'll prosecute the pair of you for conspiracy.' 'You are a fool as well as a knave, Mr. Samuel Boyd,' I said, laughing in his face. 'As for prosecuting me, shall I fetch a policeman, or will you go for one? I shall have something to tell him that will get into the papers. It will make fine reading.' He turned white at this. 'Go,' he said, throwing open the door. And I went, without asking for the five days' pay due to me, to which, perhaps, I was not entitled as I left him without giving him notice.

"Now, Dick, old man, what is to be done? The straight thing is to speak first to Mr. Reginald himself, and that I'll do before I'm many days older."

Here Dick's meditations came to an end. There were no indications that the fog was clearing, but his service with Samuel Boyd had made him familiar with the neighbourhood, and he threaded his way towards Catchpole Square without much difficulty. He had not met a soul on the road; the streets were quite deserted. "A man could almost fancy," he thought, "that he was walking through the vaults of death." In Shore Street--the backs of the houses in which faced the fronts of the houses in Catchpole Square--he stumbled against a human being who caught him by the arm.

"Who are you when you're at home?" demanded the man. "Here--let's have a look at you. I've had a large dose of shadders to-night; it's a relief to get hold of bone and muscle."

He pulled out his bull's-eye lamp and held it up to Dick's face, who laughingly said, "Well, what do you make of my face? You're cleverer than I am, Applebee, if you can distinguish features on such a night as this."

"Why, if it ain't Mr. Dick Remington!" cried Constable Applebee. "Beg your pardon, sir, but I've been that put out to-night that I can't be sure of anything. If anybody was to say to me, 'Applebee, that head on your shoulders don't belong to you,' I'd half believe him, I would indeed, sir. What with shadders that wouldn't give you a civil answer when you spoke to 'em, and that you could walk right through, and taking hold of flesh and blood that slipped through your fingers like a ghost, to say nothing of the fog, which is a pretty large order--well, if all that ain't enough to worry a night policeman, I'd like to know what is."

CHAPTER XIII.

A LIGHT IN THE HOUSE OF DR. PYE.

"Worry enough, in all conscience," said Dick, "and you've got a level head, too, if any member of the force has. You're the last man I should have expected to be scared by shadows."

"Not what you might call scared," replied Constable Applebee, unwilling to admit as much to a layman; "put out, sir, put out--that's the right word. A man may be put out in so many ways. His wife may put him out--and she often does--an underdone chop may put him out--a fractious child may put him out--likewise buttons. It's what we're born to."

"Well, say put out," said Dick with a hearty laugh. "And by shadows, too, of all things in the world! Still, one might be excused on such a night as this. The mist floats, shadows rise, and there you are. All sorts of fancies crept into my head as I walked along, and if I'd been employed on duty as monotonous as yours I have no doubt I should have heard sounds and seen shapes that have no existence."

"You talk like a book, sir."

"What was the nature of the flesh and blood that slipped through your fingers like a ghost, Applebee?"

"Human nature, sir. I'll take my oath it was a woman. I had her by the arm, and presto! she

was gone!"

"A woman," said Dick, thinking of Mrs. Death. "Did she have a child with her, a poor little mite with a churchyard cough?"

"I don't call to mind a child. It was in Catchpole Square it happened. I shall report it."

"Of course you will," said Dick, convinced that it was Mrs. Death, but wondering why she should have been so anxious to escape. "Talking of Catchpole Square, have you seen anything this last day or two of Mr. Samuel Boyd?"

"Haven't set eyes on him for a week past. To make sure, now--is it a week? No, it was Friday night that I saw him last. I can fix the time because a carriage pulled up at Deadman's Court, and a lady got out. She went through the court, followed by the footman."

"Did she stop long, do you know?"

"Couldn't have stopped very long. I hung about a bit, and when I come round again the carriage was driving away. All sorts of people deal with Samuel Boyd, poor and rich, high and low. That house of his could tell tales."

"So could most houses, Applebee."

"True enough, sir. There's no city in the world so full of mystery as London. We're a strange lot, sir. I read in a book once that every house contains a skeleton. The human mind, sir," said Constable Applebee, philosophically, "the human mind is a box, and no one but the man who owns that mind knows what is shut up in it."

It was a pregnant opening for discussion, but Dick did not pursue it. He returned to the subject that was engrossing his thoughts.

"Samuel Boyd kept a clerk,----"

"And I pity the poor devil," interjected the constable.

"So do I. The name of his last clerk is Abel Death. You've noticed him, I dare say."

"Oh, yes, I've noticed him. A weedy sort of chap--looks as it he had all the cares of the world on his shoulders. I didn't know his name, though. Abel Death! If it was mine, I'd change it."

"Have you seen him lately?"

"Let me think, now. It was Friday night when I saw him last. I noticed him particularly, because he staggered a bit, walked zig-zag like, as if he'd had a glass too much. That was what I thought at first, but I altered my opinion when I caught sight of his face. It wasn't so much like a man who'd been drinking, but like one who was fairly demented. Any special reason for asking about him, sir?"

"No special reason," replied Dick, not feeling himself justified in revealing what had passed in the police station, "You would call Mr. Death a respectable person, I suppose?"

"When there's nothing against a man," said Constable Applebee, "you're bound in common fairness to call him respectable. From the little I know of him I should say, poor, *but* respectable. If we come to that, there's plenty of poor devils in the same boat."

"Too many, Applebee. I can't help thinking of that woman you caught by the arm. It was a curious little adventure."

"It was, sir, and I don't know that I was ever more nonplussed. There's nothing curious in her being in Catchpole Square. She might have slipped in there to sleep the night out, not having money enough to pay for a bed. Pond and me happened to meet on the boundary of our beats, and we strolled into the Square. I could have swore that she was creeping along the wall; perhaps she was scared at the sight of us, and had a reason for not wanting to fall in the hands of the law."

"That will hardly hold water," said Dick. "She could have had no clearer a sight of you than you had of her. There have been too many bad deeds committed in dark places in the dead of the night, and seeing something moving that she couldn't account for, she was frightened and ran away. Did you call out to her?"

"I did. 'Now, then,' I cried, 'what are you up to?' Not a word did she answer. Then I caught hold of her; then she vanished. Which goes to prove," said Constable Applebee, contemplatively, "that she wasn't one of the regular ones. If she'd been a regular one she'd have cheeked us. Not being a regular one, what business did she have there? Anyway Catchpole Square ain't exactly the place *I* would choose for a night's lodging."

"Beggars can't be choosers," remarked Dick.

"Right you are, sir. They can't."

The conversation slackened, and the men walked slowly along Shore Street, the constable, like a zealous officer, trying the doors and looking up at the windows.

"The people inside," he said, "are better off than we are. They're snugly tucked up between the sheets, dreaming of pleasanter things than tramping a thick fog."

"There's somebody there," said Dick, pointing to a first floor window, where, through the mist, a light could be dimly seen, "who isn't between the sheets. See how the light shifts, like a will-o'-the-wisp."

"That's Dr. Pye's house, where the midnight oil is always burning. Yes, he's awake, the doctor; it's my belief he never sleeps. A clever gentleman, Dr. Pye, as chockful of science as an egg is of meat. Do you happen to be acquainted with him, sir?"

"No."

"A strange character, sir. The things they tell of him is beyond belief. I've heard say that he's discovered the secret of prolonging life, and of making an old man young."

"But you haven't heard that he has ever done it."

"No, or I might have asked him what his charge was for taking ten or twenty years off. Perhaps it's as well, though, to fight shy of that sort of thing. What they say of Dr. Pye may be true, or it mayn't, but you may make sure that he's always at his experiments. Pass his house at any hour of the night you like, and you may depend upon seeing that light burning in his window."

"Those are the men who make the wonderful discoveries we hear of from time to time. Think of what the world was and what it is. How did people do without reading? How did people do without gas? How did they do without steam? How did they do without electricity? That little light burning in Dr. Pye's window may mean greater wonders than ever was found in Aladdin's cave. As Shakespeare says, Applebee, 'What a piece of work is man!'"

"Ah," observed Constable Applebee, with a profound shake of his head, "he might well say that, sir."

"Putting a supposititious case," said Dick, and as Constable Applebee remarked to his wife next day when he gave her an account of this conversation, "the way he went on and the words he used fairly flabbergasted me"--"Putting a supposititious case, let us suppose that you and I fell asleep as we are standing here, and woke up in fifty years, what astounding things we should see!"

"It won't bear thinking of, sir."

"Then we won't think of it. Applebee, I am surprised that you have not asked me why I am wandering through the streets on such a night and at such an hour, when *I* ought to be snug in bed, dreaming of--angels."

"Who am I, sir, that I should be putting a parcel of questions to you?"

"You exhibit a delicacy for which you deserve great credit. I will make a clean breast of it, Applebee. The fact is, I am looking for a lodging."

"You always *was* a bit of a wag, sir," said Constable Applebee, with twinkling eyes.

"Was I? But I assure you I am not wagging now. Do you know of a room to let in a decent house in the neighbourhood, where they would give their young man lodger a latchkey?"

"Now, *are* you serious, sir?"

"As a judge."

"Well, then, there's Constable Pond, sir. He's taken a house in Paradise Row, and there's a room to let in it; he mentioned it to me only to-night. If you're really in earnest he'd jump at you."

"From which metaphor," said Dick, with mock seriousness, "I judge that he would consider me an eminently fit person to be entrusted with a latchkey."

"That's the ticket, sir," said Constable Applebee, bursting with laughter. "Upon *my* word, you're the merriest gentleman I've ever known. It's as good as a play, it is."

"Better than many I've seen, I hope," said Dick, still with his mock serious air, which confirmed Constable Applebee in his belief that the young fellow was having a joke with him. "Am I mistaken in supposing that there is a Mrs. Pond?"

"To be sure there is, and as nice a woman as ever breathed. No family at present, but my

missis tells me"--here he dropped his voice, as though he were communicating a secret of a sacred nature--"that Mrs. Pond has expectations."

"May they be realised in a happy hour! I'll pay a visit to the Ponds to-morrow, and if the room is not snapped up in the meantime by another person you will hear of me as their young man lodger. Good night, Applebee."

"Good night, sir."

Constable Applebee looked after him till he was swallowed up in the prevailing gloom, and then resumed his duties.

"What a chap that is!" he ruminated. "You can't mention a subject he ain't up in. That notion of his of falling asleep and waking up in fifty years ain't half a bad one. He does put ideas into a man's head. It's an education to talk to him."

Dick did not hesitate as to his route. Turning the corner of Shore Street he walked to Deadman's Court, and through it into Catchpole Square, where he paused before the house of Samuel Boyd.

"No midnight oil burning there," he mused, his eyes searching the windows for some sign of life. "The place is as still as death itself. I'll try Mrs. Death's dodge. If Mr. Boyd comes down I'll ask him if he has a room to let."

He smiled at the notion, and applied himself to the knocker. But though he knocked, and knocked vigorously again and again, and threw stones at the upper panes of glass, and listened at the door, he heard no movement within the house.

"There's a mystery inside these walls," said Dick, "and I'll pluck out its heart, or know the reason why. But how to obtain an entrance? The adjoining houses are empty. Is there a door loose in one of them?"

There was no door loose; even if there had been, Dick, upon reflection, did not see how it would have been of assistance to him. There was a dead wall at the back of the house.

"That way, perhaps," said Dick.

He left the Square, and groped in the direction of the dead wall. It was about ten feet in height--a smooth expanse of cement, with not a foothold in it by which he could mount to the top. A rope with a grapnel at the end would meet the case, and Dick determined to procure one, and pay another visit to the place the following night.

He lingered in the neighbourhood, sitting down on a doorstep now and again, and closing his eyes for a few minutes' doze. During these intervals of insensibility the strangest fancies presented themselves. He was with Mrs. Death and Gracie in the police station, listening to the story she had told, which now was exaggerated and distorted in a thousand different ways. "My husband, my husband!" she moaned "What shall I do without him? What will the children do without him?" The police station was instantly crowded with a great number of ragged little elfs, who, with misery in their faces, wailed, "What shall we do without him? What shall we do without him?" And then, in the midst of a sudden silence, Gracie's hoarse voice, saying, "You *will* find father, won't you?" An appeal immediately taken up by the horde of children, "You *will* find father, won't you? You *will* find father! You *will* find father!" The vision faded, and he saw Abel Death staggering through a deserted street in which only one sickly yellow light was burning. He was talking to himself, and his face was convulsed with passion. Behind him slunk the figure of Samuel Boyd--and behind him, Mr. Reginald and Florence. Good God! What brought *them* into the tragic mystery? What possible or impossible part had *they* played in it? The torture of the dreamer's mind was momentarily arrested by the ringing out of one dread word, clear and shrill as from the mouth of a clarion!

"MURDER!"

Dick started to his feet, his forehead bathed in perspiration. Had the word really been uttered, and by whom? He stood in the midst of silence and darkness.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LADY'S HANDKERCHIEF WHICH CONSTABLE POND PICKED UP IN CATCHPOLE SQUARE.

"The Little Busy Bee" was an afternoon newspaper with a great circulation, which took for its motto the familiar lines:--

"How doth the Little Busy Bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From ev'ry opening flow'r."

To this journal Dick had been an occasional contributor, and he was responsible for a paragraph which appeared in its columns on the day following Mrs. Death's visit to the police station:

"BISHOP STREET POLICE COURT.--A respectable woman, in great distress of mind, accompanied by her little daughter, begged permission to make a statement to the magistrate. It appears that her husband, Mr. Abel Death, residing at 7, Draper's Mews, and employed as a clerk in the office of Mr. Samuel Boyd of Catchpole Square, quite suddenly received his discharge last Friday night, and came home greatly distressed by the dismissal, as well as by pecuniary difficulties and by sickness in his family. Later in the night, at about ten o'clock, he went out, with the intention, as he stated, of making an appeal to his employer to reinstate him. He did not return home, and from that night his wife has heard nothing of him. Mrs. Death has been several times to Catchpole Square, in the hope of obtaining some information from Mr. Boyd, but as her knocking at the door has met with no response the presumption is that that gentleman is out of town. The magistrate said he was sure the press would give publicity to her husband's disappearance, and there was no doubt, if the paragraphs in the papers came to Mr. Boyd's notice, that he would write and tell her what he knows of the movements of his late clerk. Compassion was aroused by the evident ill health of the child, who appears to be suffering from bronchial trouble, and whose efforts to restrain herself from coughing, in order that the court should not be disturbed, were very pitiable. The magistrate awarded the poor woman ten shillings from the poor box, and she left the court in the deepest distress, her little girl clinging to her gown."

Dick was surprised not to see his uncle in court. Inspector Robson had promised to be present, and it was seldom that he broke a promise. Ascribing his absence to official duties elsewhere, Dick parted with Mrs. Death at the police court door, and promising to call and see her next day, he wrote his paragraph for "The Little Busy Bee," and leaving it at the office, went to Paradise Row to secure the room which Mrs. Pond had to let.

It was that little woman's washing day, and, like the maid in the nursery rhyme, she was hanging up clothes in her back yard. Hearing the knock she hurried to the door, with her sleeves tucked up to her shoulder, and wiping her hands on a towel. She wore an apron with a bib, and tucked in the bib was the lady's handkerchief which Constable Pond had picked up the previous night. She had been about to plunge it into the washtub when she heard the knock, and she had hastily slipped it in there as she hurried to the door.

"Constable Applebee tells me you have a room to let," said Dick.

"Yes, we have, sir," replied Mrs. Pond, her rosy face, which was of the apple-dumpling order, glowing with delight, "and very good it is of him to recommend us. I hope you won't mind the state I'm in. I'm doing the washing." She said this very simply; there was no false pride about Mrs. Pond.

"I shall ask you to do mine," said Dick, "if the room suits me."

"I shouldn't mind, sir. I'll show you the room if you'll be good enough to follow me."

She preceded him up the narrow flight of stairs, and opened the door. It was a small room, but it was clean and tidy, and sufficiently furnished for Dick's requirements.

"The rent?" asked Dick.

"Would three-and-six a week be too much, sir?" she asked anxiously.

"Not a bit," replied Dick, "if you'll give me a latchkey."

"We can do that, sir. Pond had an extra one made on purpose. 'If it's a gentleman,' he said, 'let him have it. If it's a lady she can't have a latchkey, no, not if she begged for it on her bended knees."

"I'll take the room, Mrs. Pond," said Dick, with a genial smile, "and I'll give you a week's rent in advance, if it's only for the confidence you place in me."

Nervously plucking at her bib as she received the money, she displaced the handkerchief, which fluttered to the ground. Dick stooped to pick it up, and his face grew white as he saw, written in marking ink in a corner, the name of "Florence." He recognised Florence's writing; at that moment he had one at his breast, bearing the same inscription.

CHAPTER XV.

DICK COMES TO AN ARRANGEMENT WITH CONSTABLE POND.

"DEAR me, sir!" said Mrs. Pond, who had noticed that he had turned pale. "Are you taken ill?"

"It is nothing, nothing," replied Dick, hurriedly, and contradicted himself by adding, "It must be the perfume on this handkerchief. There are perfumes that make me feel faint."

"I don't think there's any scent on it, sir," said Mrs. Pond, "leastways, I didn't notice any. Some scents do have that effect upon people. There's a cousin of mine who faints dead away at the smell of a hot boiled egg. There's no accounting for things, is there, sir?"

"No, there's not. May I ask if you got this handkerchief from the lady whose name is marked on it?"

"Oh, no, sir. Pond gave it me."

"Did *he* obtain it from the lady?"

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Pond. "That's just what I said to him. We had a regular scene. 'You're jealous, Polly,' he said, laughing, and he worked me up so that I as good as threw it in the fire. Then he told me that he knew no more about the lady than I did, and that he picked it up in the street."

"Whereabouts, Mrs. Pond?"

"He didn't say, sir. It's pretty, ain't it? Quite a lady's. I shouldn't have minded if he'd picked up a dozen of 'em. I've got an aunt who is always picking up things. It commenced when she was a little girl. She found a farthing that had been sanded over, and thinking it was a golden sovereign she went into a milk-shop and asked for change. She cried her eyes out when they told her what it was, There's hardly a week she don't find something. Some people are made that way, sir."

"Yes, yes," said Dick, rather impatiently, "is your husband in the house? I should like to see him."

"I expect him home every minute, sir. Why, there he is, opening the street door just as we're talking of him. If you'll excuse me, sir, I'll run down to him."

"Do. And ask him to be kind enough to come up and speak to me."

She nodded, and ran from the room with a light step, leaving the handkerchief behind her in her haste to tell her husband that she had got a lodger; and presently Constable Pond's heavier step was heard on the stairs. His face beamed with satisfaction when Dick, stepping into the passage, invited him into the room.

"Can I believe my eyes, sir!" he exclaimed. "This is what I call a downright piece of good luck. Well, I *am* glad to see you here, sir!" His eyes fell upon the handkerchief in Dick's hand. "If I don't mistake, that's the handkerchief my missis left behind her. She asked me to fetch it down to her."

"It is about this handkerchief I wish to speak to you," said Dick; "and for the sake of all parties, Constable Pond, it is as well that our conversation should be private and confidential."

"Certainly, sir," said Constable Pond, his countenance falling at the unusual gravity of Dick's voice and manner.

"She told me you picked it up in the street."

"She told you true, sir."

Now did Constable Pond feel the sting of conscience; now did it whisper that he had been guilty of a breach of duty in not depositing the handkerchief at the police station, with an account of how he came by it; now did the thought of certain penalties afflict him. Here was Dick Remington, Inspector Robson's own nephew, opening up a case with the unuttered words, "From information received."

"I have a particular reason for wishing to know where, and when, and under what circumstances, you found it," said Dick.

"It won't go beyond this room, I hope, sir. You won't use the information against me?"

"I give you my word I will not."

"I ought to have handed it in and made my report," said Constable Pond, with a rueful air, "but I didn't think there was any harm in my giving it to the missis. Applebee and me were in Catchpole Square last night, and he was talking of shadders when he thought he saw one. He run across and caught hold of it, but it slipped from him and was gone like a flash. He called to me and we ran after it through Deadman's Court; we couldn't see which way we were going, so we knocked our heads together, and my helmet fell off. I stooped to pick it up, and there was the handkerchief underneath it. If I had considered a moment I shouldn't have put it in my pocket, but we don't always do the thing we ought."

"You did not tell Applebee that you had found anything?"

"No, sir, I did not, and sorry enough I am for it now. It sha'n't occur again, I promise you."

"As the matter has gone so far without anybody knowing anything about it but ourselves, I don't see the necessity of mentioning it to anyone."

"If such is your wish, sir," said Constable Pond, gaining confidence, "it sha'n't be."

"And tell your wife not to speak about it."

"I'll tell her, sir."

"Because you see, Mr. Pond, as it is too late to undo what's done, it might get you into trouble."

"I see that, sir," said Constable Pond, ruefully.

"So there's an end of the matter. As for the handkerchief I'll take possession of it, and if it should happen that any question is raised concerning it--of which there is not the least probability--I will say that *I* found it. That will clear you entirely."

"I'm ever so much obliged to you for getting me out of the mess," said Constable Pond.

Shaking hands with him, Dick accompanied him downstairs, and after receiving the latchkey and exchanging a few pleasant words with Mrs. Pond, he left the house greatly troubled in his mind.

"There's more in this than meets the eye, Polly," said Constable Pond, when he had explained to her what had passed between him and Dick. "That young fellow spoke fair and square, but he's got something up his sleeve, for all that."

"Oh, you silly!" answered Mrs. Pond. "*I* know what he's got up his sleeve."

"Do you, now?" said Constable Pond, refreshing himself with a kiss. "Well, if that don't beat everything! Give it a name, old girl."

"Why, a sweetheart, you goose, and her name's Florence. He's going straight to her this minute."

"Is he? Then I hope she'll be able to satisfy him why she was in Catchpole Square last night--always supposing that it was her as dropped the handkerchief there."

Mrs. Pond was not far wrong, for Dick was now on his way to Aunt Rob's house, in the hope of seeing Florence, over whom some trouble seemed to be hanging. He tried in vain to rid himself of the belief that it was Florence whom Constable Applebee had surprised in Catchpole Square; all the probabilities pointed that way. In heaven's name what took her there at that hour of the night? Search his mind as he might, he could find no answer to the question. The handkerchief was hers, but there were a hundred ways of accounting for its being in the possession of another woman. Still, the longer he thought the heavier seemed to grow the weight of circumstantial evidence. Fearing he knew not what he accelerated his steps, as if swiftness of motion would ward off the mysterious danger which threatened the woman he adored, the woman who could never be his, but for whose dear sake he would have shed his heart's blood.

CHAPTER XVI.

LETTERS FROM FLORENCE.

Aunt Rob, a healthy, homely woman of forty-five, was standing at the door of her house, looking up and down the street for the form of one she loved, looking up to heaven for a message to ease her bruised heart. A terrible blow had fallen upon her home, and the grief, the fear, the tortured love in her eyes, were pitiable to see. Before Dick was near enough to observe these signs of distress she had caught sight of him and was running towards him, the tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Oh, Dick, Dick!" she cried. "You have come to tell us about Florence! Where is she? What message has she sent? Is she safe, is she well? Why don't you speak? Can't you see that I'm heartbroken, heartbroken? For God's sake, speak!"

In truth he could not. The overwhelming terror and surprise that fell upon him deprived him for a time of the power of speech; he could do nothing but stare at her in dismay and alarm. When speech was restored to him he said, in a voice as agitated as her own.

"I don't know what you mean, Aunt Rob. I have brought no message from Florence. I came to see her." Involuntarily his hand wandered to his breast, where Florence's handkerchief lay.

"You are deceiving me," she said, her limbs trembling, her face convulsed; "you are punishing me because I said it was time you looked after yourself! Perhaps I was as unhappy as you were when you left the house. If you had been a little more patient with me you would never have gone away." She turned from him, her body shaking with grief.

"Dear Aunt Rob," he said, passing his arm around her, "indeed, indeed there is no thought in my mind that is not charged with love for you and Uncle Rob and Florence. I would lay down my life for you. I see that something terrible has occurred. What is it--where is Florence? But, no, don't answer me in the street. Come inside--come, come!"

His heart beat fast and loud as he led the sobbing woman into the house.

"Don't shut the door, Dick," she sobbed. "It shall never be said that I shut my door against my child. Day and night it shall be open to her if she comes back as she went away, a good and innocent girl. But if she comes back with the loss of her good name---- Oh, my God! What am I saying--what am I saying?"

"Ah," said Dick, in a tone of stern reproof, "what are you saying, indeed, Aunt Rob, when you couple Florence's name with thoughts like those? You, her mother, who have had daily proofs of her purity and goodness! My life upon her innocence--my life, my life! Though all the world were against her I would stand by her side, and strike down those who dared defame her. For shame, Aunt Rob, for shame!"

"Oh, Dick, you comfort me--you comfort me!" She took his hand, and kissed it, and he bent forward and kissed her lips. "I would not have said it, but I am torn this way and that with doubt and despair. It's the suspense, Dick, the suspense! Oh, Florence, Florence, the best, the sweetest, the dearest! Where are you, my dear, where are you?"

"Attend to me, Aunt Rob," said Dick, holding himself in control in order that he might the better control her. "You must not go on like this--you must calm yourself--for Florence's sake, for your own and Uncle Rob's. If I am to be of any assistance--and I am here for that purpose, heart and hand--I must know what has happened. Try and be calm and strong, as you have always been, and we shall be able to work our way through this trouble--yes, we shall. That's right--dry your eyes"----

"I have been unkind to you, Dick," she said, with an imploring look at him.

"You have never been unkind--to me or to anyone. It isn't in your nature. Whatever happens to me I've brought upon myself and I'm going to reform and become a pattern to all young fellows who want to be Good (with a capital G, please, Aunt Rob) and don't exactly know how to set about it."

"You'd put heart in a stone, Dick," said Aunt Rob, checking her sobs. "Let me be a minute, and I shall be all right."

The room in which they were conversing looked out upon the street, and turning his back upon his aunt while she was battling with her grief, he peered this way and that, as she had done, and listened for the sound of a familiar footstep in the passage. He raised up a picture of Florence running suddenly in, laughing, with her hair tumbling over her shoulders, as he had often seen it, and throwing her arms round her mother's neck, crying, "Why, what is all this fuss about? Can't a girl go out for a walk without turning the house upside down? Oh, you foolish people!" And then throwing her arms round *his* neck in her sisterly way, and asking, in pretended anger, what he meant by looking as serious as if the world was coming to an end? He could almost hear her voice. The room was filled with little mementoes of her, dumb memorials with a living spirit in them. There was a framed picture of her on the wall, a lovely face, bright and open, brown eyes in which dwelt the spirit of truth, dark brown hair with a wilful tendency to tumble down and kiss the fair neck--(the most distracting, teasing, bewitching hair; in short,

Florence's hair)--smiling mouth in which there was innocent gaiety, but no sign of weakness; the typical face of a young girl of an ingenuous, trustful nature. A close observer would have detected in it an underlying earnestness, indicating tenacity and firmness of purpose where those qualities were required, and would have judged her one who would go straight to her duty and brave the consequences, whatever they might be. Gazing at that embodiment of happy, healthy springtime Dick said inly, "Florence do anything that is not sweet, and pure, and womanly! I would not believe it if an angel from heaven came down and told me!"

Aunt Rob turned to him, calmer and more composed. "Tears have done me good, Dick," she said. "It would ease a man's heart if he could cry as we can."

"We feel as much, Aunt Rob," he replied.

"I don't doubt it, Dick. Uncle Rob went away with dry eyes in a state of distraction; he is flying everywhere in search of Florence."

"She has gone?" His voice was strange in his ears. Prepared as he was for the news it came as a shock upon him.

"She has gone," said Aunt Rob, covering her face with her hands.

"Don't give way again, aunt. Pull yourself together, and tell me all."

"I will, Dick, as much as I know. You haven't been in the house for a fortnight, or you would have noticed that Florence was changed. She seldom smiled, she neither played nor sang, her step had lost its lightness. She wouldn't let me do anything for her, and I settled it in my mind that it was a lover's quarrel. I *must* speak about Mr. Reginald, Dick."

"Yes, aunt, go on."

"We had seen for some time that they were fond of each other. There was no regular engagement; it hadn't come to that, but we were young ourselves once, and we knew the ways of young people. So we made Mr. Reginald welcome, and we saw how happy Florence was to have him with us. It was on the tip of my tongue more than once to ask him to tell us more about himself than we knew, but Uncle Rob stopped me. 'All in good time,' he said, 'a few months, or even a year or two, won't make much difference. I'm not in a hurry to get rid of Florence.' More was I, but I was beginning to wish that things were settled, whether it was to be a long engagement or a short one. There was a change in Mr. Reginald, too, I couldn't tell in what way, but there it was in his face. He came and dined with us Sunday week, and since then I haven't set eyes on him. You know what last night was--the most dreadful fog we have had for years. It was at about five o'clock that I saw Florence with her hat and mantle on. 'Why, child,' I said to her, 'you are never going out in this thick fog!' 'Yes, I am, mother,' she answered. 'Don't fear that I shall be lost; I'll soon be back.' She was as good as her word, for she was home again before Uncle Rob went to the Station, and the three of us had tea together. She helped him on with his coat, and I recollected afterwards how she kissed and clung to him when he wished her good night. It was in her mind then to run away. At eight o'clock there was a knock at the street door, and Florence ran out to answer it. She often did so when she expected a letter from Mr. Reginald. She kept in the passage a little while and I heard the rustling of paper, but she had nothing in her hand when she returned to the room. Her face was very white, and she said she had a headache, and would go to bed early. I asked her if she had received a letter, and she answered, yes, she had, and said, 'Don't ask me any questions about it, please, mother.' 'Do answer me only one,' I begged. 'Have you and Mr. Reginald quarrelled?' 'Oh, no,' she answered, and I knew she was speaking the truth, or she wouldn't have answered at all. She was very gentle and quiet, and I thought to myself, 'Oh, my dear, my dear, why don't you confide in your mother who loves the ground you tread on?' But *you* know what Florence is, Dick. She takes after me in a good many ways. Nothing will make me speak if I make up my mind not to, and it's the same with her. See, now, how we put our own faults into our children. So we sat at the fireside, and I felt as if there was a wall between us. She had some sewing in her lap, but not a stitch did she do. There she sat, staring into the fire. Ah, I thought, if I could see what you see I should know! Suddenly she knelt down and laid her head in my lap, and it was as much as I could do to keep back my tears. I could have cried easily, but I knew that my dear was in trouble, and that my crying would make it worse. Presently she raised her head and said, 'Mother, you love father very much.' 'With all my heart, darling,' I answered. 'And you have always loved him,' she said again, 'and would have endured anything for him?' My heart fell as I said that I had always loved him, and would do anything in the world for him. She was quiet a few minutes, and then she said, 'You mustn't think I have done anything wrong, mother.' 'I don't, my dear child, I don't,' I said. 'It is only,' she said, 'that sometimes we are pulling two ways at once.' Then she rose, and sitting by my side, laid her head upon my breast. I was nursing my baby again, and would you believe it? I sang an old nursery song and kissed and kissed her, and smoothed her beautiful hair, and we sat so for quite half an hour almost in silence. It was striking nine when she said she would go to bed, and as I didn't feel inclined to sit up alone I went to bed, too. We have been to bed much earlier, Dick, since you went away. Soon after nine all the lights were out and the house was quiet. In the middle of the night I woke and went to her room, and called softly, 'Florence! Florence!' She didn't answer me, and I was glad to think she was asleep. She always keeps her bedroom door locked, or I would have gone in. I get up earlier than she does, and I was down before eight; and there on the mantelshelf was an envelope addressed, 'For Mother,' in Florence's handwriting.

There was a key inside, and my heart beat so that I thought it would jump out of my body as I flew upstairs and opened the door with it. Florence was not in the room, and her bed had not been slept in. But on the dressing table, was another envelope addressed to me. I tore it open, and this is what I found inside."

She handed a sheet of notepaper to Dick, and he read:

"DARLING MOTHER AND FATHER,--I have gone away for a little while because it is my duty to go. Do not be uneasy or unhappy about me. I am quite safe, and very soon--as soon as ever I can--I will let you know where I am, and what it is that took me away. It grieves me sorely to give you a moment's pain, but I am doing what I believe is right. With a heart full of love for you both, my dear, dear Mother and Father,

"Your Ever Loving and Devoted Daughter,

"FLORENCE."

"What do you make of it, Dick?" asked Aunt Rob, her fingers twining convulsively.

"I make so much good out of it," he replied, handing the letter back to her, "that I wonder at your going on in the way you've done. She says she is quite safe, and will let you know soon what took her away. What more do you want to convince you that before long the mystery will be cleared up? Upon my word, I've a good mind to be downright angry with you."

He spoke with so much confidence that she brightened up, but this cheerful view of Florence's flight from home was not the genuine outcome of his thoughts. Had he not disguised his feelings in his desire to comfort Aunt Rob, he would have struck terror to her heart. Every incident that presented itself deepened the shadows which threatened Florence's safety and the peace and happiness of the home of which she was the pride and joy. The latest discovery, that of her flight, pointed almost to the certainty of her having been in Catchpole Square last night, and to her having dropped the handkerchief which Constable Pond had given to his wife. Thankful indeed, was Dick that the man had been guilty of a breach of duty. Had he delivered up the handkerchief at the Bishop Street Police Station, with an account of how he came by it, Florence's father would have recognised it as belonging to his daughter, and he would have had an agonising duty before him. Perplexed and bewildered as Dick was by these developments he succeeded in concealing his anxiety from Aunt Rob's observation.

"Have you any idea, Dick, what she means when she speaks of her duty?" she asked.

"None whatever," he replied. "Can you give me Mr. Reginald's address?"

"No. I never heard where he lived, and never asked him. He has written Florence a good many letters, and now and then she has read me a bit out of them, but she never gave me one to read outright myself. She has left her desk behind her. Would I be justified in breaking it open?"

"No, you would not. It would be showing a sad want of confidence in her. At what time do you expect uncle home?"

"I can't say with certainty. He may come in at any minute, or he mightn't come home till late. He's hunting high and low for Florence, and there's no knowing where he may be. He's got leave for a day's absence from the office. You're not going, Dick?" For Dick had put on his hat, and was buttoning up his coat.

"I must. I've a lot of business to attend to, and I've an idea of a clue which may lead to something."

"You'll be back as soon as you can, won't you? Your room is all ready."

"'I know. Uncle Rob told me. But I can't come back to-night."

"Oh, Dick, haven't you forgiven me for the hard words I said to you? Don't harbour animosity, lad, don't! My temper got the better of me----"

"My dear Aunt Rob," said Dick, interrupting her, "no son could love a mother more than I love you. If I were base enough to harbour animosity towards you or yours I shouldn't deserve to live. There's the postman's knock!"

They both ran out for the letter. "It's from Florence--from Florence!" cried Aunt Rob.

"MY DARLING MOTHER AND FATHER" (Florence wrote)--"I am writing a hurried line to relieve your anxiety, only to let you know that I am safe and well, and that I will write again to-morrow. When you know all I am sure you will forgive me. Never forget, dear Mother, what I said to you

last night, that I have done nothing wrong. God bless you both. With my dearest, fondest love,

"Ever your faithful and affectionate daughter,

"FLORENCE."

"If you see Dick, give him my love, and tell him all."

"That ought to satisfy you, Aunt Rob," said Dick. "She is safe, she is well. My love to Uncle Rob."

He kissed her, waved his hand, and was gone.

The fog had entirely disappeared, and the contrast between the weather of yesterday and that of to-day struck him as no less marked than the contrast between himself of yesterday and himself of to-day. Yesterday he was one of the idlest of young fellows, lounging about with his hands in his pockets, with no work to do, and no prospect of any. To-day the hours were not long enough for the work he had to perform. As there are sluggish horses which need but the whip to make them go like steam, so there are men who cannot work without a strong incentive. Dick was of this order, and the incentive which had presented itself was in its nature so stirring as to bring into play all his mental and physical resources. Thus spurred on, you might have searched London through without meeting his match.

The immediate object he had in view was to gain an entrance into the house of Samuel Boyd, and this must be done to-night. Whatever discoveries he made there, or if he made none, the ground would to some extent be cleared. To accomplish his purpose he required a rope, with a grapnel at the end of it, strong enough to bear a man's weight. His funds were low. Of the sovereign Uncle Rob had given him, 3s. 6d. had gone for a week's rent, and 2s. for food; he had 14s. 6d. left. Knowing that there was a chance of picking up in some second-hand shop a rope and grapnel for half the money which they would cost new, he turned down the meanest streets, where humble dealers strove to eke out a living. He passed a wardrobe shop in which male and female attire of the lowest kind was exposed for sale; a rag and bone shop, stuffed with articles fit for the dunghill, and over the door of which an Aunt Sally in a perpetual slate of strangulation was spinning round and round to the tune of a March wind; a fried fish shop through the window of which he saw a frowzy, perspiring woman frying penny pieces (heads), three halfpenny pieces (tails), and two penny pieces (middles); more wardrobe shops, more fried fish shops, more rag and bone shops, with black dolls spinning and strangling. In one of these he chanced upon the very thing he needed, and after a heated discussion with a dirty-faced old man in list slippers and a greasy skull cap, he issued from the fetid air within to the scarcely less fetid air without, with the rope and grapnel wrapped in the torn copy of an evening paper.

Congratulating himself on his purchase he hurried along, and finding himself no farther than half a mile from Draper's Mews, he determined--having an hour or two to spare--to go to No. 7, where poor little Gracie and her mother resided, for the purpose of ascertaining whether anything had been discovered relating to the disappearance of Abel Death.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LITTLE WASHERWOMAN.

Had Dick timed his visit to Draper's Mews a couple of hours earlier he would have had a second instance in one day of female hands at the wash-tub--in this case not a wash-tub but a cracked and leaky basin, from the sides of which the soapy water dripped upon a very thin pair of female legs. In the second instance it would not have been a woman whom he would have seen, but a child--none other than little Gracie, who, with all the importance of budding washerwoman thick upon her (although, humanly speaking, her prospects of arriving at that stage of distinction appeared to be remote) was washing her brothers' and sisters' clothes. The garments were few and in woeful condition, the brothers and sisters were many, more or less in a state of nudity. There were Eddie, nine years of age, Bertie, eight, Nellie, six, Connie, five, Louie, three, Geordie, eighteen months. Six children, who, with Gracie, the eldest, comprised the young shoots of the genealogical tree belonging to the family of the Deaths. Their home comprised two small rooms, with holes in the wall that divided them.

All the children, with the exception of Gracie, were in bed, huddling together for warmth, and

waiting for the drying of their clothes, which Gracie hung upon a line stretching from wall to wall, after wringing them out. The youngsters were not unhappy; the ten shillings from the poor box which the benevolent magistrate had given to Mrs. Death dropped upon her like manna from heaven. On their way home she and Gracie had spent fifteen pence, and the children had had a full meal. What cause for unhappiness when their little stomachs were filled? That is the test stone. Think of it, comfortable ones of the earth. Fifteen pence to make seven children happy!

Gracie alone recognised what was meant by the disappearance of their father, the breadwinner, their father with his anxious face and threadbare clothes. The other children could not understand. It was merciful. Father had gone away; he would come back again with a little paper bag of brandy balls for them to suck. Abel Death was fond of his children, and once a week he gave them this treat. How they looked forward to it--how they watched for his coming--how their faces would light up when he pulled the bag out of his pocket! Brandy balls are an economical sweet; there is a magic in the very name. Brandy balls! They are hard, not to say stony, and if they are sucked fair they last a long time. Eddie once bolted one whole. He never forgot it; the taste of the physic he was made to swallow, the shaking and the slapping, made him very repentant; but he thought of it ever afterwards with a fearful joy, as of one who had performed a rash and daring deed, and came out of it alive. Sometimes the children were in rivalry as to which brandy ball would last the longest. Sad to relate, the exultation of the victor made the others cry. The way of conquerors is always watered with tears.

On this afternoon Gracie was the mistress of the house. Mrs. Death had heard of a half day's washing-up of plates and dishes at a German club in the neighbourhood where a festival was being held; and she dared not neglect the opportunity of earning ninepence. She left careful instructions that if father *should* happen to come back during her absence Gracie was to run like lightning to the club and fetch her home. She had no hope of it, but she had read of miracles in the Bible.

So the child stood at the wash-tub, soaping poor little petticoats and stockings with zeal and diligence, holding each garment up to the light and criticising its condition with the eye of an expert. Now and then she shook her head, as though in answer to a question whether this or that tattered article of clothing could be mended; and, the point being settled, plunged it into the wash-tub again for an extra soaping to make up for tatters. And the marvellous patience with which she pursued her task, the absence of anything in the shape of rebellion or protest that she, so young in years, should be set to it! If ever suffering mortal deserved a medal for duty done in the teeth of adverse circumstance, against odds so terrible that the coldest heart must have been moved to pity to witness it, Gracie surely had earned it. But there is no established order on earth for the bestowal of honours in such a cause. Crosses and broad ribbons and sparkling stars are for deeds far different from the devoted heroism she displayed. But a record is kept in Heaven, Gracie, and angels are looking down upon you. How astonished would she have been to know it! She suffered--ah, how she suffered! Every few minutes she was compelled to stop and fight the demon in her chest that scraped and scraped her brittle bones with fiendish cruelty--tearing at her, choking her, robbing her of breath, while she stamped her feet and beat her hands together.

"Oh, I say! Gracie's going it," observed Bertie, the low comedian and mimic of the family, and as is the case with better known low comedians when they give utterance to nothing particularly witty, the young audience began to laugh.

"Show us, Bertie," they cried. "Do it!"

Whereupon, with his own vocal organs, Bertie reproduced Gracie's racking cough. The other children attempted the imitation, but none with success, and he accompanied the cough, moreover, with such an expression of woe upon his face, that the children were lost in admiration. Spurred to greater efforts by their approval he wound up with so faithful a reproduction of Gracie in the last exhausting stage of a paroxysm that it brought down the house.

"Is that like it, Gracie?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, with unmoved face, "that's like it."

One of the children, burning with envy at her brother's histrionic triumph, expressed her feelings with her legs.

"Connie's kicking me, Gracie," cried Bertie, at the same time returning the kicks beneath the bedclothes.

"If you don't leave off," said Gracie, impassively, "I'll come and slap you."

She had to be very careful with the children's underclothing. So full of holes and rents were they that the least violence would have wrought irremediable havoc among them--and where was mother to get the money from to buy new ones?

"There," she said, hanging the last garment on the line, and wiping her hands and arms on her wet apron, "that job's done."

The children raised a cheer, and simultaneously sat up in bed in a state of eager expectation. Six little heads nestling close, six eager faces turned towards Gracie. They had not a clear view of

her, because night was coming on.

"Wait a bit," she said, "we must have a light, and I must make up the fire."

It was a very small fire, the capacity of the stove being circumscribed by a large brick on either side, placed there for the sake of economy. Gracie put on half a dozen little pieces of coal with miser-like care, taking as much pains to arrange them as if they were precious stones, as indeed they were. A tiny flame shot out and shone upon her face; with her black eyes and black hair she looked like a goblin beneath this fitful illumination. Then she rose and lighted a tallow candle, placing it on a deal table, which she drew close to the bed. The table was bare of covering, and presented a bald white space, Gracie having given it a good scrubbing before she commenced her washing. Seating herself on a wooden chair she took from a drawer some broken ends of chalk of different colours, yellow, green, and vermilion being the predominant hues. The excitement of the children grew to fever height.

Gracie had a gift which comes by nature. She was magnetic, and could tell a story in such a manner as to absorb the attention of her hearers. It is true that she only told stories to her brothers and sisters, who might have been considered a partial audience, but that she was capable of taking their imaginations captive and leading them in any direction she pleased--through gilded hall or dismal dungeon, through enchanted forest or dark morass--may be accepted as a token that, grown to womanhood and appealing to a more experienced audience, her success would be no less complete. To look at that apparently insensible face and at that coal black eye, unillumined by the fire of fancy, and to listen to that listless voice when she discoursed upon mundane affairs, no one would have imagined that it was in her power to rivet the attention, to fascinate and absorb. It is, however, just those faces which go towards the making of a great actor. A blank space waiting to be written upon, ready for the kindling of the spark which unlocks the gates of imagination and lays all the world of fancy open to the view. Then do merry elves peep out from beds of flowers, and fairy forms dance in the light of moon and stars; then do enchanted castles gleam in the eye of the sun, and gloomy caverns open wide their jaws and breathe destruction on all who venture within their shadowed walls.

Many such romances had Gracie told the children, with appropriate pictorial illustration in colours, but she came down to earth occasionally, and condescended to use materials more modern; but even these familiar subjects were decorated with flowers of quaint fancy and invested by her with captivating charm. Sometimes she mingled the two together, and produced the oddest effects.

The secret of the coloured chalks was this. Not long ago there lived in the house an artist who strove to earn a living by painting on the pavements of the city the impossible salmon and the equally impossible sunset. But though he used the most lurid colours he did not find himself appreciated, and, taking a liking to Gracie, he poured into her ears tales of disappointed ambition and unrecognised genius, to which she listened with sympathetic soul. Emulous of his gifts she coaxed him into giving her a few lessons, and in a short time could also paint the impossible salmon and the equally impossible sunset. One day he said, "Gracie, I am leaving this wretched country, which is not a country for artists. I bequeath to you my genius and my stock of coloured chalks. But do not deceive yourself; they will bring you only disappointment, and do not blame me if you die unhonoured, and unwept, and unsung." With these despairing words he bade her an affectionate, if gloomy, farewell. Gracie did not share his despair, and had little understanding of the words in which it was expressed. The legacy was a God-send to her and to the children whom she would enthral with her flights of imagination, with coloured illustrations on the deal table.

She related to them now some weird tale of a beautiful young princess--(behold the beautiful young princess, with vermilion lips and cheeks, green eyes starting out of her head, and yellow hair trailing to her heels)--and a gallant young prince--(behold the gallant young prince, with vermilion lips and cheeks, staring green eyes, and yellow hair carefully parted in the middle)--mounted on a fiery steed--(behold the fiery steed, its legs very wide apart, also with green eyes, vermilion nostrils, and a long yellow tail)--who, with certain wicked personages, went through astounding adventures, which doubtless would all have come right in the end had Gracie not been seized with a fit of coughing so violent that she fell back in her chair, spasmodically catching and fighting for her breath.

Two persons mounted the stairs at this crisis, a man and a woman, and both hastened their steps at these sounds of distress. Mrs. Death flung the door open and hastened to Gracie's side not noticing Dick, who followed her.

"My dear child--my dear child!" said Mrs. Death, taking her clammy hand and holding the exhausted girl in her motherly arms.

"I'm all right, mother," gasped Gracie, presently, regaining her breath. "Don't you worry about me. There--I'm better already!" She was the first to see Dick, and she started up. "Mother--look! The gentleman from the police station! Have you found father, sir?"

"I beg your pardon for intruding," said Dick to the woman. "I came to speak to you, and when I was wondering which part of the house you lived in I heard your little girl coughing, and I followed you upstairs." He gazed in amazement at the astonishing pictures on the table. "Did Gracie draw these?"

Six little heads popped up from the bed, and six young voices piped, "Yes, she did. Ain't she clever? And she was telling us such a beautiful story!"

"Be quiet, children," said Mrs. Death; and turning anxiously to Dick, "Have you any news of my husband, sir?"

"I am sorry to say I have not," he replied; "but your visit to the magistrate is in the papers, and good is sure to come of it. Have you got a teaspoon?"

With a pitying remembrance of Gracie's cough he had purchased a bottle of syrup of squills, a teaspoonful of which he administered to the child, who looked up into his face with gratitude in her soul if not in her eyes.

"It's nice and warm," she said, rubbing her chest. "It goes right to the spot."

"Let her take it from time to time," said Dick to Mrs. Death. "I will bring another bottle in a day or two. Now can I have a few words with you about your husband?"

"Yes, sir, if you'll step into the next room."

"I like brandy balls," cried Connie.

"So do I--so do I!" in a clamour of voices from the other children.

"And so do I," said Dick. "You shall have some."

"Hush, children!" said Mrs. Death. "I'm ashamed of you! I hope you'll excuse them, sir. Keep them quiet, Gracie, while the gentleman and I are talking. It doesn't do, sir,"--this in a low tone to Dick as he followed her into the adjoining room--"to speak too freely before children about trouble. It will come quickly enough to them, poor things!"

Dick nodded. "I wish you to believe, Mrs. Death, that I earnestly desire to help you out of your trouble, and that I may be of more assistance to you than most people. I say this to satisfy you that I am not here out of mere idle curiosity."

"I am sure you are not, sir, and I'm ever so much obliged to you for the kindness you've shown. The syrup of squills has done Gracie a lot of good already; but I don't see how you can help us."

"It may be in my power, if you will give me your confidence."

"I'd be sorry to throw away a chance, sir. What is it you want to know?"

"I want you to tell me the reason why Mr. Samuel Boyd discharged your husband."

"There's not much to tell, sir. Where shall I commence?"

"On Friday morning, when your husband went to the office: and don't keep anything back that comes to your mind."

"I won't, sir. He went away as usual, and it was our belief that he had given Mr. Boyd every satisfaction. I told you at the police station how we had hopes that Mr. Boyd would lend us a few pounds to get us out of our difficulty with the moneylender. I'm afraid every minute of the home being sold over our heads. We've only got a few bits of sticks, but we shouldn't know what to do without them. Mr. Boyd's a hard master, sir, and regularly every Saturday, when he paid my husband his wages, he grumbled that he was being robbed. My poor husband worked for him like a slave, and over and over again was kept in the office till ten and eleven o'clock at night without getting a sixpence overtime. It wasn't a bed of roses, I tell you that, sir; nothing but finding fault from morning to night, and he was always on the watch to catch my husband in some neglect of duty. On Friday afternoon, when he went out of the house on some business or other, his orders to my husband were that he was not to stir out of the office; if people knocked at the street door let them knock; he wasn't to answer them, but to keep himself shut up in the office. Those were the orders given, and my husband was careful to obey them. Two or three hours after Mr. Boyd was gone there came a knock at the street door, and my husband took no notice. The knock was repeated two or three times, but still he took no notice. Presently he heard a step on the stairs, and he thought it was Mr. Boyd come back, and who had knocked at the door to try him. It wasn't Mr. Boyd, sir. The gentleman who came into the room was Mr. Reginald."

Taken by surprise at this unexpected piece of information, Dick cried, "Mr. Reginald!"

"Mr. Boyd's son, sir. He and his father had a quarrel a long while ago, and Mr. Boyd turned him out of the house."

"But if the street door was not opened to Mr. Reginald, how did he get in?"

"He had a latchkey, which he told my husband he had taken with him when his father turned him off."

A light seemed to be breaking upon Dick; all this was new to him. "At what time did you say

Mr. Reginald entered his father's house?"

"It must have been about six o'clock. When he heard that his father was not at home he said he would wait; but my husband begged him not to, and asked him to go away. He seemed so bent upon seeing his father--he used the word 'must,' my husband told me--that it was hard to persuade him, but at last he consented, and said he would call again at ten o'clock, when Mr. Boyd would be sure to be alone."

The light grew stronger, and it was only by an effort that Dick was able to suppress his agitation. He recalled the conversation he had had with his uncle the previous night at the police station, and the remark that towards the elucidation of the mystery there were many doors open. Here was another door which seemed to furnish a pregnant clue, and it terrified him to think that it might lead to a discovery in which all hopes of Florence's happiness would be destroyed.

"Yes," he said, "at ten o'clock, when Mr. Boyd would be sure to be alone."

"Then my husband, remembering the caution given him by Mr. Boyd that nobody was to be allowed to enter the house during his absence, asked the young gentleman not to mention to his father that he had already paid one visit to the house. You see, sir, my husband feared that he would be blamed for it, and be turned away, as the other clerks had been, for Mr. Boyd is of that suspicious nature that he doesn't believe a word any man says. The young gentleman gave the promise and went away."

"Did Mr. Reginald say why he wanted to see his father?"

"Not directly, sir; but my husband gathered that the young gentleman had come down in the world, and was in need of money."

"Ah! Go on, please."

"When Mr. Boyd came back he asked if any one had called; my husband answered no. 'Then no person has been in the house while I was away?' he said, and my husband said no person had been there. Upon that my husband was surprised by his being asked to put his office slippers on the table, and was still more surprised to see Mr. Boyd examining the soles through a magnifying glass. Oh, but he is a cunning gentleman is Mr. Samuel Boyd! And when the examination was over he gave my poor husband his discharge, without a single word of warning. My husband was dumbfounded, and asked what he was being sent away in that manner for. Then the hardhearted gentleman said he had set a trap for him; that before he left the house he had put on the stairs eight little pieces of paper with bits of wax on the top of them, so that any one treading on them would be sure to take them up on the soles of his boots; and that when he came back six of the eight pieces were gone. It was an artful trick, wasn't it, sir? My poor husband did then what he ought to have done at first; he confessed the truth, that Mr. Reginald *had* been there. When Mr. Boyd heard that his son had been in the house he got into a fearful rage, and said that Mr. Reginald and my husband were in a conspiracy to rob him, which, of course, my husband denied. He begged Mr. Boyd to take back the discharge, but he would not listen to him, and the end of it was that he came home brokenhearted. You see our home, sir; wasn't the prospect of not being able to earn bread for us enough to break any man's heart?"

"Indeed it was," said Dick. "And that is all you can tell me?"

"It is all I know, sir."

"I think you said last night that it was about half-past nine when Mr. Death went to Catchpole Square the second time."

"As near as I can remember, sir."

"Within half an hour," he thought, "of Mr. Reginald's second visit." "Thank you, Mrs. Death," he said; "you may depend upon my doing my best to clear things up, and you shall soon hear from me again. I may call upon you without ceremony."

"You will be always welcome, sir, but it's a poor place for you to come to."

"I don't live in a palace myself," he said, with an attempt at gaiety. Taking his rope and grapnel, still wrapped in the evening paper, he held out his hand to wish her good-night (with the kind thought in his mind of sending a doctor to Gracie), when a man's voice was heard in the passage, inquiring in a gentle voice whether Mrs. Death lived there.

CHAPTER XVIII.

They went out together to ascertain who it was, and the man repeated his question, and observed that it was very dark there.

"I'll get a light, sir," said Mrs. Death in an agitated tone. "I hope you haven't brought me bad news."

"No," the man answered, "good news I trust you will find it. I have come to attend to your little girl, who, I hear, has a bad attack of bronchitis."

"Are you a doctor, sir?" she asked.

"Yes, I am a doctor," he answered. "Dr. Vinsen."

"It's very good of you, sir, and Gracie is suffering awfully, but I am afraid there is some mistake. I didn't send for you."

"Now why did you not send for me," he said, in a tone of gentle banter. "In the first place, because you don't know where I live. In the second place, because you can't afford to pay me; but that will not matter. Why should it? Dear, dear, dear! What is money? Dross--nothing more. Never mind the light; I can see very well--very well."

They were now in the room where the children were, who, sitting up in bed, stared open-mouthed at the gentleman with his glossy silk hat and his yellow kid gloves, and his double gold watchchain hanging across his waistcoat. He was a portly gentleman, and when he took off his hat he exhibited a bald head, with a yellow fringe of hair round it, like a halo. His face was fleshy and of mild expression, his eyes rather small and sleepy, and there was, in those features and in his general appearance, an air of benevolent prosperity.

"Pictures," he said, looking at the coloured drawings on the table. "Most interesting. And the artist?"

"My little girl, sir," said Mrs. Death, looking anxiously at him; "she does it to amuse the children."

"Remarkably clever," he said. "*Re*-markably clever. Dear, dear, dear! A budding genius--quite a bud-ding ge-nius. But time presses. Allow me to explain."

"Won't you take a chair, sir?" said Mrs. Death, wiping one with her apron, and placing it for him.

"Thank you. The explanation is as follows--as follows. A friend of mine reading in the evening papers an account of your application at the Bishop Street Police Court this morning--pray accept my sympathy, my dear madam, my sym-pathy--and of the evident illness of the little girl who accompanied you, has asked me to call and see if I can do anything for you--anything for you." His habit of repeating his words, and of occasionally splitting them into accented syllables, seemed to fit in with his gentle voice and his generally benevolent air.

"May I inquire the name of your kind friend?" asked Mrs. Death.

"Certainly--cer-tainly," replied Dr. Vinsen. "It is Dr. Pye, of Shore Street."

"The scientist," said Dick.

"The scientist," said Dr. Vinsen. "A man of science and a man of heart. The two things are not incompatible--not incom-patible. He asked me also to ascertain whether you have heard anything of your husband."

"I have heard nothing of him, sir," said Mrs. Death, with a sob in her throat.

"Sad, sad, sad! But have hope, my dear madam. There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow, and you may depend upon it that this special providence is watching over you, and will bring your husband back--your husband back." He turned to Dick. "Related to the family, I presume?"

"No," said Dick, "I am here simply as a friend, to assist Mrs. Death in her search for her husband."

"A very worthy endeavour. Would it be considered impertinent if I inquired the name of the gentleman who evinces so deep an interest in this very distressing matter?"

"My name is Dick Remington. I've grown so accustomed to Dick that I should hardly know myself as Richard."

Dr. Vinsen's eyes gave faint indications of amusement--eyes so sleepy could do no more than

that--and he passed his hands over and over each other, as though, like Miss Kilmansegg's father, he was washing them with invisible soap in imperceptible water. At this point Gracie, who had been trying with all her might and main to hold herself in, burst into a furious fit of coughing. "Dear, dear, dear!" said Dr. Vinsen. "Let us see what we can do for you, my child."

Taking a stethoscope out of his hat he proceeded to make an examination of Gracie's lungs and chest, a proceeding which Gracie viewed with indifference and the other children with awe. In the course of his examination he made such comments, under his breath, as--

"Dear, dear, dear! Nothing but skin and bone--but skin *and* bone! Sad, very sad! Neglected another week the result would have been--but I will not distress you. Wrap yourself up, child. My dear madam, you must keep little Gracie--sweet name--in bed for a few days. Doubtless you have a bronchitis kettle."

"No, sir," said Mrs. Death, with a forlorn look.

"Don't you worry, mother," protested Gracie. "I don't want any kettles. What's the use of kettles? *I'm* all right, I am."

"No, my dear child," said Dr. Vinsen, "allow *me* to know. You must have a linseed poultice on--your mother will see to it--and when I come again I will bring you some medicine. Permit me, Mrs. Death--a few words in private--a corner of the room will do."

They withdrew into a corner, and Dick heard the chink of coin.

"I will call to-morrow," said Dr. Vinsen, the private conference ended, "to see how we are getting on--how we are get-ting on. Nay, my dear madam--tears!--summon your fortitude, your strength of mind--but still, a gratifying tribute--a gra-ti-fy-ing tri-bute." Hat in hand, he shook hands with all in the room, a ceremony attended by considerable difficulty in consequence of the shyness of the children, but he would not let them off. "Dear, dear, dear! One, two, three, four, five, six, and our little Gracie makes seven--really, my dear madam, really! Good evening, Mr.--Mr.--dear me, my memory!"

"Dick Remington," said Dick.

"To be sure. Mr. Dick Remington. Good evening." Mrs. Death, candle in hand, waited to light him down. "So kind of you, but the passages *are* rather dark." Those left in the darkened room heard his voice dying away in the words, "*Are* ra-ther dark."

When Mrs. Death re-entered the room, her face was flushed. Beckoning Dick aside she said in an excited tone, "He has given me two sovereigns. God bless him! It is like a light shining upon me. If only I could find my husband! Children, be good, and you shall have something nice for supper."

"I'll run and get the linseed for you," said Dick, "while you put Gracie to bed."

He was soon back, and Mrs. Death met him in the passage.

"I can manage now, sir, thank you," she said, "but Gracie wants to wish you good night."

Gracie coming to the door with an old blanket round her, he bent down and put his lips to her white face.

"*That's* what I wanted," she whispered, and kissed him. "You're a good sort, you are." He slipped a paper bag into her hand. "What's this for?"

"Brandy balls for the young 'uns," he answered, and scudded away.

"Oh, you *are* a one!" she shouted hoarsely.

"God bless you, Gracie!" he shouted back.

"That's a windfall for Mrs. Death," he muttered when he was clear of Draper's Mews, "and may be the saving of Gracie. Dear little mite! Almost a skeleton, and the heart of a lion. Learn a lesson from her, Dick, and meet your own troubles like a man, and do your work, my lad, like one. It's brutal to be ungrateful, but still

> "I do not like thee, Dr. Fell,
> The reason why I cannot tell,
> But this I know, and know full well,
> I do not like thee, Dr. Fell."

Now, who could Dick have been referring to as he repeated these lines with a thoughtful face? Certainly not to Dr. Fell. He was not acquainted with that gentleman.

CHAPTER XIX.

DICK PREPARES FOR A SIEGE AND COMMENCES SERIOUS OPERATIONS.

The night was well on by this time, and though he did not intend to commence operations in Catchpole Square before midnight, there was plenty for him to do in the meantime. He made his way, therefore, with all expedition to his lodgings, fortifying himself on the road with a substantial meal at a cheap restaurant, and purchasing candles, matches, and half a pint of brandy. His spirits rose at the prospect of adventure; there is nothing like the uncertain to keep the blood at fever heat.

Mrs. Applebee was keeping Mrs. Pond company when he put his latchkey in the street door. Mrs. Pond had told Mrs. Applebee of her good fortune in securing so eligible a lodger, and Mrs. Applebee had narrated the conversation which Dick and her husband had had on the previous night.

"Applebee said he never did hear a young man go on so," said Mrs. Applebee. "All I hope is he won't give you any trouble."

"What makes you say that?" inquired Mrs. Pond.

"Well, my dear, it was a queer time for a young man to be looking for lodgings on a night like that, when he couldn't see a yard before him."

"That was only his joke," responded Mrs. Pond; "he's as nice a gentleman as ever you set eyes on. I do believe that's him coming in now. I must give him a candle."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Pond," said Dick, taking the candlestick from her.

"Can I do anything for you, sir?" she asked.

"Well, yes. Perhaps you can oblige me with an empty bottle, a large one with a cork."

She had one in the cupboard, and she brought it out to him.

"It's had vinegar it, sir."

"That won't matter. Many thanks."

In the room above Dick set about his preparations for an invasion of Samuel Boyd's house. He made a careful examination of the rope and grapnel, and was satisfied that the rope would bear his weight and the grapnel catch on the top of the wall. Everything being ready, he waited for midnight, deeming it advisable not to go out till then, for there was no object in his roaming about the streets. He heard Mrs. Applebee bid Mrs. Pond good night, which was only preliminary to a long chat between the ladies, first in the passage, afterwards at the street door. Then he heard the door closed, and listened to hear if his landlady locked it. No sound of this reached his ears, and shortly afterwards all was silent in the house, Mrs. Pond having retired to rest. For a reason which he could not have explained he tumbled the bedclothes about, as if they had been slept in. He did not possess a watch, and he had to judge the time as well as he could. When he believed it to be near the hour he softly left the room, locked it, pocketed the key, and stepping like a cat, went downstairs and opened the street door. Hoping that it would not alarm Mrs. Pond he shut it as quietly as was possible, and, with the rope round his waistcoat and concealed by his coat, he turned his face in the direction of Catchpole Square. "I'm in for it now," he thought. "I feel like a burglar, out on his first job."

CHAPTER XX.

DICK MAKES A DISCOVERY.

His familiarity with the regulations and movements of the police hailing from the Bishop Street Police Station was of assistance to him. He knew that one end of Constable Applebee's beat was close to Catchpole Square, and his design was to watch for that officer's approach, and to remain hidden till he turned in the opposite direction. This would ensure him freedom of action for some fifteen or twenty minutes, time sufficient to enable him to mount the wall. He experienced little difficulty in the execution of this design. Constable Applebee sauntered to the end of his beat, lingered a moment or two, and then began to retrace his steps. Dick now prepared for action. "I really think," he mused, "that I should shine as a burglar."

There were few persons in the streets, and none in the thoroughfare on which the dead wall abutted. The first step to be taken was to ascertain if any person was in the house. He turned, therefore, into Catchpole Square, and looked up at the windows. There was no light in them, and from the position in which he stood he could discern no signs of life within. No long neglected cemetery could have presented a more desolate appearance. He knocked at the door, and his summons, many times repeated, met with no response. Dick did all this in a leisurely manner, being prepared with an answer in case an explanation was demanded. So absolutely imperative was it that he should be convinced that the house was uninhabited before he forced an entrance that he kept in the Square fully a quarter of an hour, at the expiration of which he passed through Deadman's Court, and was once more in front of the dead wall. Stealing to each end of the thoroughfare to see that no person was in view, he unwound the rope from his body, and fixed upon the spot to fling the grapnel. The first throw was unsuccessful; and the second; but at the third the grapnel caught, and Dick pulled at it hard in order to be sure that it was fast. Then, moistening the palms of his hands, and muttering, "Now, then, old Jack and the beanstalk," he commenced to climb.

It was not an easy task, partly in consequence of his inexperience at this kind of work, and partly because of the bulging of the large bottle of water under his waistcoat. But Dick was not to be beaten; not only were all the latent forces of his mind in full play, but all the latent forces of his body, and though his hands were chafed in the execution of the task, and the perspiration streamed down his face, he reached the top of the wall in safety, and with the bottle unbroken.

"Bravo, Dick," he gasped, pausing to recover his breath. "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, I hope Humpty Dumpty won't have a bad fall. Take care of yourself, Dick, for my sake."

Drawing up the rope he reversed the grapnel, fixed it tight, let the rope drop on the inner side of the wall, and slid nimbly down.

He looked around. There were windows at the back, most of them masked with inside shutters, as they had been for years. To each of the six houses there was a back yard, and each yard was separated from its neighbour on either side by a wall as nigh as high as that which enclosed them all in the rear. Thus Dick found himself shut out from the world, as it were, with little likelihood of his movements being detected from any of the houses except the one he intended to break into--and that was as still and lifeless as death itself.

"Now, my lad," he said, "just to put life into you, for this desert of Sahara is enough to give any man the blue devils, I'll treat you to a drink. Is it agreed to? Passed unanimously."

Then came the difficult task of unhooking the grapnel, for it would never do to leave it on the wall. He made several futile attempts to loosen and bring it down, and had he not discovered in a corner a forked pole which at some remote period had probably been used as a clothes' prop, there would have been nothing for it but to leave it there and run the risk of discovery. With the aid of the pole, however, he succeeded in unhooking it, so suddenly that it fell to the ground with a crash and nearly gave him a crack on the head.

Gathering up the rope and slinging it over his arm, Dick searched for a means of effecting an entrance into the house. From the evidences of decay all around he judged that no use had been made of the back of the premises for a considerable time past; during his service with Samuel Boyd he had had no acquaintance of the rooms which looked out upon the yard, his duties confining him to the office in which the secretarial work was done. Above a door, which he tried in vain to open, was a small window which seemed less secure than the others; and when he reached up to it (standing on a rickety bench against the wall), this proved to be the case; but though the frame rattled when he shook it he saw no means of getting out of the difficulty except by breaking a pane of glass. Half measures would not serve now, and he adopted this bold expedient, pausing to listen, when the shattered glass fell upon the floor within, whether the crash had raised an alarm. There was no indication of it.

Passing his hand through the aperture he managed to unfasten the window and to raise the sash. Much more difficult was it to raise his body to the level of the window; he had no safe foothold, the rickety bench upon which he stood threatened every moment to fall to pieces, and indeed in his violent efforts this actually happened, and he was left clinging to the window-sill by his fingers and nails; by a desperate effort he got his knees upon the sill, and tumbled or scrambled into a small dark room. He could not now proceed without a light, and he congratulated himself again on his forethought in bringing candles and matches, for Dick was not a smoker, and these articles might easily have been overlooked.

Having obtained a light he took a survey of the room. The walls were bare, and there was no

furniture in it. Casting his eyes upon the floor he was horrified to see it stained with fresh red blood upon which he was treading. He was so startled that he involuntarily pressed his left hand upon his heart, and raised his right hand, in which he held the lighted candle, in anticipation of a sudden attack. Then he discovered that he had cut that hand, and that the blood on the floor was his own. In his excitement he had not felt the pain of the wound. Wrapping his handkerchief round it, and drawing a deep breath of relief, he opened a door at the end of the room, and emerged into a passage, with a staircase leading to the rooms above. Ascending, he passed through another door which shut off this staircase from the better parts of the house, and found himself on a landing with which he was familiar, for on this floor was situated the office in which he used to work, another staircase at the end of the landing leading down to the front entrance. He knew now where he was, and in which direction to proceed.

All his movements had been made with extreme caution, and almost at every step he took he paused and prepared for a surprise. But he was not interrupted in any way, and there was nothing to indicate that he was not master of the situation. It troubled him to observe that his footsteps left traces of blood behind them; these dark stains conveyed a suggestion that he had been engaged in a guilty deed. "Do I look like a murderer?" he thought. "I feel like one."

Before he entered the office he descended to the ground floor passage to ascertain if the street door was fast, and he was surprised to see the key lying on the mat. It was a sign of some significance, for had Samuel Boyd left his house for any length of time he would most certainly have locked the door from the outside and taken the key with him. But, assuming that this was not the case, why was not the key in the lock, and assuming, further, that Samuel Boyd had retired to rest, why was not the door bolted and chained?

Confused by the thought, Dick turned the key in the lock, opened the door an inch or two, and looked out upon Catchpole Square. All was silent and still. Dark clouds were scudding across the sky, with a heavy-hearted presage in them; such was the impression the gloom of night produced upon Dick. He reclosed and locked the door, and returned to the passage above.

When he turned the handle of the office door and entered the room in which he used to work he could hear the beating of his heart. In the dim light he could almost fancy that his skeleton was sitting on the old stool at the desk; but no being, human or spectral, with the exception of himself was there. Against the walls and in the corners lay the strange medley of articles which gave so singular a character to the apartment. There were no signs of confusion or disturbance; everything was in order. The drawers in desk and tables were closed, the safe in its old position, and to all appearance untampered with; beneath a paperweight of Japanese metal, representing a hideous mask, lay some papers which Dick did not stop to examine. Some of the articles in the collection had not been there during his term of service. The wine and the grand pianoforte were new to him. But who was that sitting in a chair, dressed in a flowered gaberdine?

"I beg your pardon," stammered Dick.

The figure did not answer him, and approaching nearer with stealthy steps he beheld the wax figure of the Chinaman, in an attitude of collapse, as it had fallen into the chair on the night of the 1st of March, when it was shot through the heart.

"In heaven's name how came *you* here?" muttered Dick. "Speak up like a man, in pigeon-English if you like."

He could scarcely have been more amazed had the figure lifted its head and addressed him. A sense of tragedy weighed heavily upon his spirits, and the air seemed charged with significance and dreadful import. The occurrences of the last twenty-four hours: the disappearance of Abel Death, his wife's agonised appeal at the police station, Florence's flight from home, the discovery of her handkerchief in Catchpole Square, even--unreasonable as was the inclusion--the visit of Dr. Vinsen to the Death family--all seemed to converge to one point in this room, with its deathlike stillness, and to the strong probability of their explanation being found there. It partook more of a fancy from a madman's brain than that of a sane person, and yet Dick, candle in hand, peered in all directions for a clue to the elucidation of these mysteries. That he saw none did not weaken the impression under which he laboured. The dusky figures of knight and lady in the hangings of tapestry, the quaint carvings of man and beast on the mantel and fireplace, the paintings of flying angels on the ceiling, mocked and gibed at him whichever way he turned, and tended to increase the fever of his blood.

There were three communicating doors in the apartment--one leading to the passage, one to Mr. Boyd's bedroom, one to a room which had always been kept locked. Against the wall between that room and the office the grand piano was placed, and Dick recollected that in his time a large screen had been there, covering the space now occupied by the back of the piano. Very cautiously and slowly he opened the door of the bedroom. Wrought to a pitch of intense excitement it was not surprising that his hand shook--to such an extent, indeed, had he lost control of himself that the candle dropped to the ground and was extinguished. He was plunged in darkness.

In the brief glance he had directed to the bed he fancied he had seen the outline of a sleeping form, and as he knelt to search for the candle he called aloud, "Mr. Boyd!" and trembled at the sound of his voice. "Mr. Boyd! Mr. Boyd!" he called again in louder tones, and his heated fancy

created a muffled echo of the name, "Mr. Boyd! Mr. Boyd!" Finding the candle he relighted it, and rising to his feet, slowly approached the bed.

A dumb form was there, its back towards him. The bed was in the middle of the room, the head against the wall. Treading very gently he passed to the other side, and bending forward, with the candle in his upstretched hand, he saw a man's face--the face of Samuel Boyd, cold and dead!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CHAMBER OF DEATH.

He reeled back in horror, but even in that one moment of discovery the necessity of preserving self-control forced itself upon him, and he became calm. The first real step in the mystery was taken, and all his powers of sober reason were needed to consider what would follow, and in what way the dread discovery would affect the beings he held most dear. Fortifying himself with a sip of brandy, and putting into a candlestick the candle he had held in his hand, he turned down the sheets to ascertain how the hard master he had served--the man in whose breast had dwelt no spark of compassion for any living creature--had met his death. There was no blood on the bedclothes, no stab or bullet in the dead man's body. On his face was an expression of suffering, as of one who had died in pain, and his neck was discoloured, as though a hand had tightly pressed it. But this might have been his own act in the agony of the death struggle, and his presence in his bed went far to prove that his end had been a natural one. A closer examination, however, dispelled this theory. The marks on his throat could scarcely have been made by himself, for his arms lay by his side in a natural position. Undoubtedly there had been violence done. By whom?

The first person whose image came to Dick's mind was Abel Death. The image immediately suggested a train of circumstance which, in the heat of the moment, proclaimed the absent man guilty. Abel Death had made his appeal to Samuel Boyd, and had made it in vain. In a paroxysm of fury he had fallen upon his master, and had strangled him. Then, searching for money and finding it, he had fled from the house and taken passage in some outgoing vessel for a foreign land. Presuming that the murder had been committed on the night of the 1st of March there had been ample time to make his escape, but not sufficient time to communicate with his wife. Or, perhaps the man, overwhelmed by terror, was afraid to write.

But upon further reflection this train of circumstance fell apart, and Dick perceived how false it was. It was hardly probable that Samuel Boyd had received Abel Death while he was abed, and still less probable that in his sleeping attire he would open his street door to such a visitor. By no other means than through the door could Abel Death have obtained access to the house. No, it was not he who had committed the crime. But the man was gone, and the mystery of his disappearance was still unexplained.

But if Abel Death could have obtained access to the house only by permission of Samuel Boyd, there was another man who had no need to ask for it. That man was Mr. Reginald Boyd. He possessed a key to the street door, and could obtain admittance at any hour. At any hour? No. Not after Samuel Boyd had chained and bolted the door from within before he went to bed. What was the presumption? That Reginald had quietly entered before the door was fastened, and had secreted himself until his father had retired to rest. Easy to imagine what followed: his appearance in the bedroom when his father was half asleep, his demands for money, the stern refusal and the taunting exchange of angry words, the hot blood roused, the clutching his father by the throat, the murder committed, the disposal of the limbs to make it appear that he had died a natural death, the unbolting and unchaining of the street door, and, finally, the frantic flight. But how to account for the key being upon the mat? As Dick mentally asked this question his eyes fell upon a key hanging by a cord at the head of the bed. Was it Samuel Boyd's own private key to the street door? So much depended upon this that Dick hastened downstairs to settle the point. Yes, it was Samuel Boyd's key. And the second key which Dick had picked up? Dropped by Reginald in his frenzy as he flew out of the house.

Dick's heart sank within him. This plausible chain of circumstance fitted the theory that Reginald was the murderer. Horrible! Most horrible! And Florence loved this guilty man. He it was who was responsible for her flight from her peaceful, happy home; he it was who, for some sinister reason, had imposed secrecy upon her! It seemed to Dick as if he held the fate of Florence's lover in his hands. He returned the second key to its place at the head of the bed, and mechanically--but yet in pursuance of some immature thought--put the key he had found on the mat into his pocket. Then he quitted the room of death, and closing the door, sank into a chair,

and rested his head on his hand.

How should he act? What clear line of action did his duty point out to him? His duty! What if in pursuance of this moral obligation he wrecked Florence's life, and brought upon her despair so poignant as to drive her to her grave? No, a thousand times, no! Anything but that.

Why should it be incumbent upon him to proclaim the murder? Let others do it. But even then, would that save Reginald? The finger of suspicion would be pointed at him, and a clever lawyer would wind around him a chain of circumstantial evidence so firm and strong that it would be impossible for him to break through it. What were the links in this chain?

The quarrel between father and son some time since, which ended in Reginald being turned out of the house, with the stern injunction never to enter it again. Proof would surely be discovered to establish this, and it would be vain for Reginald to deny it.

Reginald's first visit to the house in Catchpole Square on the evening of the 1st of March. Abel Death had disappeared, but Mrs. Death was alive to testify to the fact. In this connection the pitiful image of little Gracie presented itself to Dick's mind, and he heard her plaintive appeal, "You *will* find father, won't you?" He had been anxious to do this, but he recognised now that Abel Death's appearance in court might be fatal to Reginald.

The next link was Reginald's second visit to Catchpole Square an hour or so before midnight, admitting himself to the house on that occasion, as on the first, with his own private latchkey. Who was to prove this? Remote as the Square was from public observation there was little doubt that Reginald had entered unseen. No witness existed, except Reginald himself, who could state what took place on this second visit, but it was a strong link in the chain that he had "come down in the world," and was in need for money.

The murder being made public, Constables Pond and Applebee would be questioned as to whether they had observed any suspicious circumstance in the neighbourhood on the night of the 1st. Applebee would recall the visit to Samuel Boyd of a lady in her carriage. Who was the lady, and what was her business with him? This would be traced. Doubtless the lady herself would come forward. The constables would further recall the appearance of a woman lurking in Catchpole Square on the night of the 5th, her evident alarm on being challenged, and her escape from the clutches of Constable Applebee.

Then came the question of the identity of the woman, in the answering of which Florence's handkerchief would furnish a clue. But if Constable Pond confessed how he had found and concealed the handkerchief it would, in all probability, lead to his dismissal from the force. It was therefore to his interest to say nothing about it. Dick had imposed silence upon him and his wife, and the chances were that secrecy would be preserved.

He carried this point farther. It appeared certain that the murder was committed on the night of the 1st of March. Now, Florence's visit to Catchpole Square--assuming that it was she--was paid on the night of the 5th, five days after. What connection, then, could there be between this visit and the murder? He argued it out. She was in communication with Reginald; since his last visit to Aunt Rob's house, nearly a fortnight ago, letters had passed between them, and there was little doubt that, without the knowledge of her parents, she had seen and conversed with him. Fearful of venturing himself into the Square, had he sent her to ascertain whether there was any appearance of the house having been entered? That would imply her knowledge of the crime. Every pulse and nerve in Dick's body throbbed in revolt against the cruel suggestion.

"No!" he cried aloud, starting to his feet. "No--no--no!"

But earnest as he might be on behalf of Florence he could not deny that the evidence, circumstantial as it was, formed a serious indictment against Reginald. In the midst of his agitation he noticed that in his starting from his chair he had swept off the table the Japanese paperweight and the documents which had lain beneath it. Stooping to pick them up and put them in their original order he saw the name of Reginald on one of the sheets, in Samuel Boyd's writing, with which he was familiar. Re-seating himself he immediately proceeded to read what was written thereon:

"*Memoranda for my guidance. March 1st, 9.30 p.m.*"

"I jot down certain memoranda respecting my unworthy son, Reginald Boyd, to assist my memory in my application to the police to-morrow morning. Things slip my mind sometimes. This shall not. To the police I go early in the morning. I do not consider myself safe. My son and my clerk, Abel Death, whom I discharged from my service this evening, are in a conspiracy to rob me, and I must take measures against them.

"It is two years since I turned my son out of my house in consequence of his misconduct and

disobedience. I forbade him ever to darken my door again, or ever to address me.

"In defiance of this command he stole into the house this afternoon during my absence, and though Abel Death endeavoured to keep it from me, I forced the information from him that this scamp of a son of mine intends to come again late to-night.

"Impress strongly upon the police that these men are conspiring to rob me. Reginald has in his possession a key to the street door. It is my property. He stole it from me. If he does not get in through the front door he will find some other way. He is better acquainted with the ins and outs of this house than I am myself. He is an ungrateful, worthless scoundrel. They are a pair of scoundrels.

"To-morrow I will draw out my will. Reginald knows that it is not made yet. If I were to die to-night all that I possess would fall to him as heir at law, and I am determined he shall have not have a shilling of my money. Not a shilling. He is reckoning, I dare say, upon coming into a fortune. He will find out his mistake.

"*Shall* I see him? I should like to tell him to his face that he will be a beggar all his life, and to tell him, too, that I intend to put the police upon him.

"Notation, 2647. S.B."

The reading of this document filled Dick with consternation. It supplied, not one, but several new links in the chain of circumstantial evidence. Were it to fall into the hands of the police Reginald's doom would be sealed. There would be only one chance for him--his being able to prove that he had not visited his father's house on the night of March 1st. His bare word would not be sufficient; he must produce witnesses, to show how and where he passed his time on that night. Failing this, the evidence, in the murdered man's own handwriting, would be fatal.

It could not be that the murder would remain much longer undiscovered. Mrs. Death's application to the magistrate and the publicity given to the disappearance of her husband, clerk to Samuel Boyd of Catchpole Square, in conjunction with the silence and non-appearance of Samuel Boyd himself, would be sure to direct attention to the house, not only on the part of the mystery-mongers who have a passion for such matters, but on the part of the general public. The probability was that in a very short time, perhaps in a few hours, all London would be ringing with this new mystery. He saw, in fancy, the show-bills of the newspapers, and heard the cries of the newsboys as they ran through the streets with successive editions.

Again he had to consider his course of action, and he was not long undecided. He would be silent. It was not Reginald he was championing, it was Florence. Until he saw and spoke with her he would do all that lay in his power to divert suspicion from the man she loved. Animated by this resolve, and with a dogged disregard of consequences, he folded the incriminating document and put it in his pocket. He made no attempt to justify himself; at all hazards he was determined to protect Florence, and, right or wrong, he would do what he had determined to do. The knowledge he had gained he would keep locked in his breast. Let others make the discovery of the murder. He would not move a step towards it.

All this time he had not given a thought to his own safety, to the peril in which he would be placed if his presence in the house of death became known. It was easy enough to devise a train of argument which would cast such suspicion upon himself as to cause most people to believe that he was the guilty man. Having no wish to court this danger he determined to leave the house as quickly as possible, and to postpone further reflection till the morning.

A last look into the death-chamber, a swift glance at the awful form lying there, a hurried examination of the papers to see if there were any other incriminating documents among them--which to his relief there were not--a pause before the wax figure of the Chinaman and a weird fancy that it also had met its death at the hand of a murderer, the careful gathering together of all the articles he had brought with him into the house, and he was ready to go.

He had a thought of leaving the house by the front door, but there was greater risk in that than in going back the way he had come; so he scrambled out of the window at the back, finding it much more difficult to scramble out than to scramble in, and was once more in the yard. He listened for sounds of voices or footsteps in the thoroughfare on the other side of the dead wall, and, hearing none, flung his grapnel up. It caught at the first throw, and climbing the rope he cautiously peeped over the wall to see if any wayfarers were about. No person was in sight. Detaching the grapnel he hung by his hands and dropped to the ground, thinking how foolish he had been in the first instance not to have adopted this means of reaching the inner ground. Tying the rope round his waist, and buttoning his coat over that and the large bottle, half the water in which he had drank during his investigations, he proceeded in the direction of his lodgings, nibbling a biscuit as he walked along.

The faint light of early morn was in the sky. A new day was dawning, to bring joy to some, despair to some, to raise this toiler up, to dash this toiler down. No warning of these issues in the peaceful grey light of morn. Majestic nature rolls its allotted course heedless of the fret of life. The yellow gas in the street lamps had a ghastly glare; at the end of a street a cat with green

eyes gleaming like evil jewels stood in the middle of the road, and scampered off at his approach. A wretched man who seemed to start out of the ground cried, "Hi!" and flung a stone after it, and then, with folded arms and head sunk low on his breast, slinked off with a scowl, as though he had struck at the world for its treatment of him; two or three blear-eyed human night-birds, shivering in the grey light which, in its promise of a fair day, brought no solace to them, slouched close to the walls and houses, and cast lowering glances upon Dick as he passed; a forlorn woman, who had better have been in her grave, said, "Good morning, my dear," in a voice so false and hollow in its horrible gaiety that he shuddered as he heard it, and hurried on. But he turned and threw the degraded creature a sixpence. In his state of mind all forms of misery appealed strongly to him.

He reached Paradise Row in safety, and got into the house without disturbing his landlady. Locking the door of his room, he threw off his clothes and went to bed, deeming it wiser to seek three or four hours' rest in a natural way than to sleep with his clothes on. He was wearied and exhausted, but so excited that sleep did not come readily to him. Drowsily courting it he found himself dwelling upon the last words in the document he had stolen--there was no mincing the matter; he *had* stolen it: "Notation 2647." What could be the meaning of those words? Notation 2647--notation 2647. He repeated it dozens of times, and dreamt that the wax figure of the Chinaman was pursuing him over mountain and field, through fire and water, shouting after him, "Notation 2647!" Youth and a healthy physique, however, triumphed over these disordered fancies, and after awhile he sank into a dreamless sleep, and arose, refreshed and full of vigour, at half past eight. He heard the snoring of Constable Pond, and the soft footsteps of Mrs. Pond outside his door. He stepped into the passage, and it was like the breath of spring to his senses to meet her smiling face.

"Good morning, sir," she said. "I hope you slept well."

"Capitally," he replied. "The bed is very comfortable. Did I disturb you at all last night?" He waited in anxiety for her answer.

"Oh, no, sir. I'm asleep the minute I put my head on the pillow. Pond says I should be a blessing to burglars. Can I get you anything for breakfast?"

"Nothing, thank you," he said. "I take my meals out."

The next moment he was on his way to Aunt Rob. She was expecting his arrival, and ran to open the door for him.

"I've been waiting for you, Dick. Have you had breakfast?"

"Wouldn't stop for it, Aunt Rob," he answered, "I thought you would give me a bite."

"It's ready laid for you, my dear. I had a letter from Florence this morning, and one has come for you."

"From Florence?" he cried.

"No, it's not her writing." She gave him both letters, and said that Uncle Rob had gone out early in the morning to seek for her. "We haven't had a wink of sleep all night," she said.

He read Florence's letter first. It was to the same effect as her letters of yesterday. She was quite well and safe, and begged them not to be anxious about her. Her dear love to darling mother and father, and to Dick. She would write twice every day, and hoped with all her heart that everything would soon be all right.

"It is a happiness to know that she is safe and well," said Dick. "We must have patience, Aunt Rob."

"But what does she mean by her 'duty,' Dick?"

"We shall hear that from her own lips by-and-by," he replied.

"And isn't it strange," said the anxious mother, "that she doesn't say a word of Mr. Reginald?"

"Yes, it *is* strange." But in his heart he did not think so. He believed he knew why the name was not mentioned.

"What is your letter about, Dick?"

He opened it, read it hurriedly, and did not betray the agitation it caused him. "A private letter, aunt, from an old friend. Has Uncle Bob got another day's leave of absence from the office?"

"No; he must go back to his duty to-night. He wanted to see you badly, but he couldn't stop at home, he's that restless. I wish you'd have a talk with him."

"I'll manage it. If I don't catch him here, I'll drop in at the station."

He was itching to read his letter more carefully, but he would not arouse her suspicions by running away too suddenly, so he remained with her a few minutes longer, and then, saying he would see her again in the course of the day, took his leave.

"Are you going anywhere particular, Dick?" she asked, accompanying him to the door.

"I am going to look for Florence," he replied, kissing her. "It will be hard if we don't soon get some good news. Keep up your heart, dear aunt."

He did not take the letter from his pocket till he was in a quiet street.

"MY DEAR DICK" (it ran), "The reason that I have had the address on the envelope written in a strange hand is that I do not want mother to know I am writing to you. You must not tell her. I feel sure you will get my letter this morning, because you will have heard of my going away, and will go to mother's to get some news of me. I need your help, dear Dick. I am at 16, Park Street, Islington, first floor. Come at 2 o'clock; I shall be looking out for you; and let it be a secret between us. I know how true and faithful you are, and I have no fear that you will betray me. With constant love, my dear Dick,

"Your affectionate Cousin,

"FLORENCE."

CHAPTER XXII.

DICK RELIEVES GRACIE'S FEELING BY ONE EXPRESSIVE WORD.

"At last!" said Dick. "At last a ray of light! What's the time?" He looked at a clock in a baker's shop. "Five minutes past ten. Ought I to go to her at once? No, I think not. Had she wanted me earlier she would have said, 'Come to me the moment you get this letter.' Four long hours to wait. What am I to do with myself till two o'clock?"

With the idea of making time fly faster he began to count his steps-- ten, twenty, thirty, one hundred, two hundred, three hundred. He made a calculation. A step a second, three hundred steps three hundred seconds, five minutes, and five minutes more employed in thought and calculation. Ten minutes gone, ten minutes nearer to Florence. He came to another shop with a clock in it; it marked eight minutes past ten. He had done all this in three minutes. He had walked too quickly, and was fast working himself up to fever heat. "Keep cool, my lad," he muttered; "you'll mar instead of mend if you don't keep cool."

But the events of the last few hours, with their tragic issues, pressed so heavily upon him that he found it no easy matter to keep cool. Much easier was it to conjure up the feelings of a murderer, who, oppressed with the weight of his undiscovered crime, fancies he discerns in every face the knowledge of his guilt--turning his head over his shoulder every minute to see if he was being dogged--starting at familiar sounds, especially at the sound of bells and clocks striking the hour, every peal proclaiming to all the world that a Murderer was passing that way--tortured by the devilish temptation to leap into the middle of the road, and flinging up his arms to scream aloud, "Stop, you grinning fools! *I did it!*" Then running to a bridge, with a mob at his heels, and flinging himself into the river.

For some minutes Dick was under a spell of this nature. He looked nervously at the head-lines on the newspaper bills, and listened for the shouting of the newsboys, "Murder! Murder! Frightful Murder in Catchpole Square!" But no such words reached his ears. Passing the shop in which he had purchased the rope and grapnel, he was almost prepared to see the dirty-faced old man, in his list slippers and greasy skull cap, run out and cry, "Stop that man! Ask him what he did with the rope he bought of me last night. Stop him--stop him!"

"I am losing my senses," said Dick, "indulging in these fancies. I shall be deluding myself presently into the belief that it was I who murdered Samuel Boyd. I'll go and see little Gracie. I may get some news of Abel Death."

Gracie was in bed, and Mrs. Death was in the adjoining room, preparing a linseed poultice for her. She looked into Dick's face, and dropped her eyes.

"You've heard nothing, sir?"

"Nothing," he replied. "I have come to see Gracie. Is she any better?"

"She's no worse, sir," said Mrs. Death, with a sigh, "but I can hardly keep her in bed, and the trouble I have to put a poultice on her is beyond description; I have almost to go on my bended knees. She's the dearest child, sir; she never thinks of herself."

Upon Dick's entrance Gracie sat up in bed and put out her hand; it was hot and clammy, and Dick patted it kindly, and held it in his. The faces of the other children, who were all sitting on the floor, playing shop with stones and broken pieces of crockery, became illumined at sight of Dick.

"It's good of you to come," said Gracie. "I thought you would. You mustn't mind my coughing a bit. I'm ever so much better, but mother *will* worry about me. I want to whisper to you. Do you think father's dead?"

"No, Gracie," he said, to comfort her. "I don't think that."

"Then what's keeping him away? Is he afraid of somebody? Father never did anything wrong. We'll look for him together when I'm well. Shall we?"

"Yes, Gracie; and so that you may get well soon and find him, you mustn't sit up in bed." He put her head gently on the hard pillow, and arranged the scanty coverings over her. She made no resistance, but kept her eyes upon him, gravely and steadily.

"I've been dreaming of you all night long," she said.

"Now, what do *you* want?" said Dick to Connie, who was standing at his knee.

"Here's two ounces of tea," said Connie, giving him a stone, "and some scrag of mutton" (giving him another), "and a silk dress" (giving him another), "and a pound of sugar, and a penn'orth of brandy balls, and a pair of boots, and four pounds of potatoes, and a pint of beer"--all represented by stones, which Dick accepted with an air of great enjoyment. "If you haven't got any money we'll trust you." Having effected which sale upon these unbusinesslike conditions, the child trotted back to her brothers and sisters, who put their heads together and whispered.

Mrs. Death entered with the poultice, and was about to put it on, when a soft tapping was heard on the passage door. Before any one could answer it the handle was turned and Dr. Vinsen presented himself.

Gracie lay back in bed, and clutched Dick's hand tight.

As Dr. Vinsen glanced around the room, Dick thought his eyes were smaller and sleepier than on the first occasion they had met; his heavy white lids hung low, and partially veiled them; but this aspect of languor was more than counterbalanced by the fringe of yellow hair round his bald head, which gave him a luminous, not to say a saint-like appearance.

"Ah, Mr. Dick Remington," he said, in the pleasantest of voices, "good morning, *good* morning. Are you also here on a mission of kindness to our little patient--our lit-tle pa-tient? Permit me." He disengaged the clammy hand which clasped Dick's, and timed Gracie's pulse by his large gold watch, at which the children stared in awe. "Rather feverish, but an improvement. What do you say? It's nothing to worry about? Then we'll not worry about it. Why should we? Life brings a peck of worries in its train--why should we make the peck overflow--o-ver-flow?" With his head on one side, like a large yellow-fringed bird, he smilingly invited an opinion from Dick.

"Why, indeed?" said Dick.

"True--true. Why?" As though not he, but Dick, had made the inquiry. "We are getting along nicely, Mrs. Death, I am happy to say. In a short time we shall have our little patient running about again, playing with her companions, as well as ever. The troubles of children, eh, Mr. Remington?"

"Yes," said Dick, vaguely.

"A private word in your ear. Have we heard from our missing friend?"

"I believe not," replied Dick.

"Sad--sad--sad! But there is time--there is always time; and hope--there is always hope. She bears up."

"What else can she do? Knocking your head against a stone wall is not an agreeable diversion."

"*Your* head, my young friend, *your* head," said Dr. Vinsen, jocosely. Then turning to Mrs. Death, "What is this? A linseed poultice? Very proper. Let it be very hot. Our little patient makes a face. If she never has a worse trouble than a linseed poultice she is to be envied. Here is a bottle of medicine--a tablespoonful every four hours. I will call again to-morrow. You will not shut your door against me, eh?"

"No, indeed, sir. We don't shut the door against our best friends."

"So kind of you to say so." He paused to contemplate the group of children on the floor. "This"--with a comprehensive wave of his hand, so as to take in the whole of the room--"is a scene for an artist, and on the walls of the Academy would attract attention, even from the aristocracy."

"That wouldn't help them much," observed Dick.

"I don't know--I really don't know. It enlarges the scope, widens the sympathies--wi-dens the sym-pa-thies. Be happy, children, be happy." He went through the ceremony of shaking hands with Dick and Mrs. Death, and with an amiable smile, in which his halo seemed to take part, left the room.

"Dick," whispered Gracie. He bent towards her. "May I call you Dick?"

"Yes, Gracie."

"Wait a bit till my cough's over." She almost choked herself in her effort to finish the sentence before the cough commenced. It lasted a long time, but Dick, supporting her in his arms, was glad to hear that it was looser. Then she whispered to him again, "Don't let 'em hear us, Dick. Say Damn!

"Damn!" said Dick, without the least hesitation.

She sank back and smiled. It was the first time Dick had seen her smile, and it brought a wonderful light into her sallow face. Whatever may have been the reason for the singular request, she was evidently much relieved.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FLORENCE AND REGINALD.

The hands of all the clocks in Islington that kept correct time marked the hour of two as Dick stood before the door of 16, Park Street. His hand was on the knocker, when the door was opened, and Florence drew him into the house.

"Come upstairs, Dick," she said, panting as if she had been running. "I saw you from the window, and ran down. Oh, Dick, I am so glad to see you--so glad, so glad!"

On the landing of the first floor she stopped and kissed him. "Come in, Dick, come in."

They entered a comfortably furnished room, and by the aid of the better light he saw that she was struggling to keep back her tears.

"Are you well, Florence?" he asked anxiously.

"In health? Oh, yes," she answered. "But I am in trouble. That is why I sent for you."

"You did right. I am here to help you. You may rely upon me, Florence."

"I do, dear. Tell me first. How is my dear mother--and my dear father--how are they, Dick?"

"You know how they must be, Florence, loving you as they do. They are in the most terrible trouble about you. Uncle Rob has been hunting all over London for you. I don't wish to distress you, but they have not had a moment's rest. It is right that I should tell you this."

"You are quite right, dear. Poor mother and father! It cuts me to the heart, but I could not act in any other way. You shall judge, Dick--you shall judge--and if you condemn me----"

"Don't give way, Florence."

"I won't. I will be brave. I have been brave to do what I have done. Such a cruel thing, such a cruel, cruel thing!--but it was my duty--my duty! Oh, Dick, if you knew what love was, you would know of what it was capable. I may speak to you, dear, as a sister to a brother, may I not?"

"Yes, Florence, as a sister to a brother," he said, quietly.

"I can understand now so many things to which I was blind a year ago--what love will lead a

woman to do, how it can harden the heart----"

"Harden the heart!" he cried.

"Was my heart not hardened," she said, piteously, "when I stole away like a thief from the parents who loved and cherished me, knowing, as I knew, that I was bringing misery upon them? Was my heart not hardened when, at the call of love, I trod love under my feet? My prayer was that my separation would not be long, and that, when I was free to speak, they would forgive me and take me to their hearts again. But what can repay them for the suffering I have inflicted upon them--how shall I atone for the wound my own hand has dealt?"

"They will not think of it, Florence, if all is well with you, if, when you are free to speak, they approve of what you have done."

"Do you doubt it, Dick?" she asked, her hand at her heart.

"No--on my soul, no!" he cried. "I could never doubt it--I----" He came to a sudden stop as his eyes fell upon the hand that lay at her breast. She saw the earnest gaze, but did not remove her hand. "That ring, Florence!"

"My wedding ring, Dick," she said, and pressed her lips upon it.

"You are married!"

"I am married, dear."

"To Mr. Reginald?"

"Yes; but that is not the name I bear."

He covered his face with his hands. He had long known that she was lost to him, but only at this moment did he fully realise it. And not alone that. He was overwhelmed by the thought of the damning evidence in his pocket, a virtual accusation of murder made by the murdered man himself against his son, against Florence's husband! An ashen face confronted her as he took his hands from his eyes.

"Dick!" she cried.

"It is nothing, dear, nothing." His eyes wandered around the room. "You are not living here alone?"

"No, Dick. My husband is in that room. Come and see him. Tread softly, softly!"

She opened the door, and he followed her into the room, and there, in bed, lay the son of Samuel Boyd, the man lying dead in his house in Catchpole Square.

"The doctor has given him a sleeping draught," said Florence, in a low tone. "He has been very ill, and no one to nurse him but I." With tender care she smoothed the pillow, and drew the counterpane over his shoulders, then stooped and kissed him. When she raised her face it was illumined. Love shone there, and a divine pity. There are memories which dwell in the mind till the hour of death, and this revelation of devoted love would dwell in Dick's mind till his life was ended.

"Is he changed much?" she asked.

"He is worn and thin," Dick replied. "Has he been ill long?"

"A good many days, but thank God! the doctor says he will get well. If he sleeps till eight or nine o'clock it will help his recovery greatly."

They re-entered the sitting room. Dick took a chair with its back to the light, and each looked at the other in silence awhile. Florence was the first to speak.

"Where shall I commence, Dick?"

"At the beginning," he replied. "Hide nothing from me if you are sure you can trust me."

"I *am* sure. There is no shame in an honest love, dear."

"None, Florence.

"It is eighteen months ago that Reginald and I first met. Mother and I were spending an evening with a friend when he came in and was introduced to us as Mr. Reginald, A few days afterwards we met him in the street, and he walked a little way with us, and asked if he might call and see us; and soon he became a regular visitor. How does love come, Dick? It is a mystery, but I know I used to think a great deal of him when he was away, and once or twice when we expected him and he did not come I felt unhappy. When I heard his voice I was happy again, and then I knew I loved him. One day he spoke to me, and my heart was filled with happiness when he told me he loved me. He said he feared he was wrong in speaking to me of love, for there was

a secret in his life which he did not wish to disclose for a time; and he asked, if we entered into an engagement, that I should say nothing of it to my parents without his consent. I loved him, Dick, and trusted him, and I consented to everything he proposed. So I had a lover, and no one at home knew anything of it. Do not misjudge Reginald; he is the soul of honour, and I would as soon doubt the goodness of God as I would doubt the good faith and honour of the man I love. Do I hear him moving?"

She rose, and stepped softly to the bedroom. Returning, she said,

"No, he is sleeping peacefully. Oh, Dick, dear, you would pity him if you knew how he has suffered, and how little he deserves it. It is two months to-day that he spoke very seriously to me, in consequence of something you said. You will remember it, Dick. You were in a situation as clerk, and one night you told us that you were acting as clerk to Mr. Samuel Boyd of Catchpole Square, and that you intended to give up your situation because of the bad character he bore. He was a money-lender, you said, and had brought ruin on a number of poor people. Mother didn't like the idea of your throwing up your situation, but when you asked her if she would advise you to stop with such a man she said, no, she wouldn't, and that Mr. Samuel Boyd was a rascal. I didn't think anything of it at the time except that I was sorry for you. Reginald recalled that conversation, and warned me to prepare for a disclosure that might cause me to shrink from him. He had kept his name concealed, he said, because he was ashamed of his father, who was no other than the Mr. Samuel Boyd of whom such hard words were spoken at home. He told me of his life; how during his boyhood he was kept at school, and then sent abroad to learn languages; how he knew nothing of his father's doings, who described himself as a financier; how, his education being completed, his father summoned him home, and how, while he lived in Catchpole Square, he was shocked at the discovery of the kind of business his father was engaged in. It was so revolting to Reginald that he spoke his mind freely; they had quarrels, and the end of it was that he left his father's house, determined to get his own living in a more honest way. Wasn't it noble of him, Dick?"

"It was what an honourable man would do."

"When Reginald had told me all this, he said he was sure that if it came to the knowledge of mother and father that he was Mr. Samuel Boyd's son they would forbid him the house; and he begged me to give him a proof of my love by consenting to a marriage at a registrar's office, and to keep it a secret till he was in a position to furnish a home for me. I loved him so that I consented, and I promised, too, to keep it secret till he gave me permission to speak to mother and father. So we went one morning to a registrar's office, and were married. I wasn't absent from home more than two hours, and no one suspected the step we had taken. I can't say I was happy; keeping a secret of that kind from parents so kind and dear made me appear in my own eyes very ungrateful, but Reginald was so hopeful that I bore up, and prayed for the day to arrive when we could ask forgiveness. Do you condemn me, Dick? Do you condemn Reginald? Put yourself in his place, and say whether, if you loved a girl as he loves me, you could bear the idea of losing her?"

"I would lose my heart's blood first," said Dick. "But it was hard for Uncle and Aunt Rob."

"Yes, it was hard, and it often made me very wretched, but I couldn't break my promise to Reginald; that would have been a bad commencement for a young wife. The worst of it was that he wasn't getting along very well. 'I shall be getting desperate presently,' he said, 'unless things take a turn for the better. Our little home seems farther off than ever.' I cheered him up, and said there was plenty of time before us, and that I was sure there was some good luck in store for him. So things went on till a fortnight ago, when he said he was afraid he had done wrong in persuading me to a secret marriage. 'But I've an idea,' he said, 'and whatever comes of it I'll carry it out. Don't ask me what it is; it's something I must keep to myself.' Dick," said Florence, breaking off, "that night at home when you and mother were speaking against Mr. Samuel Boyd, did you do so purposely because Reginald was with us?"

"Yes, I spoke purposely," he answered.

"Reginald said you did, and that you looked as if you had a suspicion of him. But you didn't know he was Mr. Boyd's son?"

"I did know it," said Dick.

"Why did you keep it to yourself?" she asked, with a troubled look.

"It was for your sake, Florence," he answered quietly. "It wasn't for me to pry into your secrets."

"Thank you, dear," said Florence, putting her hand into his with a tender smile, "it was like you."

"Did Reginald carry out his idea, Florence?"

"I can't tell you; he said nothing more about it to me. Last Saturday I received a letter from him saying he wasn't very well, and couldn't come to mother's on Sunday, and asking me not to call and see him till I heard from him again. What day of the month is this, Dick?"

"The 7th. Last Saturday was the 2nd," said Dick, and thought, "The day after he went to his father's house late at night, the day after Abel Death went there in the night in the hope that Samuel Boyd would take him back again, *the day after the murder!*"

"Yes, Dick, the 7th. I didn't go to Reginald either on that day or on Sunday. You can imagine how miserable I was. On Monday morning I received another short letter, in which he asked me again not to come and see him. The next letter came on Tuesday night when mother and I were sitting together."

"That was the night of the great fog. Aunt Rob told me you went out in the afternoon in the thick of it. What did you go out for?"

"I came here to inquire after Reginald. The landlady said he wasn't well, and that she had just posted a letter to me from him. 'May I go up and see him?' I asked, and she answered, calling me 'miss,' that he had given orders that no one was to be allowed up, and that when I had read the letter I might know what to do. I was far from happy, Dick, as I walked home through the fog, and a great deal unhappier when the night postman brought the letter, for there was something in it--I hardly know what--that made me feel I ought to go to him. I couldn't ask advice of mother because of my promise to Reginald, which I wouldn't break; and even if anyone had advised me against what I believed was right I shouldn't have listened to it. I went to my bedroom early, and so did mother, and I got out of the house at ten o'clock and came straight here. In the streets I put on my wedding ring, which I had not worn at home, of course, only putting it on and looking at it when I was alone in my room, and I took care that the landlady should see it when I told her I was a relation of Reginald's and had come to nurse him. It was time I did, for he was wandering in his mind, and hadn't called in a doctor because he couldn't afford to pay for one. Thank God I had a little money in my purse, and I've got thirty pounds in the Post Office Savings Bank which I've given notice to take out. Reginald didn't know me, and I was in the most dreadful trouble about him. All his wandering thoughts were about me and his father, and I thought what a shocking thing it would be if he were to die without seeing him. Oh, Dick, my heart was breaking, but I wanted to do what was right, and I thought it likely, if Mr. Boyd saw Reginald in the state he was, that his heart would soften towards the poor boy. I tried to get at his wishes. Bending over him I said, 'Do you want to see your father?' I said it three or four times, and then he said, 'Yes, yes, my father, Catchpole Square. The end house in Catchpole Square. My father--my father!' I called the landlady in, and asked her if she would stop up with Reginald while I went to fetch some one he wanted to see. She consented, and I went out. It was very late when I got to the house in Catchpole Square, and I knocked and knocked without anyone answering me. 'He can't be there,' I thought, and I was creeping out of the Square when two men came into it. One of them had a bull's eye lamp in his hand, and I saw they were policemen. My anxiety then was to get away from them, but they saw me and called out to me to stop, and laid hands on me. How I escaped I don't know, but I tore myself away and ran for my life, and in a minute or two I was alone and free. Then I managed to find my way back here, and sent the good landlady to bed, telling her that the person I had gone to fetch was out of town. Yesterday morning early I sent for a doctor, and he said that Reginald would have died if he hadn't been called in, but that there were hopes for him. Oh, how I thanked God for the good news! and how grateful I was when Reginald last night opened his eyes and recognised me! He didn't blame me, poor boy, but spoke so sweetly of everybody! I told him how I had run away from home, and I begged him to allow me to end this mystery and to make things right with father and mother. He thought a little, and said, 'Send for your cousin Dick, and do what he advises.' I cried for joy, and I sat down at once and wrote to you. Now you know all, dear. Will you go and tell them everything, and ask them to forgive poor Reginald and me?"

"I will, Florence," said Dick, "the moment I go from here. It will be a happiness to me to relieve their suspense. But I want to ask you a question or two first."

"Yes, Dick."

"How long has Reginald been ill?"

"Since Saturday."

"Has he been in bed all the time?"

"Yes."

"May I go into his room?"

"What for? If he's asleep"--she opened the door and peeped in--"yes, he's asleep. You won't disturb him, Dick?"

"No, I will not speak to him. I've got my reasons, Florence."

"Very well, dear," she said, her eyes following him as he stepped softly to the bedroom, and closed the door behind him.

His purpose was to examine Reginald's boots, and he saw them the moment he entered the room. Reginald having been in bed since Saturday they could not have been worn since his visit to Catchpole Square on Friday night. Dick took them up, and discerned on the soles traces of the

waxed paper which Samuel Boyd had set as a trap. With his penknife he carefully scraped off these tell-tale evidences of the visit, and returned to Florence.

"Do you know," he asked, "when Reginald saw his father last?"

"No," she answered, "it must have been a long time ago."

He did not disabuse her. "He is sleeping quite calmly," he said. "Did the doctor say when he would be able to get up?"

"In two or three days, he told me, if the opiate he gave him had the desired effect. It *is* having it, Dick."

"No doubt of that. By the way, Florence, in your haste to escape from the policemen in Catchpole Square did you lose or drop anything?"

"How clever you are to think of it, Dick! I lost a handkerchief."

"With your name on it?"

"Yes. All my handkerchiefs are marked. I think I had it in my hand when I was in the Square, but I can't be sure. It is of no consequence. There are plenty of girls named Florence. How did you cut your hand?"

"With some broken glass. *That's* of no consequence. It is only a scratch." The exertion and haste he had made in scraping the wax off Reginald's boots had started the blood.

"Let me bind it up. Oh, Dick, you are our good angel! Dear Dick! Reginald likes you so much! But he had an idea that you didn't care for him."

"I care for him very much, Florence."

"And do you know," she said, almost gaily, so happy was she in the prospect of Reginald's speedy recovery, and of removing the cloud of misery she had brought upon her parents, "he had another idea--but I won't mention that."

"Yes, do, dear. Remember, you are to hide nothing from me."

"Well, he had an idea that you were fond of me."

"He is right. I am very fond of you, Florence."

"I know that, dear. But in another way, he meant. You understand."

"Yes, dear cousin, I understand."

"I told him that we had been brought up together, and that he wasn't to be jealous of my dear cousin Dick. Foolish of him, wasn't it?"

"Very foolish. How could such an idea have got into his head?"

"Well--perhaps--it--was--natural," she said, with an arch pause between each word. Ah, if she could have read his heart at that moment! But he did not betray himself. "There! I am sure your hand must feel more comfortable. I hope your feelings won't change towards me now that I'm a married woman."

"My feelings will never change, Florence, dear."

"A married woman! How strange and beautiful it sounds! To think of the time when we were playing together as little children! Such changes, Dick, such changes! It is almost as if we were not ourselves. My dear cousin! Do you think dear mother and father will come to me?"

"I will answer for them. Now, I must go. Every moment saved is a moment of happiness gained to them."

"Go, Dick, go quickly."

They kissed, and he was gone. When he was in the street he looked up at the window, and saw her standing there, looking out after him. She threw the window open, and kissed her hand to him. He returned the fond sign and hurried on.

"Steady, Dick, steady," he said.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DR. VINSEN TAKES AN INTEREST IN DICK.

The admonition was needed, for his brain was in a whirl. The disclosure of Reginald's movements made by Florence, his statement to her that he had an idea for improving his circumstances which he intended to carry out "whatever came of it," his silence regarding his visits to the house in Catchpole Square, his fevered ravings about his father--were, as Dick said with a groan, "so many nails in his coffin."

"No doubt can exist," he argued, "that Samuel Boyd was murdered either by his son Reginald or by Abel Death. If what I know were made public Reginald would be immediately arrested and charged. Poor Florence! She little knows what is in store for her, and what can't be hidden much longer. But where, where is Abel Death? Is it possible that he also has been murdered? That would make things worse for Reginald. I'll search the house from top to bottom to-night in the hope of not finding his body, for then the chance of his being the murderer would still be open. If Florence's husband is put in the dock we'll make a fight for his life."

Having thus relieved his mind he struck a bee-line for Aunt Rob's house, and his knock at the door was instantly answered by her and Inspector Robson.

"I bring good news," said Dick, in a cheery tone.

"You have found her!" cried Aunt Rob, quivering with excitement.

"Yes, I have found her."

"Thank God--oh, thank God!"

Inspector Robson, pale as death, grasped Dick's hand, and in a husky voice asked, "Is she well?"

"Quite well--and waiting to see you."

Aunt Rob threw on her bonnet and mantle. "Here's your hat, father," she said, almost breathless, "we must go to her at once. Come, Dick, come."

"Stop a minute," he said, laying his hand on her arm, "I have something to tell you first."

"I don't want to hear anything," she cried, sternly. "I want my child!"

"Let Dick speak," said Inspector Robson.

Then Dick related all that Florence had told him, and their joy at recovering their daughter was so great that they had no word of reproach for her. The dear child was found, and they would be once more re-united. What more could they desire?

"They must come here this very day, father," said Aunt Rob. "This is their home till they get one of their own."

He nodded, and the fond parents, accompanied by Dick, hastened to the dear one, with love and forgiveness in their hearts. When they were all together in Florence's room he stood apart, a silent witness of the joyful meeting. How the parents embraced and wept over their child, how she clung to them and kissed them, and entreated them to believe that her love for them was stronger than it had ever been! Aunt Rob's tearful eyes shone with gladness; her one ewe lamb was restored to her; a sacred joy stirred their hearts at this re-union.

Then, when their agitation had somewhat subsided, and they had stepped in softly to see Reginald, who was still asleep, came the question of his removal.

"It must be left to the doctor," said Uncle Rob. "When do you expect him, Florence?"

"He is coming to-night, between eight and nine o'clock," she answered, and added, with a wistful look, "we are very poor, father."

"You share with us, my dear," was his ready response. "All we have is yours. Mother, it is hardly likely he can be removed for a day or two. You will stay with Florence to-night."

"And every night," said Aunt Rob, "till we get her home. I don't let her out of my sight. Dick, what are you looking so glum for?"

"Am I looking glum?" he said, striving to speak cheerfully. "I was not aware of it."

"Dear Dick!" said Florence, stepping to his side. "How can we thank you?"

"That will do, that will do," he said. "As if anybody in my place wouldn't have done the same! I must be off now--a thousand things to attend to."

"Pop into the office between eight and nine for a chat," said Uncle Rob.

"All right, uncle, I'll be there," answered Dick, waving goodbye to the happy group.

He was glad to get away, to think of the work before him. The search in Samuel Boyd's house for the body of Abel Death must be made to-night; it might be the last opportunity he would have to do so secretly.

"I must dodge the police, and I must get in early," he thought. "At nine I will have a chat with Uncle Rob, at ten I'll be in Catchpole Square. My mind is in a state of muddle. Let me see how the case stands in respect of dates and the consecutive order of events. To save confusion I will jot them down."

Taking a small memorandum book from his pocket he halted at a street corner, and made the following entries:

"*Friday, 1st March*.--Abel Death discharged by Samuel Boyd. He pays a visit to Catchpole Square at about ten o'clock to beg Boyd to take him back into his service. Reginald's two visits to the house, the first in the afternoon, the second late at night, hour unknown. In his haste to get away on the second occasion he drops in the passage the key of the street door. Samuel Boyd murdered. Query--Did Abel Death and Reginald meet? Would it be advisable, when Reginald is in his right senses, to ask him about this?

"*Saturday, 2nd March*.--Mrs. Death goes to Catchpole Square to obtain news of her husband. Unsuccessful. Good reason for it. Dead men tell no tales. Reginald back in his lodgings, in bed, delirious. The events of the previous night being fresh in his mind, it is likely he raved about them. Query--Who attended to him? His landlady. Did she hear anything that would furnish a clue, and will this occur to her when the murder is discovered?

"*Sunday, 3d March*.--Mrs. Death repeats her visits to Catchpole Square. Same result. Same reason for it.

"*Monday, 4th March*.--Mrs. Death continues her visits to Catchpole Square.

"*Tuesday, 5th March*.--The day of the great fog. My conversation with Uncle Rob in the police station. Mrs. Death and Gracie are brought in. Her story. Florence leaves home secretly to nurse Reginald. Fearing that he is dying, and gathering from his ravings that he wishes to see his father, she goes to Catchpole Square after midnight. She is seen by the police and drops her handkerchief, which Constable Pond picks up. My conversation with Applebee. He tells me that Pond has a room to let. I reconnoitre Samuel Boyd's house, and determine to force an entrance next night. Only one way of getting in, by means of rope and grapnel.

"*Wednesday, 6th March*.--At the police court with Mrs. Death and Gracie. I write par. for 'L. B. B.' I take lodgings in Pond's house, and obtain possession of Florence's handkerchief. Visit Aunt Rob, and learn particulars of Florence's flight. I purchase rope and grapnel. I visit Mrs. Death. No news of her husband. Make the acquaintance of Dr. Vinsen. He gives Mrs. Death two pounds. Why should he be so generous? At one in the morning I get over dead wall, and into Samuel Boyd's house. Discovery of the murder. Find Samuel Boyd's written accusation of his son. Pocket it. Find Reginald's key to street door. Pocket it. Things look black.

"*Thursday, 7th March*--Visit Aunt Rob. Receive letter from Florence. Go to her. Fetch Aunt and Uncle Rob. Leave them together. Things look blacker."

Replacing the memorandum book in his pocket he became conscious that he was being observed. Looking up he saw the sleepy eyes of Dr. Vinsen fixed upon him.

"My dear young friend," said the doctor, with an amused smile, "I have been observing you for quite three minutes, and wondering what engrossing task you were engaged upon to make you oblivious of passers-by. An effort of literature--a poem--an inspiration? I envy the literary character. So free, so untrammelled by the ordinary circumstances of our prosaic existence! It soars on the wings of imagination into fairy realms--in-to fai-ry realms. Who knows that you have not in your pocket"--he tapped Dick's breast with a light finger--"something that will open our minds to noble truths? Who knows--who knows?"

"*I* know," said Dick. "If an account of how many socks, and collars, and handkerchiefs I have sent to the wash will elevate mankind I am sure I have no objection."

"A washing account," said Dr. Vinsen, with a gentle laugh. "Dear, dear, dear! But romance and mystery may be found even in commonplace matters. Look around. Observe the men and women who are passing us. What secrets are hidden in their breasts? In yours? In mine? It occurs to me at this moment to inquire whether mystery is the offspring of romance, or romance the offspring of mystery?"

"You can take your choice," said Dick, attempting to shake Dr. Vinsen off.

"*Can* one take one's choice?" said Dr. Vinsen, walking by Dick's side, and ignoring his companion's distaste for his society. "Is it open to us to do so? Are we free agents? Are we not rather like boats on a strange sea, with hidden currents that whirl us on, and occasionally bring destruction upon us--des-truc-tion up-on us? Do you happen to be aware if the missing man has returned to the bosom of his family?"

"I am not aware of it. I should consider it very unlikely."

"Then you have a theory concerning his mysterious disappearance." Dick shook his head sullenly. "No? Perhaps you are right not to trouble yourself. I perceive that you are not in the mood for conversation. My dear young friend, I take my leave. If I can be of any service, pray command me."

So saying, Dr. Vinsen raised his hat, affording the world a view of his bald head and his halo, and slowly ambled away.

"Confound you!" said Dick, looking after him. "Why did you raise your hat to me? I am not that kind of man, you know."

His mind was in a state to magnify and distort the simplest matters. To such an extent that the voice of a newsboy shouting in an adjoining street caused him to hurry in that direction to buy a paper. There was nothing in it touching the murder, and he crumpled it up and threw it into the road So he idled away the time until a few minutes before nine, when he entered the Bishop Street Police Station, where his uncle expected him.

"Well, Dick, my lad," said Inspector Robson, "things have taken a turn since our talk the night before last."

"They have, indeed," returned Dick, and thought, "If you knew all!"

"It has been a terrible time," said the inspector, "and we owe you what we can never repay."

"You make too much of it, uncle. What did I do but go to Florence when she asked me? Did you stop long with her?"

"Till the last minute. Had tea there. It's a blessing the mystery's over; it almost drove me mad. It isn't a pleasant reflection that Reginald is the son of such a man as Samuel Boyd, but it would be hard lines to blame children for the faults of their parents. Have you seen Mrs. Death and her little girl?"

"Yes," replied Dick, "I have been twice to their lodgings, and they have heard nothing of the missing man. They are in great poverty--there are seven little children----"

"Poor creature! How's the little girl?"

"There's a chance of her getting well. A friend has unexpectedly turned up, and a doctor is attending her."

Then he related all that he knew of Dr. Vinsen.

"Have you ever heard of him, uncle?"

"Never; he must be a kind gentleman, and I'm glad such a piece of good fortune has fallen to Mrs. Death's share. I wish we could find her husband for her. Dick, now that Reginald is connected with us, a watch ought to be kept on the house in Catchpole Square. Constable Applebee says it looks as if it was quite deserted. If it remains so a day or two longer I shall consider what is best to be done. Abel Death and Mr. Boyd are mixed up together in my mind, and some steps should be taken to clear the mystery. You remember what you said about murder--do you still hold to it?"

It was an awkward question, and Dick gave an evasive reply.

"You might have a look round Catchpole Square yourself, Dick."

"I will do so," said Dick, and soon afterwards took his departure.

CHAPTER XXV.

LADY WHARTON AT THE FOUNTAIN.

A fine starlight night, and the weather fair all over England, especially in Bournemouth where, in their beautiful estate, The Gables, Lord and Lady Wharton are giving their yearly ball. The air is soft and balmy in this favoured southern retreat, and though it is too early yet for the rhododendrons, the gardens are bright with flowers. Guests are riding to The Gables from all parts of the county, for this annual function is eagerly looked forward to by the belles and beaus of Hampshire. At eleven o'clock they begin to arrive, and by midnight the nineteenth century revelry is at its full height; at which hour my Lady Wharton, deeming that she has done her society duty, ceases to receive at the top of the grand staircase, and strolls into the grounds to welcome her tardy friends. Lord Wharton, happily convalescent, but still weak, and, as some whisper, not so strong in his intellect as he might be, is in the card room, where, propped up by cushions, he is entertaining a few choice guests by dropping his guineas to them. My lady's brother, Lord Fairfax, has also contributed to their entertainment, and, feeling that he has done *his* duty, he also strolls into the grounds, and flirts. He is in his fourth decade, a handsome gentleman with a blonde moustache, and has not yet made his choice in the matrimonial market; therefore he is gladly welcomed by all the spring beauties here assembled. But he is not an assiduous cavalier, and being weary of most things, is soon weary of languishing glances. Standing by a tiny fountain my lady watches him until he joins her there.

"They do these things better on the Continent," he says languidly.

Some hostesses would have misunderstood him, but she knows he refers to the fountain, and she nods assent. His conversational powers are not remarkable, so he allows her to rattle on for his amusement, putting in an occasional monosyllable as his contribution.

"Did you leave Wharton in the card room?" she asks.

"Yes," he drawls, and hazards three consecutive words. "Your friend arrived?" It is not a question in which he seems to take more than a momentary interest. He does everything languidly; even when he raises his white fingers to caress his moustache, which has been the business of his life, it is done as though the effort were a tax upon his physical powers. This, to many of the opposite sex, is one of his charms.

"Not yet," my lady answers.

"By the way," he says, and either forgets what he was going to say, or finds the effort of a long sentence too great.

"You were going to speak about the old bills?" she asks.

"Yes."

"I wrote to him to bring them to-night. I can't imagine how I forgot to ask him for them when I gave him the new acceptances you and Wharton signed."

"Not--business--woman," he observed, with a pause between each word.

"Don't be ridiculous, Fairfax," she protested, with a merry laugh. "Not a business woman? I should like to know what would become of Wharton if I were not."

"Floored," said Lord Fairfax.

"Indeed he would be. And don't I manage *you?*"

"Difficult?" he asked.

"Not at all. You are the dearest fellow! I shall be almost ashamed to ask you for another cheque to-morrow."

"Don't. Stumped"

"Next week, then?" He nods. She casts a critical look around. "Our most brilliant gathering, I think."

"Jolly," he says, and, being by this time exhausted, he leaves her at the fountain, where, presently, she is joined by other guests, with whom she carries on an animated conversation.

The grounds, with their thousands of coloured lights, are dotted with the attractive dresses of the ladies and the soberer costume of the gentlemen. Pleasure shows its smiling face, and doors are shut upon black care. No face brighter than that of Lady Wharton, none more free from the least suspicion of anxiety. Her hearty voice rings out, an invitation to mirth and gaiety. And yet as time wears on there is an anxious thought in her mind. "Why does the man not come?" she thinks. "He promised to be here faithfully, and it must be now nearly one o'clock." She consults a jewelled watch. "Yes, it is--one o'clock." The fact is, my lady is pressed for money, and she is expecting to receive a thousand pounds to-night in ready cash, half of which must go to her dressmaker in the morning. For, come what may, my lady must be dressed. So she stands at the fountain, and taps her foot impatiently. Soft gleaming lights, fair sky with its panoply of stars and

bright moon shining, sounds of rippling laughter, gay forms gliding and flitting through the lacework of the trees: a fairy scene, made not less beautiful by the dark spaces wherein the pines, their topmost branches silvered by the moon, stand apart, picturesque sentinels of the night.

To my lady a liveried footman, who presents a card. She moves into the light to read it.

"At last!" she says. "Where is the man?"

"He is waiting to see you, my lady."

She follows the servant, and steps into the shadow of a cluster of trees.

* * * * *

What connection is there between that gay scene in Bournemouth and this more sombre scene in Samuel Boyd's house in Catchpole Square, where, an hour after midnight, Dick moves in search of the body of Abel Death? The invisible links are in the air. Will they ever be brought to light and united to form another chain in the mystery?

Dick's search has lasted two hours, and has been conducted with care and patience. It is not alone traces of Abel Death he seeks for; he searches for anything in the shape of incriminating evidence against Reginald, his intention being to take possession of it, and by-and-by, perhaps, destroy it. That by so doing he will be committing a felonious act and frustrating the course of justice does not trouble him. He is working for Florence.

The first room he lingers in is that in which Samuel Boyd lies. No change there. The bed is still occupied by that silent, awful figure, cold and dead. Incapable of aught for good or evil as it is, it exercises a powerful influence over him. He dreads to approach it, and it draws him to its side. He steals from the room, shuddering, and, closing the door, breathes more freely at the barrier between them; but ever and anon, for some time afterwards, he casts a startled look over his shoulder, as though expecting to see a phantom standing there.

The ghostly moon shines through the windows which are unshuttered, and knowing now, from what Inspector Robson said, that an intermittent watch is being kept upon the house, he dare not in those rooms carry a light. In the rooms with shuttered windows he risks a lighted candle, but holds it close to the floor and moves it warily from spot to spot, and shades it with his hand, in order to lessen the chance of its glimmer being seen from without. This makes his task more difficult, and there are moments when he almost regrets having undertaken it.

The wax figure of the Chinaman is still in its chair, holding in its hand the stick of the reign of Charles the Second. The chair is old-fashioned, too, having a grandmother's hood to it, so that the Chinaman sits, as it were, in a cosy alcove, only those standing in front of the figure being able to obtain a full view of its face.

Dick finds no further incriminating evidence against Reginald than that which he appropriated on his last visit. He makes, however, a curious discovery. He has examined every room with the exception of a small room on the same floor as the office, against the outer wall of which is placed the grand piano. The door of this room opens into the passage, and it is locked. His diligent search is rewarded by finding the key of the door, which he opens. The room is simply furnished, a table and two wooden chairs being all that it contains. A large cupboard with folding doors is fixed to the wall, and by pressing a spring he loosens one of these doors. The cupboard is bare of shelves, and affords ample space for a man to stand upright in. There is a sliding panel at the back, about three feet from the floor, and just wide enough for a man to squeeze through. He is surprised to see that the sliding panel leads to the interior of the grand piano, which is quite hollow and contains no wire or wood-work of any kind. The open space is large enough for a man to lie down in, though not without discomfort. The key of the piano is in the inner part of the lock, and by removing this any person concealed there could see into the office, and could certainly hear any sounds of voices or movements made therein, the watcher being so shrouded in darkness as to be quite safe from observation. "Another of Samuel Boyd's tricks," thinks Dick, "for spying upon his clerks." To verify this he returns to the office, and satisfies himself that he has arrived at the correct explanation.

As he stands pondering over this curious discovery, which in the end he dismisses from his mind as of no importance, he finds himself mechanically counting the bottles of wine stacked against another part of the wall. It is done idly, and without meaning, but he does not forget that there are seventy-six bottles, with the crusted dust of years upon them. "Port wine, I should say," he thinks. "I should like half a pint." But he does not yield to the temptation.

At three in the morning his search is at an end. He can do nothing more. He has met with no traces of Abel Death, and he has not found an additional clue.

"I must keep my own counsel," he mutters. "If Abel Death turns up will it be for good or ill? His absence lays him open to suspicion, but it is altogether a case of circumstantial evidence. Supposing him to be caught, tried, and convicted, and he an innocent man----!"

He cannot pursue this supposition to its just conclusion. The image of Florence presents itself, her hands stretched out, appealing to him to save Reginald.

With a sinking heart, and using every precaution to escape observation, he succeeds in getting out of the office by the front entrance. Oppressed by the conviction that he must now wait for the course of events, and that he is powerless to direct them, he is walking out of Deadman's Court when the voice of Constable Applebee falls upon his ears.

"I thought it was you, sir," said the constable. "Have you been looking at the house?"

"Yes," replies Dick, pulling himself together, "from the outside."

"Of course from the outside, sir," says Constable Applebee. "I should like to have a look at it from the inside. People are beginning to talk about it. It's seven days now since anybody's set eyes on Mr. Boyd, and seven days since Mr. Abel Death disappeared. That's what I call a coincidence. I hope it's nothing more than that. Hope you're comfortable in your new lodgings, sir."

"Quite comfortable, thank you. I must be off to them now. Good night."

"Good night, sir."

Dick is by this time thoroughly tired out, and when he reaches his room is glad to tumble into bed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"THE LITTLE BUSY BEE" GETS AHEAD OF ITS RIVALS.

Two days afterwards, that is, on the 9th of March, some hours after the morning papers were in circulation, all London was ringing with the news of the mysterious murder in Catchpole Square. The name of Samuel Boyd was on every tongue; the newsboys shouted it out raucously and jubilantly, with the full force of their lungs, and the wind carried it into all the highways and byeways of the vast metropolis; it was printed on the variously coloured waybills of the newspapers in scarlet letters, green letters, yellow letters, as large as the width of the sheets permitted; it was read aloud and discussed in omnibuses, in public-house bars, in the workshops and places of business; it was bandied about, tossed in the air, caught up and passed on, embellished, illustrated and exaggerated, and rolled over the tongue as the most tempting of tempting morsels. Editorial offices were alive with it, their swing doors had not a moment's rest, the whole of the staff were on the *qui vive*, reporters hurried this way and that in their hunt for facts, fanciful or otherwise, that had the remotest connection, or no connection at all, with the name of the murdered man and the circumstances of the murder, as far as they were known. Now was the chance for the descriptive writer, for the youthful aspirants for journalistic fame, for the enterprising interviewer. Things had been rather dull lately. There had been no stirring crime, no bloodthirsty deed, no sensational trial, no tremendous conflagration, no awful shipwreck, no colliery explosion, no terrible railway collision, for quite a week, and circulation was languishing. But here at last was a dish of hot spice to stir the blood, to set tongues wagging, to fire the imagination, to make the pulses glow. A murder! And such a murder! Dark, thrilling, impenetrable, inscrutable, enveloped in delicious mystery. What is one man's meat is another man's poison, and Samuel Boyd, who had never in life given a beggar a penny or the price of a meal to a starving man, was the means, in death, of filling many a platter and frothing up many a pewter pot. Trade revived. People spent more, drank more, smoked more, went to the music-halls and theatres more, for it was impossible to keep still with such an excitement in the air. See the radiant faces of the ragged street urchins as they shout it out and dispose of their sheets, and are not asked for change of a penny--see the journalistic scouts as they follow the trail, true trail, false trail, any trail--see the crowds in Fleet Street and the Strand and all the narrow thoroughfares leading riverwards--see the smart newspaper carts, with their dapper ponies flying north, south, east, and west with their latest editions--see the travellers on the tops of omnibuses throwing down their coppers and bending over to seize the papers--see the railway bookstalls besieged by eager buyers, who, rushing to catch a train, pick up half a dozen different journals, in the hope of finding in one of them two or three lines of different import from those contained in all the others--see the men standing at street corners, running their eyes down the columns,

animated by a similar hope--see the telegraph wires, blind and deaf to human passion, carrying the message of murder, murder, murder, on their hundreds of miles of silent tongues--see the envy of the hawkers of wax matches, penny toys, and bone shirt studs, as they watch the roaring trade that is being done by the busy armies of tag, rag, and bobtail, who form the distributing street agency of journalistic literature, and wish that heaven had sent them such a bit of luck. Sold out again, Jack! Hurrah! Fly off for another quire. As good as a Derby Day, Bill! As good? Ten times better! Where are "all the winners" now? Shorn of their glory they sink into the background, and no small punter so poor to do them reverence? What are "all the winners" to a rattling spicy murder?

Never had "The Little Busy Bee" more fully justified its title than on the present occasion. A daring scheme had suggested itself to one of the members of the staff, which had been crowned with success. Ahead of all its rivals it was the first to publish the exciting news, and needless to say it made the most of its golden opportunity. The office was besieged; it was like a Jubilee Day. Men and boys fought and scrambled for the copies as the steam presses belched them forth, and selling them out before they reached the wider thoroughfares, rushed back for more. The day was Saturday, and the whirling tumult lasted till midnight.

The manner of "The Little Busy Bee's" buzzing in its preliminary editions was as follows: First, a quotation in large type from "Macbeth." "And one cried, Murder!" Then half a column of the usual sensational headings. Then the account of the daring scheme and the discovery in the following fashion:

CHAPTER XXVII.

"THE LITTLE BUSY BEE" ENLIGHTENS THE PUBLIC.

"Special and exclusive information has just reached us of

A Remarkable and Ghastly Murder

in the North of London, and we hasten to lay the particulars before the public. It will be fresh in the recollection of our readers that in our Tuesday's editions we drew attention to a blind thoroughfare in that neighbourhood, known as Catchpole Square, to which the only access is through a hooded passage, bearing the ominous and significant designation of Deadman's Court. On that morning a poor woman, accompanied by her little daughter, whose pallid face and emaciated appearance evoked general sympathy, made an application to the magistrate at the Bishop Street Police Court respecting the mysterious disappearance of her husband, Mr. Abel Death. It appears that this man was a clerk in the employ of Mr. Samuel Boyd, of Catchpole Square, and that on Friday evening last he was summarily discharged by his employer. He was in needy circumstances and he came home to his lodgings in a very desponding frame of mind, for the loss of his situation spelt ruin to his family. In this desperate strait he left his wife at between nine and ten o'clock on the same night, with the intention, as she stated, of making an appeal to Mr. Boyd to take him back into his service. From that hour to this nothing has been heard of him. Neither has anything been heard of Mr. Samuel Boyd, who, it may be premised, is supposed to be a man of great wealth, and is described by some of his neighbours as a money-lender, by others as a miser. Credence is given to the latter description by the fact that he lived quite alone, and kept no servants in his house, such domestic services as he required being performed by a charwoman who attended only when she was sent for.

"Mrs. Death's application at the police court having been made public through the medium of our columns it was a reasonable presumption that it would have come to the notice of Mr. Samuel Boyd, and that he would have sent a communication either to the distracted wife or to the newspapers, stating if Abel Death visited him on Friday night, and if so, at what hour he left. But Mr. Boyd made no sign. The woman said that she had been several times to the house in Catchpole Square, and had received no response to her knocking at the street door. Nothing was seen of either of the men, and it is probable that nothing would have been known for a considerable time had it not been for the bold action taken by a valued member of our staff, to whose love of adventure we have been frequently indebted.

"We may state at once that this gentleman acted entirely upon his own initiative, and that we accept the full responsibility of his proceedings, and are prepared to defend them. It may be objected in some quarters that he took upon himself duties which did not fall within his province. We will not at present argue the point. There was a dark mystery; there were rumours of foul play; hidden from public gaze stood a house which contained the evidence of

A Terrible Tragedy;

futile endeavours had been made to obtain entrance into this house; the police did not act, probably because they had no authority to act. What followed? That the press stepped in, and by a bold stroke

Laid a Foul Crime Bare.

"History records how officers high in command on land and sea, but not invested with complete authority, have disobeyed orders and won great victories. Success justified them. Success justifies us.

"We come now to details.

"In his endeavour to ascertain whether a search of Mr. Samuel Boyd's house would afford a clue to the silence of its proprietor and to the disappearance of Abel Death, our reporter ran the risk of being arrested for burglary. Except that he did not get in by the front door we do not propose just now to disclose how he obtained an entrance into the open space at the back; sufficient that he did obtain it, and that at ten o'clock this morning he found himself in an enclosed yard at the rear of the house. The merest examination of this part of the premises satisfied him that some person, probably a more experienced burglar, had been before him. The back door was locked and bolted, but a window sill and the panes of glass above had been smashed in, and there were signs that the person who had done this had entered the house through the window. To reach the sill the first burglar had stood upon a rickety bench which had apparently given way beneath him. Our reporter managed to put this together in a sufficiently firm manner to afford him a temporary foothold. Then, with an upward spring, he got his hands upon the sill, and scrambled through the window into a small unfurnished room. He did not effect this violent entrance without noise, but there were no indications that his movements had disturbed any person in the house, which was silent as the grave. His next task was to examine the rooms, all the doors of which were unlocked. He proceeded with great caution, and at length reached an apartment which, from the fact of its containing a writing table, desk, and safe, he concluded was the office in which Mr. Boyd conducted his business affairs, although, from the singular collection of articles scattered about, it might have been the shop of a dealer in miscellaneous goods, comprising as they did several dozens of wine, old tapestry and armour, pictures, valuable china, a grand piano, and, strangest of all, the wax figure of a Chinaman which might have come straight from Madame Tussaud's exhibition. Our reporter confesses to a feeling of alarm when he first saw this figure, the back of which was towards him, and, while it did not lessen his surprise, it was with relief he ascertained its real nature. Up to this point, however, strange as were the objects which met his eyes, he had seen nothing to warrant his breaking into the house. The safe was locked, and there was no appearance of its having been tampered with; with the exception of the broken window at the back of the house, there were no signs of disorder in any part of it, and he began to doubt the wisdom of his proceedings. He was not to remain long in doubt; he was on the threshold of

An Appalling Discovery.

"There are three doors in the apartment in which he stood. One leading to the passage, one on the left, and one on the right. This last door opened into a bedroom, which he entered. Seeing the form of a human being in the bed he retreated, uncertain how to act. Then he called softly, and receiving no answer spoke in a louder tone, and still received no answer. Mustering up courage he approached the bed, stepping very gently, and laid his hand on the man's shoulder. The silence continuing he turned down the bedclothes. The man was dead!

"In view of the proceedings he had determined to take our reporter last night obtained from a

policeman a personal description of Mr. Samuel Boyd, and he had no difficulty in identifying the features of the dead man. They were those of Abel Death's employer, and from certain marks on his throat he came to the conclusion that Mr. Boyd had been murdered by strangulation. The position of the furniture did not denote that a struggle had taken place on the floor of the bedroom, and the reasonable conclusion is that Mr. Boyd had been strangled in his sleep. After the deed was done the murderer must have composed the limbs of his victim, and arranged the bedclothes over the body, in order, probably, to make it appear that Mr. Boyd had died a natural death. The shortsightedness of this proceeding is a singular feature in this ruthless crime, for it is scarcely possible that the marks on his throat could escape detection, or that the strangulation could have been effected without some violent efforts on the part of the victim to save himself, whereby the bedclothes must have been tossed about.

"The silence of Mr. Samuel Boyd on the subject of the disappearance of Abel Death is now accounted for; the disappearance of Abel Death has yet to be explained. We make no comment. From this hour the matter is in the hands of the police, who will doubtless set all the machinery of Scotland Yard in motion to discover the murderer and bring him to justice.

"A circumstance remains to be mentioned which may furnish a clue. Before he left the house to give information to the police our reporter's attention was attracted by certain dark stains on the floor of the bedroom and the office. They bear the appearance of having been made by a man's feet. Our reporter traced these dark stains from the office into the passage, and from the passage down a staircase leading to the small room which our reporter first entered through the broken window. There they end. The mystery is deepened by the fact that there are no marks of blood on the clothes of the bed in which the murdered man lies. Our reporter scraped off a portion of the stains, which we have placed in the hands of an experienced analyst, in order to ascertain whether they are stains of human blood.

"An important question, yet to be decided, is, when the murder was committed. Our reporter is of the opinion that it was perpetrated several days ago. The evidence of doctors will be of value here. We understand that no person in the neighbourhood of Catchpole Square has seen Mr. Boyd since last Friday evening. From Mrs. Death's evidence at the Bishop Street Police Court we gather that her husband has not been seen since that day. The presumption is that the murder was committed on Friday night. Much depends upon the discovery of Abel Death and upon the explanation he will be able to give of his movements. It is understood that Mr. Boyd leaves one son, his only child, who is now in London.

"We shall continue to issue editions of 'The Little Busy Bee' until midnight, in which further particulars will be given of this strange and most mysterious murder."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BURSTING OF THE CLOUD.

Inspector Robson, being on night duty, was not present at the Bishop Street Police Station when the reporter of "The Little Busy Bee" gave information of the murder. Aunt Rob had had a busy day; while admitting that her son-in-law was very weak, she insisted that he would have a greater chance of getting well in a short time if he were removed from his lodgings to their home. "It's his proper place," she said, "and I won't rest till I get him there." She argued with the doctor, one of the old school, who shook his head; she continued to argue with him, and he continued to shake his head. This exasperated her.

"I suppose, doctor," she said, with freezing politeness, "you won't allow that women ought to have opinions."

"Not medical opinions," he replied.

"He may shake his head till he shakes it off," she said privately to Uncle Rob, "but he won't convince *me*." He smiled an admission of this declaration. "And look at Florence," she continued; "the poor girl is being worn to skin and bone. We shall have her down presently."

"But is it safe to move him, mother?" asked Florence, who, next to Reginald's recovery to health, desired nothing so much as a return to the dear old home.

"My darling child," said Aunt Rob, "when did you know me to be wrong? Ask father how much I've cost him for doctors since we've been married. I nursed you through the whooping cough and scarlatina without a doctor, and are you any the worse for it? I know as much as a good many of

them by this time. There are some doctors who won't allow you to suggest a single thing. The moment you do they're up in arms. 'What business have *you* to know?' they think. This is one of that kind. Reginald is my son now, and I'm doing by him as I'd do by you."

The upshot was, all preparations being made, that Reginald was moved on Saturday morning, and bore the removal well. When Florence saw him sleeping calmly in her own room she cried for joy.

"It's like old times, mother," she said, tenderly.

Aunt Rob smiled a little sadly; when a daughter is married it can never be again quite like old times in the home in which she was born and reared. Something is missing, something gone. It is not that the old love is dead, but that a new love is by its side, with new hopes, and mayhap new fears, to make up the fulness of life. The mother looks back upon her own young days, and realises now what she did not think of then, that the child she nestled at her bosom is going through the changes she has experienced; and so, if her daughter is happily mated, she thanks God--but now and then a wistful sigh escapes her.

In the afternoon Dick came to see them, and they chatted in the sitting room in which they had passed so many happy hours. He was not in a bright mood; dreading every minute that the murder would be discovered and made public, he felt that it would be almost a relief when the cloud burst, as burst it must before long. Knowing what he knew, the suspense was maddening.

"Now, Dick," said Aunt Rob, "I've got something to say to you. Reginald and Florence are here, as you know, but that doesn't make any difference in your room. There it is, ready for you, as it has been all through, and I shall begin to think there's some secret reason for your keeping away from us if you don't occupy it at once. I'll take no denial, Dick."

"Let us wait a bit, aunt," said Dick. "I'll sleep here now and then, and take my meals here, but it wouldn't be fair to Mrs. Pond for me to run away after having been in her house only a few days. So, like the kind dear soul that you are, let it remain as it is for a little while. What's that?"

It was a newsboy shouting at the top of his voice, and selling copies of "The Little Busy Bee" as fast as he could hand them out.

"It's a murder!" cried Aunt Rob. "And do you hear that? Hark! 'Horrible discovery!' Merciful heavens! 'Catchpole Square!' Where Reginald's father lives!"

The two men ran out of the house like mad, and were just in time to tear the last copy from the boy's hands. A glance at the headlines was sufficient.

"You were right, Dick, you were right," said Uncle Rob. "Samuel Boyd's murdered!"

They looked at each other with white faces.

"Found dead in his bed! Strangled! We must keep it from them at home, Dick."

"Impossible, uncle. Listen--there's another boy shouting it out. Let's get back to the house."

They read as they walked, Uncle Rob holding the paper, and Dick looking over his shoulder.

"What is it--what is it?" cried Aunt Rob, meeting them in the passage.

"If it's true, it's murder," said Uncle Rob. "Come into the room, and shut the door. Speak low. Is Florence upstairs?"

"Yes. Wait a minute." She stepped softly to the room above, and quickly returned. "Reginald is dozing, and Florence has fallen asleep in her chair. The poor child is tired out. Murder! Where? In Catchpole Square?"

"Yes."

"Reginald's father?"

"Yes." She uttered a cry of horror. "I must go to the office at once."

"Dick! You're not going, too?"

"I can't stop, aunt. I must go with uncle."

He was in a fever of impatience to get out of the house.

"Do what you can, mother, to keep it from Florence," said Uncle Rob, hurriedly. "If it comes to her ears tell her we've gone to see about it. Now, then, Dick."

"Leave me the paper, father. How horrible! How horrible!"

"Here it is; don't let Florence see it. We'll get another as we go along." As they hastened to Bishop Street Station he said, "This is a bad business, Dick."

"A frightful business."

"I wonder if Mr. Boyd made a will."

"Ah, I wonder."

"If he hasn't his money falls to Reginald. The chances are, though, that there's a will, disinheriting him."

"Do you think so?" asked Dick.

"Don't you?" his uncle asked, in return.

"I don't know what to think. Time will show."

"It will show a good many things. It's got to show what has become of Abel Death. I'm sorry for his wife and that poor little girl."

"I'm sorry for a good many people," said Dick. His uncle cast a hurried look at him. "I don't mean anything. My head's in a whirl."

"No wonder. There's another boy shouting the news. Run after him and get a paper."

They both raced, and bought two copies. The boy's face was beaming.

"He's happy enough," said Inspector Robson.

At the police station they learned that two constables had been sent to Catchpole Square to ascertain whether the news was true.

"I've given them instructions," said the day inspector, "if they can't get into the house by the front door, to scale the wall at the back. I can't say I like the way this case has been got up. Those newspaper men are getting too meddlesome altogether."

"But if it's true," suggested Inspector Robson.

"That will make it all the worse for us," grumbled the day inspector. "The next thing the papers will do will be to start a Scotland Yard of their own. The fact is, the police haven't got power enough; we daren't move without proof positive. It's all very well to talk of the liberty of the subject, but it's my opinion the subject's got more liberty than it has a right to have. I'll give you an instance. I know a man who is as mad as mad can be--a dangerous chap, with a bloodthirsty eye, carries knives, and looks at you as if he'd like to murder you. But we daren't touch him. Why? Because nobody charges him. When he sticks a knife into somebody we can lay our hands on him, but not till then; so we've got to wait till mischiefs done. Then they'll prove him mad, and he'll be made comfortable for life. There's this affair; the public will be down on us for not being the first to make the discovery. *We* can't move, but a newspaper man can. It's like taking the bread out of our mouths."

Inspector Robson made no comment, but offered advice.

"If I were in your place I should send three or four more constables to Catchpole Square. Deadman's Court is a narrow thoroughfare, and there'll be a rush of people to stare at the house. There should be a guard back and front. I'm going there now to have a look round."

"I'll send the men after you," said the day inspector, "instanter."

Off they hurried to Catchpole Square, where they found that a great many sight-seers had already gathered, of whom only a few at a time were allowed to enter to stare up at the windows of Samuel Boyd's house, a constable being stationed at the entrance of Deadman's Court to guard the passage. Inspector Robson asked this officer where the other constable was.

"Gone to the station, sir, for further instructions," replied the constable, whose name was Filey.

"Who is it?"

"Simmons, sir. We was detailed together."

"Have you been in the house?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did you get in?"

"Over the wall, at the back. We borrowed a ladder, and Simmons mounted and got over, while I kept watch outside."

"What did he find?"

"The body, sir, just as the paper describes."

"Did you get into the house the same way as Simmons?"

"No, sir. He found the key of the street door hanging on a cord in Mr. Boyd's bedroom, and he came out that way and let me in."

At this point four constables from the station appeared on the scene, Applebee among them.

"Who has the key of the street door?"

"I have, sir."

"Give it to me. I knew Mr. Boyd by sight, and so did you, Applebee."

"Could pick him out of a thousand, sir."

"And you, Dick, were intimately acquainted with him. We'll go in and see the body. By the way, Filey, was the street door chained and bolted when Simmons unlocked it?"

"I never asked him. Here he is, sir; he can answer for himself."

Constable Simmons joined the group, and Inspector Robson repeated the question.

"Neither locked *nor* bolted, sir," he replied.

Inspector Robson drew Dick aside, and said, "That's a suspicious circumstance, Dick. The murderer got in by the back entrance, and got out by the front. I argue it this way. He gets in, he kills the man, he finds the key of the street door in the bedroom, he goes down, unchains, unbolts, and unlocks the door. He then returns to the bedroom and fastens the key on the cord, goes down again and lets himself out. It seems to prove that the murder was committed by a novice."

Dick made no remark. He recollected that Mrs. Death had not said anything in the police station of Reginald's visit to his father in the afternoon, and of his having a second key to the street door. That information had been given exclusively to Dick by Mrs. Death in Draper's Mews; it would come out presently, of course, but he would not utter a word to throw the shadow of a suspicion on Reginald. "A nice treacherous part I'm playing," he thought, "but I must go on with it. God knows how things will turn out."

There were some twenty or thirty persons in the Square; a few were airing theories concerning the murder, and recalling other crimes as mysterious and thrilling; one man was boasting that he had seen every house in London in which a murder had been committed during the last forty years; the majority were silent, and appeared to derive a creepy enjoyment by simply staring at the walls and windows. A journalist was jotting down everything he heard that could be incorporated into an article. Two newspaper artists were sketching, and one of these came forward and asked Inspector Robson if he would kindly point out the window of the room in which the body was lying. He replied that he did not know. The other artist, observing that the Inspector had a key in his hand, inquired if it belonged to the house.

"Key of the street door," said the inspector, whereupon the artist immediately took a sketch of it, and wrote beneath, "Key of the Street Door by which the Murderer Made his Escape."

"We go in for realism," he said, as with a few skilful touches he limned the faces of Inspector Robson, Constable Applebee, and Dick on his sketching pad. "Nothing tickles the public so much as sketches from real life in pen and pencil. We live in a melodramatic age, and must go with the times. I belong to 'The Illustrated Afternoon.' Now I call these speaking likenesses. I take it you belong to the force, and are here upon official business. May I inquire your name, or shall I call it the Portrait of a Gentleman who Carried the Street Door Key?"

With no good grace Inspector Robson gave his name, which was placed beneath his portrait. Then Applebee was asked for *his* name, and it was given more willingly. The worthy constable had no objection to his features appearing in "The Illustrated Afternoon"; the picture would be preserved in the family as an heirloom.

"And yours?" inquired the artist, of Dick.

"Private person," said Dick.

"Thank you," said the artist, and wrote beneath the portrait, "Private Person who, for Unexplained Reasons, Declined to Give his Name."

The insertion of the key in the lock caused much excitement, and all the artillery of the press was brought to bear upon the inspector. The industrious journalists advanced cogent reasons why they should be let into the house; they begged, they clamoured, but they could not convince the obdurate inspector.

"Very sorry, gentlemen," he said, "but it can't be allowed."

He could not, however, prevent them from obtaining a glimpse of the dark passage, and this glimpse was quite sufficient to enable them to give a vivid description of the walls, the staircase, and the umbrella stand with one umbrella in it, which the eagle eye of the smarter of the artists transferred like lightning to his pad. It was an interesting feature in his article, "The Murdered Man's Umbrella." There was great disappointment among the group outside when the door was closed upon them.

"You've been up these stairs often enough, Dick," said Inspector Robson. "Take us to the room."

His eyes opened wide when they reached the office, and both he and Constable Applebee stared around in amazement.

"Did you ever see anything like this, Applebee?"

"Never, sir, out of a play."

They spoke in hushed voices.

Dick could not have explained why he counted the bottles of wine. It was done mechanically, and without motive, but it gave him a surprise. "Seventy-five bottles," he thought. "I'll take my oath that when I counted them the night before last, there were seventy-six."

"Where's the bedroom, Dick?" whispered the inspector.

Dick opened the door, and creeping in, they stood looking down upon the dead face. In this awful presence they were dumb. Stepping very softly they returned to the office. Then Inspector Robson spoke.

"It's Samuel Boyd. What do you say, Applebee--do you recognise the features?"

"I'll swear to the man, sir."

"And you, Dick?"

"There can be no doubt of it."

"The coroner must be informed. Go and see who's knocking at the street door, Applebee. Don't let any one in." The constable departed on his errand. "It's a clear case, Dick. I wouldn't say so to any one but you, and we must keep our own counsel. The name of the murderer of Samuel Boyd is Abel Death. Now we know why he's keeping out of the way. He's got a long start of us. Here's Applebee coming back. Not a word. Who is it, Applebee?"

"Mrs. Death and her little girl, sir. She's half distracted, and tried to force her way in."

"We've seen what we came to see," said Inspector Robson, "and no person must be admitted into the house. You will keep in the Square to-night, Applebee. I'll put another man on your beat."

"Very good, sir."

The moment they emerged into the Square Gracie ran to Dick and took his hand. An infinite pity filled his heart as he looked down at her pallid, mournful face.

"It's all right now, mother," she said, hoarsely. "Dick'll stand up for us."

"Is it true, sir, is it true?" cried Mrs. Death, a wild terror in her eyes. "We've run here as fast as we could."

"It is unhappily true," he answered.

"Then where's my husband? Do you know what they're saying? That he murdered Mr. Boyd! They lie--they lie! Oh, my God! Is there any justice in the world?"

"Don't make a disturbance, Mrs. Death," said Inspector Robson, very kindly. "I am truly sorry for you, but you can do no good by coming here."

"Where else should I come, sir?" she asked, her tears falling fast. "Mr. Boyd is the only man who can tell me what has become of my husband, and he's dead, you say. Who killed him? What a wicked world--oh what a wicked, wicked world! Haven't I enough to bear without this being thrown in my teeth?"

"Don't take on so, mother," said Gracie, in a dull, apathetic voice, but Dick understood how great her inward suffering was by the convulsive twining of her little fingers round his. "It's all right now we've got Dick. You're our friend, ain't you, Dick?"

"May they be struck down dead for their lies!" sobbed Mrs. Death. "How dare they, how dare they accuse my poor husband, who never raised his hand against a living creature!"

"Do these people live in your neighbourhood?" asked Inspector Robson.

"Yes, sir; they do."

"They should be warned not to be so free with their tongues, or they may get themselves in trouble. Can you point them out?"

"I can show them you," said Gracie, answering for her mother.

"Go with her," said Inspector Robson to Dick, in a low tone, "and give her neighbours a caution. The poor woman has something yet worse in store for her. Then go home to Aunt Rob and Florence, and remain there to-night. They need a man's support and sympathy, and my duties will chain me to the office."

"Thank you, sir," said Gracie, whose sharp ears caught every word, "you're ever so good to us." A sudden tightening of her hand on Dick's caused him to look up, and he saw Dr. Vinsen.

"I have heard what has passed," said the doctor, addressing himself to Inspector Robson, "and shall be glad to offer my services in the interests of humanity--the in-te-rests of hu-ma-ni-ty."

"Who may you be, sir?" inquired Inspector Robson.

"I am Dr. Vinsen. Our friends here have some knowledge of me, I believe." He shed a benevolent smile around. "This is a most shocking murder. It would be worth your while, Mr. Remington, if you could discover the perpetrator of the frightful crime, and so relieve this unfortunate woman's distress. It shall be done, madam, it shall be done. Rely upon me. Let not the criminal hope that his guilt can be for ever hidden. There is an All-seeing Eye--Divine justice will overtake him--will o-ver-take him. Is that the house in which the victim lies?"

"Yes," said Dick.

"A singular place for a man to live in--and die in. Now, my dear madam, if you wish me to admonish these slanderers I am ready to accompany you."

"Dick's going to speak to 'em," said Gracie.

"Oh, Dick's going to speak to them. And you would rather Dick did it?"

"Yes, if you please, sir."

"Well, then, Dick it shall be. I have no doubt he will do it as well as myself--better, perhaps, he being a literary character." There was a faint twinkle in his sleepy eyes. "But you have no objection to my walking a little way with your mother, I hope? Mr. Inspector, have you any opinion----"

"Don't ask me for opinions," interrupted Inspector Robson.

"Pardon my indiscretion, but one's natural curiosity, you know. There will be an inquest?"

"Of course there will be an inquest."

"Of course--*of* course. Good day, Mr. Inspector, I am greatly obliged to you. Now, my dear madam."

They walked out of Deadman's Court, Mrs. Death and Dr. Vinsen in front, Dick and Gracie in the rear, at whom now and then the doctor, his head over his shoulder, cast an encouraging smile.

"Do you like him, Dick?" asked Gracie.

"No, I don't," he replied, "and I don't know why."

"*I* do," said Gracie. "He's so slimy."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A MODERN KNIGHT OF CHIVALRY.

Draper's Mews and its purlieus were on fire with excitement, raised by a spark dropped by a vicious beetle-browed coster, whose chronic state for years past had been too much beer, and

liquor of a worse kind. Mrs. Death's neighbours were by no means unfavourably disposed towards her and her family. The kindness of the poor to the poor is proverbial, and there is much less friction in the way of social scandal among the lower classes than among those of higher rank. This was exemplified in Draper's Mews, where the Death family had long resided, and had fought life's bitter battle in amity with all around them. Now and then, of course, small differences had cropped up, but they were soon got over, and there was no serious disturbance of friendly relations. To this happy state of things there was, however, an exception. It happened in this way.

Two or three years ago, on a bright summer day, the beetle-browed coster wheeled his barrow through the poor neighbourhood, disposing of his stock of early cherries at fourpence the standard pound. Children who had a halfpenny or a penny to spare, beggared themselves incontinently, and walked about with cherry ear-rings dangling in their ears, while some made teapots with fruit and stalks, and refreshed themselves with imaginary cups of the finest leaf of China. Abel Death stood by, and looking at the children thought of his own, and fingered the few loose coppers in his pocket. Strange that fruit so tempting and young--the cherries were whitehearts, with the daintiest blush on their innocent cheeks--should have been destined to bring sorrow to the hearts of those who were dear to the poor clerk! But in this reflection we must not forget the apple in the Garden of Eden.

Unable to resist the temptation Abel Death bought half a pound of the pretty things, and had received and paid for them, when he noticed an ugly piece of lead at the bottom of the scale in which the fruit was weighed. What made the matter worse was that on the coster's barrow was displayed an announcement in blazing letters of vermilion, "Come to the Honest Shop for Full Weight." Which teaches a lesson as to the faith we should place in boisterous professions. Abel Death remonstrated, the coster slanged and bullied, there was a row and a growling crowd, some of whom had been defrauded in like manner, and among the crowd an inspector of weights and measures, who, backed by a constable, forthwith brought before the magistrate the cheat, the barrow (the coster wheeling it), the innocent cherries, and the scales with the piece of lead attached to the wrong balance. The moving scene, with its animated audience laughing, babbling, explaining at the heels of the principal actors in the drama, was almost as good a show as a Punch and Judy. With tears in his eyes, which he wiped away with his cuff, the coster declared that he'd take his oath he didn't know how the piece of lead could have got on the bottom of the scale, all he could say was that some one who had a down on him must have put it there to get him in trouble, he'd like to find out the bloke, that he would, he'd make it hot for him; and, despite this whining defence, was fined, would not pay the fine, and went to prison for seven days, whimpering as he was led from the court, "Wot's the use of a cove tryin' to git a honest livin'?"

The result of this swift stroke of justice was a mortal enmity against Abel Death. He proclaimed a vendetta, and waited for his chance, meanwhile avenging himself by kicking and cuffing the younger members of the Death family when he met them, and encouraging his children to do the same. The chance came with the disappearance of Abel Death and the discovery of the murder of Samuel Boyd. Forthwith he set light to a fire which spread with startling rapidity, and he went about instilling his poison into the ears of Mrs. Death's neighbours. Hence her agony of mind.

Dick traced the rumours to their fountain head, found the man, talked to him, argued with him--in vain. It was a public matter, and the usual crowd collected.

"Look 'ere," cried the coster, to Dick, "we don't want none o' *your*
cheek, we don't. Who are you, I'd like to know, puttin' *your* spoke in? A innercent man, is 'e? Looks like it, don't it? Wot's the innercent man a-keepin' out of the way for? Why don't 'e come 'ome? Tell me that? 'Ere, I'll wait till you've made up somethink, somethink tasty, yer know. Take yer time. Wot! Ain't got a bloomin' word to say for yerself? Wot do you think?" Appealing to the people surrounding them. "'E's a nice sort o' chap to come palaverin' to me, ain't 'e?"

The listeners were not all of one mind, many of them, indeed, being mindless. Some took one side, some took another, while Mrs. Death and Gracie stood by, pitiful, white-faced spectators of the scene.

"Why, it's as clear as mud," continued the coster. "The sneakin' thief killed 'is master, and then laid 'ands on everythink 'e could collar, and cut away. Put them things together, and there you are, yer know."

"I know where *you'll* be," said Dick, speaking in his best judicial manner, "if you're not careful. It won't be the first time you've got yourself in trouble." The shot told, and the listeners wavered. "We're Englishmen, I believe," said Dick, following up his advantage. "We don't carry knives like the Italians, or fight with our legs like the French, and we're not made in Germany." This cosmopolitan reference was an immense hit, and two or three politicians said "Hear, hear!" Dick went on. "We fight with our fists, and we don't hit a man when he's down. What we insist upon is fair play; that's what we wave our flag for--fair play. Look at Mrs. Death, a hard-working, respectable woman, that's lived among you all these years, and never done one of you an ill turn. Look at her innocent children that this great hulking brute is flinging stones at. It's cowardly, sneaking work. Oh, I'm not afraid of you, my man; if you lift your hand against me I'll give you something to remember me by. You haven't the pluck to hit one of your own size; you only hit

women and children. I don't believe you've got a drop of English blood in your cowardly carcase." With sparkling eyes and glowing face he turned to the crowd. "I appeal to a jury of English men and women. Is what this brute is doing manly, is it fair, is it English--that's the point, is it English?"

There was no doubt now as to the sympathy. It went out full and free to Mrs. Death and Gracie, who stood, as it were, in the dock, with the beetle-browed, sodden-faced coster accusing them, and this generous, bright-eyed, open-faced young fellow defending them. A woman who had a good recollection of the cherry incident, called out, "Cherries!" and they all began to laugh. This laughter completely settled the matter; the victory was won. The coster slunk off.

Dick was overwhelmed with congratulations, and Mrs. Death cast grateful glances at him, and wistful glances at her old friends and neighbours. They answered the mute appeal by thronging about her. To her they said, "Never you mind, my dear, we'll see you righted." And to Dick, "You spoke up like a man, sir, and we're proud of you." Which he capped, rather vaguely, by retorting, "I'm proud of *you*. You're the sort of women that have made England what it is. Wives and mothers, that's what *you* are." A shrill voice called out, "Not all of us, sir," amid shouts of laughter, which caused Dick to add, "Then I hope you soon *will* be." This happy rejoinder won him the admiring glances of all the single women, many of whom (as yet unattached) breathed silent aspirations that heaven would send them such a man. At the worst of times Dick was a good-looking young fellow; seen now at his best, glowing with fervour, and espousing the cause of the weak, he was positively handsome. What wonder that maiden hearts were fluttering! He could have picked and chosen.

Dr. Vinsen had been an amused witness of the encounter.

"My young friend," he said, "my dear young friend, victorious again, always victorious; and in eloquence a Demosthenes. Accept my congratulations. Mrs. Death, take your little girl home and put her to bed, then apply a hot linseed poultice. I will call upon you to-morrow morning. Mr. Dick Remington--pardon the familiarity, but Dick is so appropriate--I salute you--sal-ute you."

Dick nodded good-day, and turned off with Gracie.

"Oh, Dick," she said, fondling his hand, "you're splendid, splendid!" No knight of chivalry in "the good old times" (which were much worse than the present) ever inspired deeper admiration in the breast of lady fair than Dick did in the breast of this poor little waif. "I told you, mother, it would be all right if we had Dick with us."

"Yes, you did, dear."

"Don't I wish I was old enough to walk out with you!" said Gracie.

"How do you know I'm not a married man, Gracie?" he asked.

"Go along!" she replied, with a touch of scorn. "As if I don't know the married ones by only looking at 'em!"

"You mustn't mind her foolishness, sir," said Mrs. Death. "She says the silliest things! We're very grateful to you, sir."

"Oh, nonsense," he said, "anyone else would have done the same."

"They wouldn't," said Gracie. "They couldn't."

With a kind pressure of their hands he turned in the direction of Aunt Rob's house, where a very different task awaited him.

CHAPTER XXX.

REGINALD'S MAN OF BUSINESS.

As it was in Draper's Mews so was it in other parts of the metropolis. The murder was talked of everywhere, and in some mysterious way the disappearance of Abel Death was associated with it. The wildest speculations were indulged in. He had gone to Australia, he had gone to America, he had never left England at all, he had taken with him an enormous sum of money which he had found in the house in Catchpole Square, he had so disguised himself that his own wife and children would not have known him, he had been seen in various parts of London. He was

generally condemned, and had no defenders. Had his fate, if caught and in the clutches of the law, depended upon the public vote, his doom would have been sealed.

So was it with Mrs. Pond and Mrs. Applebee, who could talk upon no other subject.

"Applebee says that when Inspector Robson saw the body he turned as white as a ghost."

"Why should he?" asked Mrs. Pond. "It's not the first body he's seen by many."

"Why, don't you know, my dear," said Mrs. Applebee, "that his daughter's married to Mr. Boyd's son?"

"No, I never heard of it."

Mrs. Applebee bristled with importance. "They were married only a few weeks ago, and they do say it was a runaway match. Off they went one morning, arm in arm, to the registrar's office, and she comes home half an hour afterwards, and says, 'Mother, I'm married to Mr. Reginald Boyd.' 'Married, Florence!' cries Mrs. Robson, and bursts into tears.

"Florence!" said Mrs. Pond, in dismay, thinking of the handkerchief.

"That's her name, my dear, and a pretty girl I'm told. She's a lucky one. Applebee says if Mr. Boyd hasn't made a will her husband'll come in for everything. Mr. Boyd must have been worth piles of money. Let's hope it'll do somebody good; it never did while he was alive. It's curious that your lodger, Mr. Remington, is mixed up in it, too. He's Inspector Robson's nephew, you know; him and Miss Florence was brought up together. He's been hanging about Catchpole Square a good deal the last week or two; in the dead of night, too. Applebee says he'd like to get hold of that woman that slipped through his hands on the night of the fog. He's got an idea that she must have something to do with the murder."

"But doesn't he think Abel Death did it?" asked Mrs. Pond, faintly.

"Oh, yes, he thinks that, as everybody does, but the woman might be mixed up with it somehow. Just listen to those boys shouting out another edition. What are they calling out? Fresh discoveries! I must get a paper; that'll be the third I've bought to-day. Perhaps they've caught Abel Death. The man on 'The Illustrated Afternoon' took Applebee's portrait, and I'm dying to see it. I wouldn't miss it for anything."

There was, of course, but one subject in Aunt Rob's mind when Dick presented himself. She told him that Reginald was in a terrible state.

"I couldn't stop the boys coming into the street," she said, "and Reginald heard them. Florence ran down to me all in a flutter, and asked if I didn't hear them calling out something about a murder in Catchpole Square, and what was it? Then she caught sight of the paper that I was trying to hide, and when she looked at it she was frightened out of her life. We did all we could to keep it from Reginald, but he couldn't help seeing from our faces that there was something serious the matter. At last there was nothing for it but to tell him, and we did it as gently as we could. But the shock was dreadful; he sobbed like a little child. Then he cried that he must go to the house, and we had almost to use force to prevent him leaving his bed. Florence threw her arms round him, and begged and implored so that he had to give in. We tried to comfort him by saying that it mightn't be true, that it might be another man who was murdered, and that you and Uncle Rob had gone to see about it. I'm afraid to ask you if it's true, Dick."

"It is too true," he replied, and rapidly related all that had passed since he and Uncle Rob had left her. She listened horror-struck, and when he finished could hardly find voice to ask who he thought was the murderer.

"I don't know what to think," he said.

"There can be only one man," she said, but he stopped her from proceeding.

"Don't let's talk about it just now, aunt. There are a dozen men who would rather see Samuel Boyd dead than alive. He had plenty of enemies, and he deserved to have. If Reginald knew I was here he would want to see me."

"He made me promise the moment either of you came back to bring you up to him."

"We'll go at once. There must be no further concealment."

Reginald was sitting up in bed, very white and haggard.

"I thought I heard voices," he said when they entered the room. "Have you been there?"

"Yes, I have been there," said Dick.

"Did you see him? Speak--speak!"

"I saw him."

"You saw him! Well--well?"

"He is dead."

"My God! My God! My father!--Dead! And he died at enmity with me!" groaned Reginald, sinking down in bed, and turning his face to the wall. They did not disturb him--did not dare to speak. "Is it certain that he was murdered," he said presently in a broken voice, "that he did not die a natural death?"

"I fear there is no doubt."

"Strangled, the paper says--strangled!" Dick was silent. "Strangled in his sleep! Without having time to think, to pray! Oh, Florence, what shame, what misery I have brought upon you!"

"It is an awful misfortune, Reginald, dear," said Florence, her arms round his neck, her face nestled close to his, "and it makes us all very unhappy. But there is no shame in it, dearest."

"There is, there is," he moaned. "Shame, shame--misery and disgrace!"

Dick, observing him closely, strove to arrive at some conclusion, apart from the evidence in his possession, with respect to his complicity in the terrible deed. Innocent or guilty, the shock of the news could have produced no other effect than was shown in the white face, the shaking body, the sobbing voice. There was another interval of silence, which, again, Reginald was the first to break. "Tell me everything."

"You know the worst," said Dick, "let us wait till you are stronger."

"No," cried Reginald, "I cannot wait. You must tell me everything--now, here! Wait? With those cries ringing in my ears? Don't you hear them? Hark!" They listened, and heard nothing. It was the spiritual echo of the ominous sounds that was in Reginald's ears. "Is anyone suspected? Is there any clue? Are not the people speaking about it in the streets?"

"There are all sorts of rumours," said Dick, reluctantly. "When Uncle Rob and I went into the house we found everything as the papers describe. Nothing seems to have been taken away, but of course we can't be positive on that point yet. There were no signs of a struggle."

"The paper speaks of bloody footprints," said Reginald, a white fear in his eyes.

"There are signs of them," said Dick, with a guilty tremor.

"And no blood on my--my father's body, nor in the bed?"

"None."

"The house has been broken into?"

"Yes."

"The man who broke into it did the deed," said Reginald, in a low, musing tone; then, after a pause, "But the blood--the blood! How to account for that? How did you get into the house?"

"Through the front door."

"But--the key!" exclaimed Reginald, and Dick fancied he detected signs of confusion. "Where did you get the key from?"

"A policeman scaled the wall at the back of the house, and entered through the broken window. He found the key in your father's room, and he came down and let us in."

"He had to draw the bolts?"

"The door was not bolted, and the chain was not up."

"Then my father couldn't----," said Reginald, and suddenly checked himself. "Go on."

"When Uncle Rob and I left the house Mrs. Death and her little girl were in the square; she had tried to force herself into the house, but the policeman kept her back. You know from the papers that her husband has not been seen since Friday week."

"Until I read it in this paper an hour ago," said Reginald, pointing to the copy of "The Little Busy Bee" that lay on the bed, "I was in ignorance of it. I cannot understand his disappearance; it is a mystery. The last I saw of him was on the afternoon of that very Friday, when I went to see my father in Catchpole Square."

"Yes?" said Dick, eagerly, greatly relieved at this candid confession. It was a gleam of comfort.

"My father was not at home, and I came away." He pressed his hand upon his eyes, and a long silence ensued. They looked at him anxiously, and Florence, her finger at her lips, warned them not to speak. Removing his hand, he proceeded: "I ought to tell you now why I went to see my

father. Had I been well I should have spoken of it before. Even you, Florence, have not heard what I am about to say. Dick, I can trust you not to speak of this to any one."

"You may trust me thoroughly, Reginald."

"I know, I know. In my dear wife's eyes you are the soul of honour and faithfulness, and in my eyes, also, Dick. It is my hope that we shall always be firm friends."

With but one thought in his mind, the peace and happiness of the woman he loved, Dick answered, "And mine."

"Thank you," said Reginald, gravely. "What I wish to tell you commences with my child-life. My mother, when she married my father, brought him a small fortune, and she had money, also, in her own right. Young as I was, I knew that she was not happy, and that there were differences between her and my father, arising partly from his endeavours to obtain the sole control of every shilling she possessed. There were probably other causes, but they did not come to my knowledge. My mother's refusal to comply with his demands was prompted by her solicitude for my future. She was the best of women, and never uttered one word of reproach against my father; she suffered in silence, as only women can, and she found some solace in the love she bore for me and in the love I bore for her. We were inseparable, and, occupying the home with my father, we lived a life apart from him. He had but one aim, the amassing of money, and there was no sympathy between us. I hope there are not many homes in which such estrangement exists. She died when I was ten, and I lost the one dear friend I had in the world. In our last embrace on her deathbed she said to me, in a whisper, 'Promise me that when you are a man--a happy man, I fervently pray--you will not become a money-lender.' I gave her the promise, and an abhorrence of the trade my father practised took deep root in me, and has grown stronger every year of my life. Over an open grave there should be no bitterness, and though my heart is sore I will strive to avoid it. My mother left me her little fortune, and appointed a trustee over whom, by ill chance, my father subsequently obtained great influence, and in the end had him completely in his power. This trustee died when I was twenty-two, and before then my inheritance was in my father's hands to deal with as he pleased. My mother's will was very precise. A certain sum every year was to be expended upon my education until I came of age, when the residue was to be handed to me to make a practical start in life. She named the schools and colleges in which I was to be educated, and when I was nineteen I was to spend the next two years in France and Germany and Italy, to perfect myself in the languages of those countries. It was at my option whether I remained abroad after I came of age, and, in point of fact, I did, returning home a year after the death of my trustee. You will see by these provisions that I was cut off entirely from the domestic and business life of my father, and I understood and appreciated her reasons when I became intimately acquainted with it--as I did when, my education completed, I returned to his home in Catchpole Square. I lived with him between two and three years, and during that time his one endeavour was to induce me to share the business with him, to obey his orders, to carry out his directions, to initiate myself into a system which I detested, into practices which I abhorred. We had numberless discussions and quarrels; he argued, he stormed, he threatened, and I steadily resisted him. At length matters came to a head, and I finally convinced him that I would not go his way, but would carve out a path for myself. 'Upon what kind of foundation will you carve out this path?' he asked. 'You will want money to keep yourself in idleness till you establish a position, and are able to pay for your livelihood.' 'I have it,' I replied. 'Indeed,' he said, 'I was not aware of it. Have you some secret hoard of wealth which you have hidden from me?' 'I have my inheritance,' I said. He laughed in my face. 'Your inheritance!' he exclaimed. 'You haven't a shilling. Every penny of it, and more, has been spent upon your education and riotous living since your beautiful lady mother died.' The sneering reference to my dear mother angered me more than his statement that I was a beggar, and hot words passed between us, in the midst of which I left the room. The next day I returned to the subject, and said I had understood from my trustee that when I was twenty-one years of age I should come into a fortune of eight thousand pounds. 'He lied,' my father said. 'I have the papers and the calculations here in my safe. You can look them over if you like. I deal fair by every man, and I will deal fair by you, ungrateful as you have proved yourself to be. I could refuse to produce the papers for your private inspection, but I am honest and generous, and though all is at an end between us unless you consent to assist me in my business, I will satisfy you that your father is not a rogue. You are indebted to me a large sum of money, and I shall be happy to hear how soon you intend to pay it.' I replied that I would choose the humblest occupation rather than remain with him, and he took from his safe a mass of documents and said I must examine them in his presence. I did examine them, but could make nothing of them, the figures were so confusing. There were records of transactions into which my trustee had entered on my behalf, losses upon speculations, of charges for my education, of sums of money which had been sent to me from time to time for my personal expenses, of interest upon those advances, of interest upon other sums, of the cost of my board and lodging during the time I had lived at home with my father, of the small sums he had given me during the last two or three years, and of interest upon those sums. At the end of these documents there was a debit upon the total amount of twelve hundred pounds, which my father said I owed him. All this I saw as in a mist, but cunning as the figures were, there was no doubt in my mind that I had been defrauded, and by the last man in the world who should have inflicted this wrong upon me. What could I do but protest? I did protest. My father, putting the papers back in his safe, retorted that I was reflecting upon his honesty, that I was his enemy and had better go to law, and that he renounced me as his son. We had a bitter quarrel, which ended in my leaving his house, a beggar, to begin the world; and so strong were the feelings I

entertained towards him, and so sensitive was I to the opprobrium which, in the minds of many people, was attached to the name of Boyd, that I determined to renounce it, as he had renounced me. Thus it was that you knew me only as Mr. Reginald; it caused me many a bitter pang to deceive you, and I was oppressed with doubts as to the wisdom of my resolve. All that is now at an end, however, and I ask your pardon for the deceit. Perhaps you have heard from Florence of the struggle I made to provide a home for her, and of my disappointment and despair at not seeing the way to its accomplishment. I thought much of the fraud of which I had been the victim, and the more I thought the more was I convinced that my father was retaining money which rightly belonged to me. At length it seemed to me that it was my duty to see him again upon the subject, and to make an earnest endeavour to obtain restitution. For my own sake, no. Had I not my dear Florence I think I should have left England, and have striven in another country to carve my way; but having seen her I could not, could not leave her. It was in pursuance of this resolution that I went to Catchpole Square last Friday week, and saw Abel Death, who informed me that my father was not at home. Now you know all."

It was with almost breathless interest that Dick listened to this confession, and it was with a feeling of dismay that he heard the last words, "Now you know all." Did they know all? Not a word about the key, not a word about the second visit to his father late on that fatal Friday night!

"Are people speaking about Abel Death?" asked Reginald, turning to Dick.

"Yes. They are coupling his disappearance with the murder. A strong suspicion is entertained. His poor wife is nearly mad with grief."

"Do you tell me he is suspected of the crime?" cried Reginald, in an excited tone.

"Many suspect him."

"What cruelty to defame an innocent man--what cruelty, what cruelty!"

"Do you know for a certainty that he is innocent?" asked Dick.

"That is a strange question, Dick. How can I be certain? Until the truth is known, how can any man be certain? I speak from my knowledge of his character. A drudge, working from hand to mouth. Alas! what misery and injustice this dreadful deed brings in its train!"

"Reginald, dear," said Florence, gently, "you are exhausted. Do not talk any more. Rest a little. Dick will remain here, and will come up when you want him."

"Yes, I am tired. You are a true friend, Dick. You will assist us, I know. Do all you can to avert suspicion from Abel Death. I must rest and think. There are so many things to think of--so many things!"

He held out his hand to Dick, and then sank back in his bed and closed his eyes. There was nothing more to be said at present, and Dick and Aunt Rob stole softly to the room below.

"Now, Dick," she said, "I am going to open my mind to you."

"Do, aunt."

"Has it occurred to you that in this trouble that has fallen upon Reginald he needs a man of business to act for him." Dick looked at her for an explanation. "A man of business," she repeated, "and a devoted friend, rolled into one. I am a practical woman as you know, Dick, and we mustn't lose sight of Reginald's interests--because his interests are Florence's now, and ours. He stands to-day in a very different position from what he did when he married Florence without our knowledge. Mr. Boyd's death is very shocking, and it will be a long time before we get over it; but after all it's not like losing one we loved. He's dead and gone, and the Lord have mercy upon him. The longer he lived the more mischief he'd have done, and the more poor people he'd have made miserable. It sounds hard, but it's the honest truth. I'm looking the thing straight in the face, and I feel that something ought to be done without delay."

"What ought to be done, aunt?"

"Well, Reginald is Mr. Boyd's only child, and there's that house in Catchpole Square, with any amount of valuable property in it, and no one to look after it. It mustn't be left to the mercy of strangers."

"It ought not to be."

"Reginald won't be able to stir out of the house for at least three or four days. Now, who's to attend to his interests? You. Who's to search for the will, supposing one was made--which with all my heart and soul I hope wasn't? You. Even if there is a will, leaving the money away from him, he can lay claim to the fortune his mother left him, for there isn't a shadow of doubt that he has been robbed of it. There's no one else with time on their hands that will act fair by him. You must be Reginald's man of business, Dick."

"Some person certainly should represent him," said Dick, thoughtfully, "and I shall have no objection if he wishes it. But it must be done legally."

"Of course it must. Do you know a solicitor?"

"Not one."

"And I don't, but I think I can put you on the scent of a gentleman that will do for us. In High Street, about a dozen doors down on the left hand side from here, there's a brass plate with 'Mr. Lamb, Solicitor,' on it. Just step round, and ask Mr. Lamb if he'll be kind enough to come and see me on very particular business. While you're gone I'll say just three words to Reginald; I'll answer for it he'll not object."

"You *are* a practical woman, aunt," said Dick, putting on his hat.

"Have you lived with us all these years without finding it out? Cut away, Dick."

Away he went, and soon returned with Mr. Lamb, a very large gentleman with a very small practice; and being a gentleman with a very small practice he brought with him a capacious blue bag.

"This is professional, Mr. Lamb," said Aunt Rob.

"So I judge, madam, from your message," he answered, taking a seat, and pulling the strings of his blue bag with the air of a gentleman who could instantly produce any legal document she required.

Aunt Rob then explained matters, and asked what Reginald's position was.

"If there is no will, madam, he is heir at law," said Mr. Lamb.

"Until a will is found can he enter into possession of the house?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And being too ill to leave his bed, can he appoint some one to act for him?"

"He has an indisputable right to appoint any person he pleases."

"Then please draw up at once a paper to that effect, in as few words as possible."

"At once, madam!" exclaimed Mr. Lamb, with a professional objection to a course so prompt and straightforward.

"At once," said Aunt Rob, with decision. "This is an unusual case. There is the house with no one to take care of it, and here is my son-in-law upstairs, unable to leave his bed. If you cannot do what you want I must consult----"

"Madam," said Mr. Lamb, hastily, "there is no occasion for you to consult another solicitor. I will draw out such an authority as you require, and it can be stamped on Monday. Favour me with the name of the attorney."

"The attorney?" she said, in a tone of inquiry.

"The gentleman whom Mr. Reginald Boyd appoints to act for him?"

"Oh, Mr. Dick Remington. My nephew."

The solicitor, recognising that Aunt Rob was not a woman to be trifled with, even by a solicitor, accepted the situation with a good grace, and set to work.

"I have spoken to Reginald, Dick," said Aunt Rob, "and he consented gladly. It is to be a matter of business, mind that. We can't have you wasting your time for nothing."

In due time the solicitor announced that the document was ready, and read it out to them, not quite to Aunt Rob's satisfaction, who shook her head at the number of words, and was only reconciled when Dick said it was all right.

"It is in proper form and order," said Mr. Lamb, "though shorter than it should be."

"The shorter the better," said Aunt Rob.

He smiled sadly. "There is another thing Mr. Reginald Boyd should do, madam. He should take out letters of administration."

"Is that a long job?" she asked.

"No, madam, it is very simple, very simple."

"Then let it be done immediately."

"There are certain formalities, madam. With Mr. Reginald Boyd's permission we will attend to

it on Monday. To this present power of attorney the signatures of two witnesses are necessary."

"I'm one, and my nephew's another."

"Your nephew, madam, being an interested party, is not available. Your signature will be valid, and there is probably a servant in the house."

"Of course there is," said Aunt Rob, resentfully. "The law seems to me to be nothing but going round corners and taking wrong turnings purposely. Such a fuss and to-do about a signature I never heard."

Mr. Lamb gave her a reproachful look. "It is for the protection of the individual, madam. The law is a thing to be thankful for."

"*Is* it?" she snapped.

"Without law, madam," he said, in feeble protest, "society could not exist. We should be in a state of chaos."

The formalities were soon concluded. Reginald signed, Aunt Rob signed, and the servant signed, though at the words, "This is your hand and seal," she trembled visibly. Then instructions were given for the taking out of letters of administration, and Mr. Lamb took his departure.

"Your worthy aunt," he said, as Dick opened the street door for him, "is a very extraordinary woman. The manner in which she has rushed this business through is quite unique, and I am not sure, in the strict sense of the term, that it is exactly professional. I can only trust it will not be accepted as a precedent."

CHAPTER XXXI.

SCENES IN CATCHPOLE SQUARE.

From time to time there had been murders committed in London with details dismal and sordid enough to satisfy the most rabid appetites, but it was generally admitted that the great Catchpole Square Mystery outvied them all in just those elements of attraction which render crime so weirdly fascinating to the British public. Men and women in North Islington experienced a feeling akin to that which the bestowal of an unexpected dignity confers, and when they retired to bed were more than ordinarily careful about the fastening of locks and bolts. Timid wives woke in the middle of the night, and tremblingly asked their husbands whether they did not hear somebody creeping in the passages, and many a single woman shivered in her bed. Shopkeepers standing behind their counters bristled with it; blue-aproned butchers, knife in hand, called out their "Buy, buy, buy!" with a brisk and cheery ring; crossing sweepers touched their hats smartly to their patrons, and preceding them with the unnecessary broom as they swept nothing away, murmured the latest rumour; the lamplighters, usually a sad race, lighted the street lamps with unwonted alacrity; and the Saturday night beggars took their stands below the kerb in hopeful anticipation of a spurt in benevolence. Naturally it formed the staple news in the newspapers on Sunday and Monday, and all agreed that the excitement it had created was unparallelled in the records of the criminal calendar.

"On Saturday evening," said "The Little Busy Bee" in its Monday's editions, "numbers of people wended their way to Catchpole Square from every part of the metropolis. Up till late the usually quiet streets resembled a Saturday night market, and there was an extraordinary demand for the literature of crime, with which the vendors of second-hand books had provided themselves. Towards midnight the human tide slackened, but even during the early hours of the morning there were many fresh arrivals. On Sunday the excitement was renewed, and it is calculated that seven or eight thousand persons must have visited the Square in the course of the day, many of whom seemed to regard the occasion as a picnic.

"In our columns will be found picturesque accounts of incidents that came under the notice of our reporters, not the least amusing of which is that of the mother and father who brought with them a large family of children, and had come provided with food for a day's outing. They arrived at eleven in the morning, and at eleven at night were still there. They had been informed that when a murdered man was lying in his own bed unburied on the Day of Rest he was ordered to get up and dress himself when the church bells rang, and go to church to pray for his sins. If he disobeyed his soul was lost, and his ghost would appear on the roof at midnight, surrounded by flames and accompanied by the Evil One. 'Did he go to church?' asked our reporter, who, in a

conversation with the woman late on Sunday night, elicited this curious piece of information. 'No,' replied the woman, 'and it's a bad day's work for him. I shouldn't like to be in his shoes.' The woman furthermore said that she would give anything to see the ghost at midnight on the roof, thus evincing small regard for Samuel Boyd's salvation. 'It would be a better show, wouldn't it?' she observed, with an eye to theatrical effect. 'I've never seen the Devil.' It is deplorable that in this age such silly superstitions should obtain credence, and that with numbers of people in different parts of the country the belief in witchcraft and in demoniacal demonstrations should still exist.

"Secondary only in importance to the murder is the disappearance of Samuel Boyd's clerk, Abel Death. To suggest anything in the shape of complicity would be prejudging the case, but whatever may be the fate of Abel Death his poor family are to be commiserated. The theories and conjectures respecting the disappearance of this man are perfectly bewildering, and many are the excited discussions concerning it. Such licence of speech cannot be commended, and we suggest to those persons indulging in it the advisability of suspending their judgment.

"A full report of the inquest held this morning appears in our columns. In view of the burial of the body of the murdered man, which will take place to-morrow, it was deemed necessary to open the inquiry to-day, although it was anticipated that little progress would be made; but although the Coroner stated that the proceedings would be of a formal character, it will be seen that matters were introduced the development of which will be followed with the keenest interest. The appearance of an eminent barrister for Lord and Lady Wharton, whose names have not hitherto been associated with the mystery, aroused general curiosity, which was intensified by the conduct of Lady Wharton herself. The Court was crowded, and numbers of persons could not obtain admittance. Among the audience we noticed several famous actors and actresses."

CHAPTER XXXII.

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

This morning, at the Coroner's Court, Bishop Street, Mr. John Kent, the Coroner for the district, opened an inquiry into the death of Mr. Samuel Boyd, of Catchpole Square, who was found dead in his house on Saturday, the 9th inst., under circumstances which have already been reported in the newspapers.

The coroner, addressing the jury, said the initial proceedings would be chiefly formal. Their first duty would be to view the body of the deceased; after that certain witnesses would be examined who would testify to the finding of the body, and others who would give evidence of identification. The inquiry would then be adjourned till Wednesday, on which day medical and other evidence would be forthcoming. He refrained from any comment on the case, and he advised the jury to turn a deaf ear to the strange rumours and reports which were in circulation; it was of the utmost importance that they should keep an open mind, and be guided only by the evidence which would be presented to them. Much mischief was frequently done by the prejudice aroused by injudicious public comment on a case presenting such singular features as the present. Comments of this nature were greatly to be deplored; they hampered, instead of assisting, the cause of justice.

The jury then proceeded to Catchpole Square to view the body, and upon their return to court Mr. Finnis, Q.C., rose and stated that he appeared for Lord and Lady Wharton, who had a close and peculiar interest in the inquiry.

The Coroner said the inquiry would be conducted in the usual manner, without the aid of counsel, whose assistance would be available in another court, but not in this, where no accusation was brought against any person, and where no person was on his trial.

Mr. Finnis: "Our desire is to render material assistance to you and the jury. Lady Wharton----"

The Coroner: "I cannot listen to you, Mr. Finnis."

Mr. Finnis: "Lady Wharton has most important, I may say most extraordinary evidence to give----"

The Coroner: "Her evidence will be received, but not to-day. Pray be seated."

Mr. Finnis: "Her ladyship is in attendance."

The Coroner: "She is at liberty to remain; but I repeat, her evidence cannot be received to-day.

Only formal evidence will be taken to enable the body to be buried."

Mr. Finnis: "Evidence of identification, I understand?"

The Coroner: "Yes."

Mr. Finnis: "Lady Wharton's evidence bears expressly upon this point."

The Coroner: "It must be tendered at the proper time."

Mr. Finnis: "With all respect, Mr. Coroner, I submit that this is the proper time."

The Coroner: "I am the judge of that. I ask you not to persist. I shall conduct this inquiry in accordance with my duties as Coroner."

The first witness called was Mr. Robert Starr.

"You are a reporter?"

"A special reporter and descriptive writer for 'The Little Busy Bee.'"

"Were you the first person to enter the house in Catchpole Square after the death of Mr. Samuel Boyd?"

"I cannot say. Some person or persons had been there before me, as is proved by a broken window at the back of the house through which I obtained entrance, but whether after or before the death of Mr. Boyd is unknown to me."

"It appears, however, to have been a recent entrance?"

"It appears so."

"You have no knowledge of these persons?"

"None whatever."

"Having obtained entrance into the house, what next did you do?"

"I went through a passage, and up a staircase to another passage which leads to the street door. In this passage are doors opening into various rooms. I looked into these rooms without making any discovery, until I came to one which seems to have been used as an office. There are two doors in this office, one opening into a small room in which I saw nothing to arouse my suspicions, the other opening into a larger room which I found was a sleeping apartment."

"Examine this plan of the rooms, and tell us whether it is accurate?"

"Quite accurate, so far as my memory serves."

"The room on the right is the sleeping apartment?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Samuel Boyd's bedroom?"

"I do not know. There was a bed in it, and the usual appointments of a bedroom. I stepped up to the bed, and saw it was occupied. Examining closer, I discovered that the person in it was dead."

"By the person you mean Mr. Samuel Boyd?"

"I do not. I have never seen Mr. Boyd in his lifetime, and I could not therefore identify the body. But from the fact of the house being his, and from certain rumours of foul play which had reached me, I assumed that it was he."

"You examined the body?"

"Yes, and I observed marks on the throat which favoured the presumption that the man had been murdered."

"In his sleep?"

"I cannot vouch for that."

"Were there any signs of a struggle?"

"None. The limbs were composed, and what greatly surprised me was the orderly condition of the bedclothes."

"How long did you remain in the house?"

"About two hours."

"During that time were you quite alone?"

"Quite alone."

"Were there any indications of a robbery having been committed?"

"I observed none. The clothes of the deceased were on a chair, and there was no appearance of their having been rifled. There is a safe fixed to the wall; it did not seem to have been tampered with."

"Having completed your examination, what next did you do?"

"I left the house, and proceeded to the Bishop Street Police Station to give information of my discovery."

"And after that?"

"I went to the office of 'The Little Busy Bee,' and wrote an account of what I had seen and done, which, being published, was the first information the public received of the murder--if murder it was."

"Had any orders been given to you to take action in this matter?"

"None. I acted entirely on my own initiative."

"What impelled you?"

"Well, there seemed to me to be a mystery which should be unravelled in the public interests. I pieced three things together. The disappearance of Mr. Boyd's clerk, as reported in our paper, the silence of Mr. Boyd respecting that disappearance, upon which, had he written or spoken, he could probably have thrown some light, and the house in Catchpole Square sealed up, so to speak. These things required to be explained, and I set about it."

Mr. Finnis, Q.C.: "Now, Mr. Starr, at what time in the morning----"

The Coroner: "No, no, Mr. Finnis. I instruct the witness not to answer any questions you put to him."

Mr. Finnis: "Will you, then Mr. Coroner, ask him at what hour in the morning he made the discovery? I assure you it is a most important point."

The Coroner: "At what hour in the morning did you enter the house?"

"At a little after ten."

"And you left it?"

"At a few minutes before twelve. I went straight to the police station, where, no doubt, the time can be verified."

"Have you any other information to give bearing on this inquiry?"

"One thing should be mentioned. In my printed narrative I state that I noticed dark stains upon the floor of the office and the bedroom, and that I traced these stains to the window at the back. I scraped off a portion of the stains, which I gave to my chief, who handed it to an analyst. His report is that they are the stains of human blood."

"Were they stains of old standing?"

"No. I scraped them off quite easily."

"Did you observe any blood on the bedclothes?"

"None whatever."

The next witness was Constable Simmons, who stated that he and Constable Filey were instructed by the day inspector at the Bishop Street Police Station to enter the house for the purpose of ascertaining whether there was any truth in the information given by Mr. Starr.

"At what time were those instructions issued?"

"Somewhere about three o'clock."

"So that three hours elapsed before any action was taken?

"I am under orders, sir."

The witness then gave an account of how he got into the house by means of a ladder over the wall at the back, and through the window. Corroborating in every particular the evidence of the reporter, he went a step farther. In the bedroom of the deceased he found the key of the street door, which he opened to admit Constable Filey, who was keeping watch in the Square outside. The street door was neither chained nor bolted. He did not see any stains of blood on the floor; he did not look for them.

Constable Filey, who was next examined, gave evidence to the same effect. Neither of these officers was acquainted with Mr. Samuel Boyd, and could not therefore speak as to the identification of the body.

Inspector Robson was then called. His appearance caused some excitement, it being understood that his daughter was married to the son of the deceased.

"You are an inspector of police?"

"Yes. At present on night duty at the Bishop Street Station."

"You were acquainted with Mr. Samuel Boyd?"

"Not personally. I have seen him several times, but have never spoken to him."

"You are sufficiently familiar with his features to identify him?"

"I am."

"When did you first hear of his death?"

"On Saturday afternoon, when I was sitting at home with my wife and my nephew, Mr. Richard Remington. The boys were calling out news of a murder in Catchpole Square, and we went out and bought a paper."

"Before Saturday afternoon had your attention been directed in any way to the house in which the deceased resided?"

"Yes. Last Tuesday night a woman was brought into the office who made a statement respecting the disappearance of her husband, who had been in the service of the deceased."

"What is the name of the woman?"

"Mrs. Abel Death. I advised her to apply to the magistrate on the following morning, in order that it might be made public."

"After reading the news in the paper on Saturday afternoon what did you do?"

"I went to the Bishop Street Station, and learned that constables had been sent to enter the house, for the purpose of ascertaining if the statement made by the reporter was correct."

"And then?"

"I went to Catchpole Square, accompanied by Constable Applebee and my nephew, Mr. Richard Remington--both of whom were acquainted with the deceased--I entered the house and saw the body. I identified it as the body of Mr. Samuel Boyd."

"Is there any doubt in your mind on the point?"

"Not the slightest. I have seen him scores of times, and his features were quite familiar to me."

"You saw the marks on his throat?"

"Yes."

"Have you any idea as to the cause of his death?"

"It appeared to me to have been caused by strangulation."

"Now, Inspector Robson, I wish to ask you if you formed any idea as to how long he had been dead. You cannot, of course, speak with the authority of an expert, but we should like to hear what your impression was?"

"My impression was that he had been dead several days."

At this answer considerable commotion was caused by a lady exclaiming "Impossible! Impossible!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SCENES IN COURT.

The Coroner: "I cannot allow the proceedings to be interrupted by any of the spectators, and I must request the person who spoke to preserve silence."

The Lady (rising): "My name is Lady Wharton, and I know what I am saying. It is not in the nature of things to be silent when so monstrous a statement as that is made. I say again, it is impossible."

The Coroner: "The witness has given his impression----"

Lady Wharton: "He cannot be in his right senses, or he must have some motive----"

The Coroner: "You are impeaching the witness and delaying the proceedings. Unless you resume your seat it will be my duty to have you removed----"

Lady Wharton (indignantly): "Have me removed! Is this a court of justice?"

The Corner: "I hope so. Kindly resume your seat."

Lady Wharton: "I insist upon being heard."

The Coroner: "You compel me to do what will be disagreeable to you." (To a Constable.) "Officer----"

Mr. Finnis, Q.C.: "One moment, I beg." (To Lady Wharton.) "Please observe the Coroner's directions. At present you can be heard only through me." (Lady Wharton, who was accompanied by her brother, Lord Fairfax, resumed her seat in great agitation.)

Mr. Finnis: "It is a point of vital importance, and I ask the witness--upon whom neither Lady Wharton nor I cast any imputation--whether he positively swears that the body is that of Mr. Samuel Boyd?"

The Coroner (to the witness): "Do not reply to any question except those put to you by me or the jury."

Mr. Finnis: "You will understand, Mr. Coroner, when Lady Wharton is examined, why the statement of the witness appears to her incredible. Our desire is to prevent a miscarriage of justice."

The Coroner: "It is the desire of all of us."

A Juror: "There can be no harm in asking the question again. With your permission, Mr. Coroner, I will put it. Inspector Robson, do you positively swear that the body you saw is that of Mr. Samuel Boyd?"

Inspector Robson: "So far as a human being can be positive, I swear it."

"And that you formed the idea that he had been dead several days?"

"That is certainly my impression."

The Coroner (after listening to a whispered communication from the juror): "It has been suggested to me to ask whether you have any personal interest in the death of Mr. Samuel Boyd?"

Inspector Robson (with warmth): "I do not understand you."

The Coroner: "We are aware, Inspector Robson, of the high character you bear, and of the deserved estimation in which you are held. It is probable that in the course of this inquiry questions may be asked which may not seem to have any direct bearing upon the investigation, but which may eventually lead to issues of more or less importance."

Inspector Robson: "I am giving my evidence as inspector of police."

The Coroner: "Not entirely. You are a witness in this case, and are here both as an official and a private citizen. If you have an objection to answer the question I will not press it; but I would point out to you that your refusal may leave an unfavourable impression on the minds of the jury."

Inspector Robson (after a pause): "Will you put the question in more direct terms, Mr. Coroner? I would prefer my private affairs not being imported into this case, but I should be sorry to lay myself open to misconstruction."

The Coroner: "In plainer terms, then, is there any relationship between you and the deceased?"

Inspector Robson: "He is my son-in-law's father."

The Coroner: "You were, of course, aware of this when Mrs. Abel Death reported the disappearance of her husband?"

Inspector Robson: "No, Mr. Coroner, I was not aware of it."

The Coroner: "Was the marriage between your daughter and Mr. Reginald Boyd quite recent?"

Inspector Robson (with evident reluctance): "No, they have been married two months."

The Coroner: "There is a strange discrepancy here. How could you have been ignorant of the relationship when Mrs. Death came to the Bishop Street Police Station?"

Inspector Robson: "At that time I did not know that my daughter was married. As what passes in this court will be reported in the newspapers, I wish to add that no blame attaches either to her or her husband, for whom my wife and myself have the highest regard."

The Juror: "He is the only son of the deceased?"

Inspector Robson: "Yes."

The Juror: "In point of fact the heir-at-law, unless he is dispossessed by will?"

Inspector Robson: "Yes."

The Juror: "Has any will been found?"

Inspector Robson: "Not to my knowledge."

The Juror: "Has search been made for it?"

Inspector Robson: "It is now being made."

The Juror: "By whom?"

Inspector Robson: "By my son-in-law's attorney, Mr. Richard Remington."

The Juror: "Your nephew?"

"Yes."

The Juror (to the Coroner): "Will Mr. Reginald Boyd be called?"

The Coroner: "Not to-day. It appears, from a letter I have here, which is accompanied by a doctor's certificate, that he went yesterday to his father's house in Catchpole Square to identify the body, that he has been very ill, and that the exertion was too much for him. It is hoped that on Wednesday, to which day the inquiry will be adjourned, he will be well enough to give his evidence."

The Juror: "How long has he been ill?"

Inspector Robson: "Since last Saturday week."

The Juror: "The day following that on which Mr. Abel Death disappeared?"

Inspector Robson: "Yes."

The Juror: "Can you inform us whether Mr. Reginald Boyd was on good terms with his father?"

Inspector Robson: "I do not think it is a question I should be called upon to answer."

The Juror: "Very well, Inspector Robson."

The next witness was Mr. Richard Remington, who gave his answers generally with rapidity; but occasionally there was a slight hesitancy before he replied, as though he were considering the form of words in which he should reply. Asked if Inspector Robson was his uncle, he answered that he was proud to own it. Asked if he followed any occupation, he described himself as a Jack of all trades. "And master of none?" queried a juror jocosely. "I won't say that," replied the witness, quickly. "There are some things I can do thoroughly."

"You accompanied Inspector Robson when he entered the house of the deceased on

Saturday?"

"I did."

"You saw the body?"

"Yes. It is the body of Mr. Samuel Boyd."

"You were acquainted with him?"

"Intimately. I was in his service nearly three months, and saw him daily."

"So that you can speak with confidence on the point?"

"With perfect confidence."

"Can you inform us whether the room in which the body was found was Mr. Boyd's regular bedroom?"

"It was. He always slept there."

The Juror: "Is it the only bedroom in the house?"

"No; there is another bedroom on the second floor."

The Juror: "Occupied by any person?"

"By no person during my service with the deceased."

The Juror: "But at some time or other occupied by another person?"

"I believe by Mr. Reginald Boyd when he lived in the house."

The Juror: "Under what circumstances did he leave his father's house?"

"It is hardly a question that should be put to me."

The Juror: "You think it would be better to ask Mr. Reginald Boyd?"

"That is for you to decide."

The Coroner: "You were in the house yesterday?"

"Yes."

"We understand you are searching for a will?"

"Yes."

"And have found none?"

"None."

The Coroner: "I am now going to put a question to you which I put to Inspector Robson. When you saw the body did you receive any impression as to the length of time Mr. Boyd had been dead?"

"Yes. He must have been dead four or five days at least."

Lady Wharton: "They are stark staring mad!"

The Coroner: "I assure Lady Wharton that if she persists in these interruptions she cannot be allowed to remain in Court."

The evidence of Constable Applebee, who was the next witness, was then taken. Catchpole Square is within the radius of his beat, and not a week passed without his seeing Mr. Samuel Boyd two or three times. He was positive that the body was that of Samuel Boyd, and he would not admit the possibility of his being mistaken.

"Did you see any suspicious persons about on the night of the 1st?"

The witness answered "No," and happened to glance in the direction of Lady Wharton, upon which another scene occurred. Her ladyship exclaimed, "Gracious Powers! I am in a hornet's nest! Does the man suspect *me?*" It was with difficulty that she was calmed, and it was only upon her giving her promise that she would not speak again that an order for her removal was not carried out.

Mr. Finnis: "Her ladyship visited Mr. Samuel Boyd on the night of the 1st upon a matter of business, and the witness probably saw her."

The Coroner: "That is no excuse for these interruptions, Mr. Finnis." (To the witness.) "On any subsequent occasion did you see any suspicious persons about?"

"Yes, on the night of the great fog something occurred. The fog was so thick that I missed my way, and by accident I stumbled upon Constable Pond, whose beat joins mine. We were close by Catchpole Square, and we went into it. As we were moving away I saw a woman trying to steal from the Square into Deadman's Court. I ran and caught the person by the arm, but somehow or other she slipped through my hands and escaped."

"Did you see her face?"

"No, she was too quick for me."

"At what time did this take place?"

"I can't say exactly, but it was past midnight."

"Is it usual for people to be in the Square so late?"

"Quite unusual."

"That is all you can tell us?"

"That's all, except----" Here the witness hesitated.

"Except what?"

"Well, it has nothing to do with the case, but it come into my mind that two nights last week I met Mr. Richard Remington near the Square."

"You must have met many persons. What is there special in your meeting Mr. Remington?"

"Only that both times it was two or three o'clock in the morning. It isn't worth mentioning."

"The smallest incident in connection with a case of this description is worth mentioning. Did you have any conversation with him?"

"Oh, yes. The first time we had a long talk together."

"Did he say what brought him out so late!"

"Well, he said he was looking for a lodging."

"What! At two or three in the morning?"

"Yes, that is what he said."

"It sounds like a joke; he can hardly have been serious."

A Juror: "Perhaps Mr. Remington would like to explain."

Mr. Richard Remington (from the body of the Court): "I am quite ready to explain."

The Coroner (to Constable Applebee): "We have nothing further to ask you."

Mr. Richard Remington was recalled.

"You have heard what the last witness said in reference to yourself?"

"Yes; he spoke the truth. I met him on two occasions last week, in the middle of the night, and we had a chat. Of course it is absurd to suppose I was looking for lodgings at that time, but I intended to do so next morning, and I mentioned it to Constable Applebee, thinking it likely he might know of a place to suit me. In point of fact he did know, and it was upon his introduction that I took a room next day in the house of Constable Pond in Paradise Row. You might like to hear why I went in the direction of Catchpole Square on the night of the fog. Well, I was in the Bishop Street Station at about midnight when Mrs. Abel Death reported the disappearance of her husband and asked the assistance of the police. As I had been in the employ of Mr. Samuel Boyd I took an interest in her story, and, my time being my own, I thought I would have a look at the old house."

The Coroner: "Thank you, Mr. Remington."

The last witness called was Mrs. Jewel, a charwoman, whose evidence was mainly interesting from the insight it afforded of the singular domestic habits of the deceased. She was the only female servant employed by Mr. Boyd, and her services were not requisitioned for more than two half-days every week. The witness described the deceased as the hardest master she ever had. When she swept out a room or made a bed he grumbled at the way it was done, and made it an excuse for beating her down to the last farthing. She did no cooking for him; he took his dinner at some cheap eating house, and prepared his own breakfast and tea. "He'd skin a flint," the witness

remarked. The value of Mrs. Jewel's evidence lay in her intimate familiarity with the personal appearance of the deceased. She swore positively to the body, and laughed at the idea of her being mistaken. Some amusement was caused by her being hard of hearing, and she resented this by giving short snappy replies to the questions put to her, and declining to be moved by so much as a hair's breadth from any statement she made. The last of these questions were put by the juror who had taken so prominent a part in the proceedings, and who resisted every effort made by the Coroner to abbreviate his inquiries.

The Juror: "You worked for the deceased during the time his son, Mr. Reginald Boyd, lived in the house?"

Mrs. Jewel: "Of course I did, and Mr. Reginald's a gentleman."

"Were they on good terms with each other?"

"No," she answered, "old Mr. Boyd was always quarrelling with Mr. Reginald. He stormed a lot, but Mr. Reginald was very quiet, and hardly answered his father. At last he went away, and I don't blame him."

Nothing further was elicited from the witness, and the inquiry was adjourned till Wednesday, when, the Coroner said, important evidence would be laid before the jury.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

GATHERING CLOUDS.

"There's trouble coming, there's trouble coming." This was the dominant thought in Dick's mind as he emerged from the court. Reporters, hurriedly gathering their sheets of notes and sketches, were hastening to their respective offices, and persons who had been unable to obtain admission were eagerly asking for news of what had taken place. The jurymen filed out, with a judicial weight on their brows, and the man who had put and prompted so many questions gave Dick a searching look as he passed. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Remington," said a cheery interviewer, "I belong to 'The Hourly Inquirer,' and if you would give me a few minutes----" "No time for interviewing--nothing to say," interrupted Dick, and hurried on. Of which the interviewer made a quarter of a column. Dick was not in the mood to impart information or impressions; he had more serious matters to think of. It seemed to him as though sinister forces were at work inimical to Florence and Reginald. "I wonder," he thought, "what kind of evidence Lady Wharton has to give--she seems terribly in earnest."

Clear of the crowd he felt a light touch upon his arm; looking down he saw it was Florence.

"Reginald sent me," she said; "he is very anxious. Is it over?"

"Not by a long way," he replied. "People are staring at us. Let us walk on."

"What has been done, Dick?"

"Evidence of identification has been taken, and a lot of stupid and unnecessary questions asked. You will read all about it in the papers, one part true, and three parts fiction." He spoke with a light air to relieve her mind. "Reporters make the most of everything; it is their business to lay on colour pretty thickly. There is one rather vexatious thing--your visit to Catchpole Square on the night of the fog."

"Has my name been mentioned?" asked Florence, in alarm.

"No, but it may be, and we must consider what we ought to do. Don't look distressed; a straightforward explanation will set it right. Docs Uncle Rob know you went there?"

"No."

"Aunt Rob?"

"No. There was no harm in my going----"

"None whatever, dear."

"And none in my not speaking of it. There has been so much else to think of."

"Indeed there has, and you have done everything for the best; but in this unfortunate matter Uncle Rob is very delicately and peculiarly placed; he is not only privately but officially connected with it. You see that, don't you?"

"Yes, Dick."

"People are so uncharitable that a false step, though taken quite innocently, may lead to trouble. I am afraid you will read many unpleasant thing in the papers, and I want you to be prepared for them." She gave him a startled look. "You must have courage, Florence."

"I will."

"That's right. Now go home and tell them about your visit to Catchpole Square, and why you went. I will be there in an hour or so. And don't for one moment lose heart. There are some unhappy days before us, but before long the clouds will clear, and all will be well."

She left him at the entrance to Deadman's Court, and he gave her a bright smile to cheer her; but when she was out of sight he murmured again, "There's trouble coming, there's trouble coming." He feared he knew not what; every hidden danger seemed to grow, and the dark clouds to deepen. How to ward this danger from Florence? This was his aim and hope, and to this end he was continually nerving himself.

Up to the present nothing but perplexity and mystery had attended his search in the house of the murdered man. There were the bottles of wine. On the first occasion he had mechanically counted seventy-six bottles, on the second occasion seventy-five, and now there were but seventy-four. "Either I am out of my senses," he thought, "or some person has been twice in the house since I forced an entrance into it." Wildly improbable as was the suggestion he found it impossible to reject it. True, he was not the only person who had been there these last two days. Scotland Yard was astir, and had sent detectives and policemen, to whom free access was granted by Dick. These officials made themselves very busy, but for the most part kept a still tongue. Plans of the room were drawn, and every inch of the walls and floors and staircases was examined. When it was proposed to photograph the blood-stained footprints made by Dick, he looked on calmly, and assisted in the preparations.

On this Monday afternoon the undertaker's men were waiting for Dick in the Square, and they followed him upstairs with the coffin. It had been a gruesome task, and he felt as if he could not breathe freely till the body was taken to its last resting place.

Then there was the safe, of which he had found the key. During his service with Samuel Boyd this safe had been the receptacle of all the documents of value and of all the record books belonging to the dead man--bank book, bill book, ledger, mortgage deeds, undue bills, etc.; he expected to see these articles in the safe, but to his astonishment it contained only a few unimportant papers.

At five o'clock the undertaker's men had departed, and Dick with a last look around also took his departure. As he pulled the street door behind him he heard a familiar cough, and a little hand was slid into his. Gracie's hand.

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you, Dick," she said, clinging to him. "I've been everywhere to find you."

"Has your father come back?" he asked, in sudden expectation that she brought him news of the missing man.

"No such luck. You didn't come to see us yesterday."

"I was too busy, Gracie. Are you any better?"

"Ever so much." Her pallid face and the sunken rims round her large black eyes did not confirm the statement. "I can't rest, Dick, I can't rest. Is he caught?"

"Who, Gracie?"

"The man that murdered Mr. Boyd?"

"No; and God knows when he will be."

"If God don't catch him," said Gracie, slowly, "and you don't, *I* will. You just see if I don't. I've got to, because of what they're saying of father. Dick, if I was a man I'd tear 'em to pieces. Poor father! It's too bad, ain't it?"

"Altogether too bad."

"There's mother fretting herself to skin and bone. She gets up in the night, and goes down to the Mews, and when she thinks nobody sees her she cries and cries fit to break her heart; but *I* see her, and I feel like killing somebody!"

Not a trace of emotion in her dark little face; no kindling light in her eyes; no tremor in her

voice. The passion which agitated her was expressed only in the clinging of her fingers to the hand of the friend in whom she trusted and believed.

"I dreamt of father last night, Dick," she continued. "He was running as hard as he could, and there was a mob of people after him. I kept 'em back. 'If you dare,' I cried, 'if you dare!' So we got away together, and where do you think we got to?"

"Couldn't say for my life, Gracie, dreams are such funny things."

"Yes, they are, ain't they? We got into Mr. Boyd's house in Catchpole Square, and we went all over it, into every room, creeping up and down the stairs, looking for the murderer. 'You didn't do it, father?' I said. He swore a big oath that he was innocent, and he cried to me to save him and catch the murderer. I'm going to. I promised I would, and I'm going to."

"It was only a dream, Gracie."

"It was real. I can hear him now, I can see him now. I've promised to catch the murderer, and I'm going to."

They had reached Aunt Rob's house, and Dick stopped.

"I must leave you now, Gracie. My friends live here."

"You won't throw us over, will you? You'll come and see us?"

"Yes, I will come."

She raised her face; he stooped and kissed her and she went away with a lighter heart.

CHAPTER XXXV.

LADY WHARTON STARTLES THE COURT.

When the jury re-assembled on Wednesday the excitement created by the mystery had reached fever heat, and long before the Court was opened a crowd of people had gathered round the doors. Numbers of influential persons had applied for admission, and as many of these were accommodated as the limited space at the disposal of the Coroner would permit. The first day's proceedings had whetted curiosity, and many members of the aristocracy were present to hear the evidence which Lady Wharton was to give, the nature of which had been kept a profound secret. The learned professions were adequately represented; the stage sent some of its best actors and actresses, and literature some of its most famous authors. Never in the history of crime had a gathering so notable assembled at the initial inquiry into the circumstances of a mystery murder.

The murdered man had been buried the previous day, and a vast concourse of people had attended the funeral. Reginald--still very weak--and Florence were the chief mourners, and in their carriage were Inspector Robson and his wife. There was but one other mourning carriage, and this was occupied by Dick and the poor charwoman who had been fitfully employed domestically by the deceased. The newspapers devoted columns to descriptions of the funeral and to those pictorial sketches of personages and incidents which have become almost a craze in up-to-date journalism. Standing by the grave, Dick, looking over the heads of the people, saw Gracie and her mother and Dr. Vinsen, side by side. Mrs. Death was in tears, Gracie wore her accustomed impassive expression, and Dr. Vinsen bared his halo to the skies.

"My young friend, my dear young friend," he said, sidling up to Dick, "this is the end of a crafty life, but let us extend our pity--ex-tend our pi-ty. The grave, like charity, covereth a multitude of sins. We will be clement; we will soften our judgment; it is the least we can do in the presence of death, in the solemn presence of death. If it teaches us a lesson, Mr. Samuel Boyd will not have lived in vain."

"What lesson?" asked Dick, half angrily; the voice, the manner, jarred upon him.

"The lesson of humility, of charity--sweet charity--of justice."

"You call the life that ends here," said Dick, pointing to the grave, "a crafty life. Where does justice come in?"

"Ah, my young friend," responded Dr. Vinsen, shaking his head remonstrantly, "ah, my dear young friend!"

"Meaning--what?" demanded Dick.

"Meaning that you are young, that you have much to learn, much to unlearn."

"You speak in enigmas," said Dick. "Good day."

"Not in anger," said Dr. Vinsen, gently, "not in anger, my dear young friend, lest the dead rise to reproach you."

"He is better where he is," said Dick, cynically. "I knew him--did you?"

"I had not the privilege. In life we never met."

"But you take it very much to heart. Why?"

"My heart is large; it bleeds for all." He laid his hand upon the shoulder of Mrs. Death, and repeated, "It bleeds for all."

"More enigmas--more platitudes," said Dick, scornfully.

Dr. Vinsen looked at him with a pitying smile. "I fear I do not find favour in your eyes."

"To speak plainly, you do not."

"To speak plainly is commendable. But give a reason for it."

"I cannot. You have a scientist for a friend."

"Dr. Pye? Yes."

"He will tell you that there are certain chemicals that will not mix."

"I do not need to be told. I know it."

"Well, then, Dr. Vinsen, *we* don't mix; and there's an end of it."

"No, my young friend, not an end of it. The end is there, for him, for you, for all. Better for some of us if we were in our graves." There was no change in his voice; it was mild, benignant, reproachful. "Better, far better, for some of us if we were in our graves. Come, Mrs. Death; come, Gracie, my child."

They turned away, but not before Gracie had taken Dick's hand and kissed it.

And now, on Wednesday morning, the Coroner took his place, and addressed the jury in the following terms:

"Upon the opening of this inquiry I advised you to keep an open mind respecting it, and to turn a deaf ear to the strange rumours and reports which were in circulation. I feel it necessary to repeat this caution. The extraordinary statements which have appeared in the public press may or may not have a foundation of fact, but with these statements we have nothing to do, and I beg you to dismiss them. You are here to give your verdict in accordance with the evidence which will be presented to you, and not in accordance with unauthorised and unverified rumour. If you do this without fear or favour you will have performed your duty. Before medical evidence is taken Inspector Robson has requested permission to make a statement, to which, as he is an important witness in the case, I see no objection."

Inspector Robson was then called.

The Coroner: "Does the statement you wish to make, Inspector Robson, relate to the present inquiry?"

Inspector Robson: "It does, Mr. Coroner, though it has no direct bearing upon it. A matter has come to my knowledge since Monday which, although it is purely of a private nature, I consider it my duty to make public. Constable Applebee, in his evidence on that day, mentioned that on the night of the 5th, when he was in Catchpole Square, he saw a woman there whom he challenged, and who escaped from him. The incident was reported at the Bishop Street Station, and note was taken of it. I wish to state that the lady he challenged is my daughter."

"You were not aware of the fact when Constable Applebee was under examination?"

"I was not. My daughter, hearing on Monday that the incident had been mentioned in court, informed me that it was she who had visited Catchpole Square on the night in question."

"Is there any special reason why she did not inform you of it before?"

"None. Had the matter been of importance she would have spoken of it earlier."

"Perhaps we had better hear from her own lips the reason of her visit. Is she in court?"

"She is."

"Let her be called."

Florence came forward. She was sitting between Reginald and her mother, who gave her an encouraging smile as she left them.

The Coroner: "You have heard what your father has said. There is no obligation upon you to state why you went to Catchpole Square at such an hour on such a night; but we are ready to listen to any explanation you may desire to make."

Florence: "I will answer any questions you ask."

"Previous to your visit where were you on that night?"

"At my husband's lodgings in Park Street, Islington. He was very ill, and I was nursing him."

"Did he send you for his father?"

"No, he was delirious. He spoke of his father several times, and it appeared to me to be my duty to make him acquainted with his son's dangerous condition. There was no one else to go but myself, and I went to Catchpole Square because I considered it right to do so."

The Juror (who had taken so conspicuous a part in Monday's proceedings): "When he spoke of his father, what were his precise words?"

The Coroner: "I do not think the witness should be asked that question."

Florence: "Oh, yes, there is nothing to conceal. He simply said, 'My father, my father!' and I gathered from that that he wished to see him. It was natural that I should think so."

The Coroner: "Quite natural. You arrived at Catchpole Square, and knocked at the door of the deceased?"

"Yes, I knocked a good many times, but no one answered me. As I was about to leave the square I heard voices, and saw, very dimly, two men very close to me. I did not know they were policemen, and one of them called out to me to stop, and caught hold of me. I was so frightened that I tore myself away, and ran out of the Square as quickly as I could."

The Juror: "Did you know at that time that your husband was not on good terms with his father?"

The Coroner: "You need not answer that question."

"I wish to answer every question. I did know it, and I knew that there was no fault on my husband's part. It was my hope that his illness would lead to a reconciliation between them. I thank God that my husband is spared to me, but if he had died I should never have forgiven myself if I had not made the attempt to bring his father to him."

"Thank you, Mrs. Boyd; that is all we have to ask."

A buzz of admiration ran through the court as Florence returned to her seat by Reginald's side.

Dr. Talbot Rowbottom, of Harley Street, a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and a doctor of medicine, was then called.

"You examined the body of the deceased?"

"Yes, on Sunday, at the request of Mr. Reginald Boyd, who wrote me a note to that effect. I had read of the discovery of the body in the newspapers, and, anticipating an inquest, I called first upon you, as coroner of the district, and received your permission to make the examination."

"Did the deceased die a natural death?"

"No. He met his death by strangulation."

"You have no doubt upon the subject?"

"Not the slightest."

"He could not have strangled himself?"

"From the condition of the body that is impossible."

"Does your examination of the body warrant you in saying that there was resistance on the part of the deceased?"

"Great resistance. There is every indication of a violent struggle having taken place."

"So that the orderly state of the bed and bedclothes was unnatural?"

"Most unnatural. After the deed was done singular care must have been taken to compose the limbs and arrange the bedclothes."

"Do you consider it likely that, during the struggle, the deceased succeeded in getting out of bed?"

"More than likely. I observed upon the body traces of bruises which could not have been produced had the deceased remained in bed. There was a bruise upon the shin of the right leg, another on the head, and another on the right shoulder. These must have been caused by the deceased coming into violent contact with heavy pieces of furniture. Above the left eye there was an abrasion from a similar cause."

"Was there any wound on the body such as might have been caused by a knife or a pistol?"

"No."

"Is the furniture in the bedroom of a sufficiently heavy character to cause the wounds and abrasions you spoke of?"

"There is no heavy furniture in the bedroom. My impression is that the deceased was first attacked in his sleep, that he awoke, that in the course of the struggle he succeeded in getting out of bed, and dragged, or was dragged by his assailant or assailants, into the adjoining apartment, where the furniture is of a much more substantial description."

"Do you consider it likely that the deceased could have called for help during the struggle?"

"Not to any appreciable extent. The compression of the windpipe was remarkable, and under such compression the capacity of the vocal chords must have been considerably weakened. Even had he succeeded in releasing himself for a few moments he could not in that brief time have regained control of his voice. The exhaustion would have been too great."

"Now, Dr. Rowbottom, you examined the body on Sunday, the l0th. Can you state with some degree of precision on what approximate date the deceased met his death?"

"He must have been dead at least eight days."

"That takes us back to Sunday, the 3rd?"

"Yes. And it is probable that he died the day before, on the Saturday."

At these words, which were uttered with decision, there was a commotion in the part of the court in which Lady Wharton was sitting, but the Coroner looking with some severity in that direction, her ladyship, who had risen to her feet, obeyed the injunction of her counsel not to speak. She sank back in her seat, and evinced her agitation by a vigorous fluttering of her fan. When the excitement caused by this interruption had subsided, the Coroner continued.

"The deceased being in his night attire, we may take it that he died either on the night of Friday, the 1st of March, or on the night of Saturday, the 2nd?"

"Certainly on one of those nights."

"Absolutely certain?"

"Absolutely certain."

Dr. John Webster, of Canonbury Square, and Dr. Lipman, of Wimpole Street, who were next examined, corroborated in every respect the evidence of Dr. Rowbottom, and agreed with the conclusions at which he had arrived. They spoke positively to the fact that the deceased had been brutally murdered, and to the presumption that the murder had taken place either on the Friday or the Saturday night.

At this stage of the inquiry Mr. Finnis, Q.C., requested the Coroner to take Lady Wharton as the next witness. Her ladyship, he said, had evidence of an extraordinary nature to give which would throw an entirely new light upon the inquiry, and it was most important that there should be as little delay as possible in hearing what she had to say.

The Coroner: "Before Lady Wharton is examined there is official information to lay before the jury. An officer from the detective department in Scotland Yard is present, and we will hear him first. He has duties elsewhere, and is anxious to be relieved from a longer attendance in this court than is absolutely necessary. His evidence will open up matter which may have a bearing on the verdict. Call Mr. Lambert."

This gentleman, whose name is well known in association with many celebrated criminal cases, stepped forward and was sworn.

"You are a detective in official service?"

"I am."

"You have visited the house of the deceased in Catchpole Square?"

"On three occasions. The first on Sunday, the second on Monday, the third yesterday."

"Whom did you find in charge there?"

"Mr. Richard Remington, who gave me every facility for a thorough examination of the premises."

"Describe what steps you took, and their result."

"I first examined the bedroom and the adjoining office. On the floor of both rooms I observed the marks of a man's footsteps, with stains of blood which had been trodden upon. In three places the footmarks were partially outlined in these stains, and I took photographs of them."

"Are these the photographs?"

"Yes."

The Coroner passed the photographs to the jury.

"How do you form the conclusion that they are the footsteps of a man?"

"The boots are those of a man, and the size, No. 8, is an unusual size for a woman."

"Were there marks of other footsteps?"

"None."

"Could these footsteps have been made by the deceased?"

"No. The deceased was flat-footed; the man who wore the boots had a defined arch in his soles. Here are photographs of the soles of deceased's boots; you will see a marked difference in the size and shape."

The photographs were produced, and examined by the Coroner and the jury.

"After searching the bedroom and the adjoining office you proceeded to another part of the premises."

"With your permission I will first finish with these two rooms."

"Very well. Proceed."

"The walls of the office are partially hung with old tapestry, and I observed in one place that a hand had clutched it. The finger marks are still discernible, and the tapestry has not returned to its original folds. This indicates that, during a struggle, one of the men had caught hold of it. Upon parts of the wall not covered with tapestry are scratches which seem to have been made by finger nails."

"Recent scratches?"

"Made within the last two or three weeks."

"Do you consider it certain that there was a struggle between the deceased and his assailant?"

"I am positive there was."

"In that case would there not have been, in addition to the defined blood stains of footmarks, smears of blood upon the floor?"

"I was coming to that. There is no doubt that a prolonged struggle took place, but the absence of blood-smears, such as would have been caused by the naked feet of the deceased, proves that the wound from which the blood proceeded could not have been inflicted during the struggle."

"Before or after?"

"After. If blood had dropped upon the floor before the struggle it would have taken some time to dry, and signs of dragging feet would have been observable. Besides, there would have been blood-stains on the naked feet of the deceased. There were none. Examining farther I discovered a bullet in the wall, which I extracted, and which must have been fired within the last two or three weeks. The bore is .320, the barrel of the pistol, four inch. The weapon used was probably a Colt's ejector revolver."

"Probably, you say. Did you not find the pistol?"

"No. I inquired of Mr. Remington whether he had found one. He had not."

"So that you cannot say whether the shot was fired by the deceased or his assailant?"

"I cannot say."

"Was that the only bullet you found?"

"The only one. My examination of these two rooms concluded, I turned my attention to other parts of the house. On the stairs leading from the street door to the bedroom I picked up two pieces of brown paper, with small pieces of wax adhering to them."

"Did you examine the back of the premises?"

"Yes. Over the basement rooms, which had not been used for a considerable time, was a window which had been broken from without, and broken by an unskilled hand."

"How do you arrive at the conclusion that the window was broken from without?"

"By the splinters of glass on the floor of the room, and by the broken pieces remaining in the panes, the jagged edges of which are a verification of my statement."

"We should like to hear your reason for saying that the hand that broke the window was unskilled?"

"A regular burglar would have been provided with tools which would have enabled him to cut the glass without running the risk of personal injury."

"But might not such a man have adopted these rougher means for the purpose of averting suspicion?"

"I have never known it done by a skilled burglar. It was through this window that the man effected an entrance. Continuing my investigation I came to the wall which surrounds the back of the house, and there I received confirmation of the theory I had formed. The man had brought with him a rope to which a grapnel was attached. This rope he had thrown up from the outside until the grapnel caught in the mortar at the top of the wall. Then he climbed up; the rest was easy. The marks of the grapnel are plainly discernible, and the freshness of the loosened mortar proves that but a short time has elapsed since he paid his last visit."

"Is it your opinion that there was more than one visit?"

"As to that I have formed no opinion."

"All this must have taken some time?"

"Yes, and was done at night when there were few people about. The street on which the dead wall abuts is but little frequented. The movements of the policeman on the beat were doubtless carefully noted."

"Should you say that robbery was the object of this burglarious entrance?"

"It is a fair presumption."

"Did you search the clothes of the deceased?"

"Yes. Mr. Remington had gone through the pockets before I came, and had replaced what he found in them."

The Juror who had asked previous questions: "How do you know that?"

"He told me so. The watch and chain had not been taken, and there was money in his purse, a £5 note and some gold and silver, £9 18s. in all. I opened the safe; there were no articles of value in it. If there had been any before the death of the deceased they had been removed, and the key put back in its original place."

"You found no burglars' tools about?"

"None."

"Nor tools of any kind?"

"No."

"There were desks and drawers in the room adjoining the bedroom. Did any of the locks appear to have been forced?"

"No."

"I have no further questions to ask you, Mr. Lambert. Call Lady Wharton."

Expectation ran high at this summons. The scenes in Court in which her ladyship had played a principal part, and her excited comments upon a vital point in the inquiry, had caused her evidence to be looked forward to with intense interest.

The Coroner: "We understand that you have a communication of importance to make to the jury, and we are now prepared to hear what you have to say. You were acquainted with the deceased?"

Lady Wharton: "Whom do you mean by the deceased?"

The Coroner: "You are here to answer questions, Lady Wharton, not to ask them."

Lady Wharton: "But I do ask them. I want to know whom you mean by the deceased."

The Coroner: "Mr. Samuel Boyd, of course. You were acquainted with him?"

"I was very slightly acquainted with him. As a matter of fact I saw him only twice in my life. The first time was on the evening of Friday, the 1st of March. Lord Wharton had entered into certain financial transactions with Mr. Boyd, which did not come to my knowledge till a week or two before that date. Some settlement had to be made respecting these transactions, and Lord Wharton being ill, I undertook the business, having also a little business of my own to do with him. So far as I am aware there was no person in the house except Mr. Boyd when I called upon him in Catchpole Square. The business being of a private nature I entered alone, and ordered my servant to wait outside for me in the Square."

"At what hour was this visit paid?"

"At eight o'clock, and I remained with him thirty or forty minutes. I had brought with me some bills signed by Lord Wharton and endorsed by my brother, Lord Fairfax. In return for these bills I should have received bills not then due. It slipped my mind at the time, and I wrote to him about them, and about another matter as well. In his reply he promised to bring the old bills to our place in Bournemouth on Thursday night, the 7th."

"A moment if you please. Do you say that you received a letter from the deceased on a date subsequent to Friday, the 1st of March?"

"I say that I received a letter from Mr. Samuel Boyd on the 6th of March, and that I saw him on the night of the 7th."

So great was the commotion in the Court at this statement that it was two or three minutes before order was restored.

The Coroner: "Do you seriously assert this, Lady Wharton, in the teeth of the medical evidence that Mr. Samuel Boyd met his death on the night of the 1st or the 2nd of March?"

Lady Wharton: "A fig for the medical evidence! Mr. Samuel Boyd was alive last Thursday night, and it is my belief that he is alive at this moment!"

The Coroner: "Surely, surely, Lady Wharton----"

Lady Wharton (interrupting excitedly): "And surely, surely, Mr. Coroner! Am I to believe the evidence of my senses? I tell you I saw the man last Thursday night, and had a conversation with him; and as his body has not been found, Mr. Samuel Boyd is alive now, and is keeping out of the way, like the thief and scoundrel he is, for the purpose of robbing me!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE INQUEST.

These words, spoken loudly and emphatically, acted like a spark upon gunpowder, and it was not until the Coroner threatened several times to clear the Court that order was again restored. From Lady Wharton the attention of the audience was turned to Reginald, whose head was bowed in shame. Some pitied him, some condemned him, and all were feverishly curious to hear the outcome of Lady Wharton's disclosures. The only crumb of comfort Reginald received was expressed in the close clasp of Florence's hand. Fearlessly and indignantly the young girl faced the eyes that were directed towards her and her husband; her cheeks were flushed, her lips parted, as though crying shame upon those who seemed to be mutely accusing the man she

loved. Dick looked contemptuously upon these silent accusers, and Aunt Rob glared at them; it was with some difficulty that Uncle Rob prevented her from addressing Lady Wharton in terms of indignant reproach. "Keep still, mother, keep still," he whispered, "you will only make matters worse." So she held her tongue, and nursed her wrath in bitterness of spirit. During the course of this drama of human passion and emotion Mr. Finnis, Q.C., rose and addressed the Court.

"Lady Wharton," he said, "has suffered a grievous wrong, and however strongly she may express herself, it cannot for one moment be doubted that she is speaking what she believes to be the truth. An endeavour has been made to prove that Mr. Samuel Boyd was murdered on the Friday or Saturday night of the week before last. We do not impeach the witnesses, we do not say that they have spoken from interested motives. What we do say is that they are in error. That Mr. Samuel Boyd did not meet his death at the time mentioned is proved by the fact that Lady Wharton saw and conversed with him five or six days afterwards. Her testimony is supported by that of her brother, Lord Fairfax, who is now in Court, and who also saw and conversed with him. As you may gather from her evidence we go farther than that; we say that Mr. Samuel Boyd has not been murdered. Her ladyship, as you will presently learn, has had, unfortunately for herself, some business transactions with Mr. Samuel Boyd, and in view of the strange mystery which surrounds the case, I have advised her to make these transactions public. I ask you now, Mr. Coroner, to permit her to relate her story with as little interruption from yourself as possible; and I would also ask Lady Wharton to control her feelings, and to refrain from strong language. There are persons in Court related to Mr. Samuel Boyd, to whom such epithets as she has applied to him must be extremely painful."

The Coroner: "The extraordinary turn this inquiry has taken renders it imperatively necessary that a full disclosure be made of all that has passed between Lady Wharton and Mr. Samuel Boyd. Now, if your ladyship pleases."

Lady Wharton: "And kindly do not interrupt me. I have mentioned that I paid Mr. Samuel Boyd a visit on the evening of Friday, the 1st of March. On that occasion I gave him bills for a considerable amount in renewal of bills shortly to fall due, and I foolishly forgot to ask him for the return of the old bills. In the course of the interview I requested him--(it is perfectly abominable that I should be compelled to speak of it, but I suppose it cannot be prevented)--I requested him to advance me a thousand pounds for my personal use, quite apart from the business between him and Lord Wharton. With some idea of the character of the man I was dealing with, I had brought with me as security for the loan certain articles of jewellery of great value, for which I had no immediate use, and which I handed over to him. After inspecting them he consented to advance the money, but said he could not let me have it immediately--which, of course, was a trick and subterfuge. I told him that I was going out of town, to our place in Bournemouth, and he said he would bring the sum to me there on Thursday night--last Thursday, you know--in bank notes. With that understanding I left him. Two days afterwards it was brought to my recollection that Mr. Boyd had not returned the old bills, and I wrote to him about them. At the same time I mentioned that I needed a much larger sum for my private personal use than we had arranged for, and I requested him to bring £1,500, promising to give him further security in the shape of additional jewels, for there is only one way of dealing with these Shylocks: they *must* have their pound of flesh. He replied that he would bring the money and the old bills on Thursday night. We were giving a ball on that night, and as I did not wish such a person to mix with our guests I decided to finish the business with him in a retired part of the grounds, and I instructed my servants to that effect. He had the assurance not to present himself till one in the morning, when a servant brought me his card. I went to the spot I had appointed, and there I saw Mr. Samuel Boyd. I asked him if he had brought the money; he answered that he had, and he produced a small packet, which he declined to part with till I gave him the additional jewels I had promised as security. The scoundrel assumed an air of saucy independence which completely deceived me The jewels were in the house, and Lord Fairfax happening to be passing at that moment I called to him and requested him to remain with Mr. Boyd while I went to fetch them. When I returned I gave them to Mr. Boyd, who then handed me the packet, saying that it contained the £1,500 in bank notes and the old bills. As I could not count the money in the grounds I went to the house again, accompanied by Lord Fairfax, and opening the packet, discovered that I had been robbed. There were no bills inside, and no money, nothing but blank paper cunningly folded to make it feel like bank notes. I hurried back, with the intention of giving the thief into custody, but though search was made for him in every direction he was not to be found. I want to know what has become of him and of my property."

The Coroner: "This is a strange story, Lady Wharton, and is in direct conflict with the evidence that has been tendered."

Lady Wharton: "The evidence that has been tendered is in direct conflict with the facts of the case. In all my life I have never heard such a tissue of misrepresentations and delusions."

"May you not yourself be labouring under a delusion?"

"You had better say at once that I am not in my right senses."

"Pray do not speak so excitedly. May you not have been deceived by an accidental likeness to Mr. Samuel Boyd in the person who presented himself?"

"It is an absurd suggestion. There is no possibility of my having been mistaken. I tell you it

was the man himself."

The Coroner: "Did you keep a copy of the letter you wrote to Mr. Boyd?"

Lady Wharton: "I am not in the habit of keeping copies of my letters. I leave that to tradesmen."

"Have you the letter you received from him?"

"I have brought it with me."

Lady Wharton handed the letter to the Coroner, who read it aloud:

"Mr. Samuel Boyd presents his compliments to Lady Wharton, and will have the pleasure of waiting upon her ladyship on Thursday night with the bills which he forgot to return last Friday evening, and with the additional advance her ladyship requires. Mr. Boyd hopes that her ladyship will be prepared with the jewels she speaks of, and that they will be adequate security for the increase in the loan.

"Catchpole Square, N., 5th March, 1896."

Lady Wharton: "And people come here and swear that at the time the man wrote that letter he had been dead five days! Can anything be more preposterous?"

The Coroner: "We shall have witnesses before us who are familiar with Mr. Boyd's handwriting, and this letter will be submitted to them. Have you the visiting card Mr. Boyd gave your servant in Bournemouth?"

"Here it is."

"Could you identify the jewels?"

"I can swear to them, if they are fortunately recovered."

"That is all I have to ask you at present, Lady Wharton. If Lord Fairfax is present perhaps he will come forward."

Lord Fairfax (advancing from the body of the Court): "No objection."

"You have heard the account given by Lady Wharton of the visit of a person last Thursday night who announced himself as Mr. Samuel Boyd?"

"Quite true."

"You saw that person?"

"Yes."

"Have you had any dealings with Mr. Boyd?"

"Happy to say, no."

"Then you are not acquainted with him?"

"Not the pleasure."

"Then you cannot say it was Mr. Boyd."

"Take Lady Wharton's word for it. Her ladyship presented him. She said, 'Mr. Samuel Boyd, Catchpole Square.' I said, 'Ah.'"

"You conversed with him?"

"He conversed with me. Fifty words to my one."

"What was the subject of the conversation?"

"Money. Asked if I wanted it. I said every fellow wanted it. Said he would be happy to oblige. I said, 'Ah.'"

"When Lady Wharton returned did you remain with them?"

"At her request. Saw her give him jewels. Saw him give her packet. Saw her dismiss him. Glad to be rid of fellow."

"You went back to the house, and was present when she opened the packet?"

"Yes. Blank paper. Infernal scoundrel."

"Was information given to the police?"

"Wanted to. Lady Wharton said no, go to lawyer. Went to Mr. Finnis Saturday. Then, surprising report in papers. Man murdered, or supposed to be."

"That is all you know, Lord Fairfax?"

"All I know."

The Coroner (to the jury): "Before we call Mr. Reginald Boyd I wish to ask Mr. Richard Remington a question or two, arising out of Lady Wharton's evidence."

The profound amazement with which Dick had listened to this evidence was not reflected in his countenance as he stepped airily forward. Never in his life had he so strongly felt the need for dissimulation as at the present time. It was forced upon him--by the discoveries he had himself made and by the testimony of the witnesses who had been examined--that in this mystery another agency was at work the existence of which he had hitherto only dimly suspected. The person who had presented himself to Lady Wharton as Samuel Boyd and had committed the fraud upon her must have been intimately familiar with the business operations of the murdered man, and must have had free access to the house in Catchpole Square. He must also have a talent for disguise to have so imposed upon Lady Wharton. He could think of but one person who had the knowledge requisite to carry out the deception--Abel Death. But to do what Lady Wharton had described needed courage, coolness, skill, and an evenly balanced brain; none but a master of resource, and one who had perfect command over himself, could have brought to a successful issue a task so difficult. Dick could hardly believe that Abel Death was equal to a man[oe]uvre so daring, a scheme so full of peril, in which a single false step would bring destruction upon him. Dick felt as if every hour added a new mystery to those that lay unsolved. He had one cause for deep gratitude, and he gladly welcomed it. These disclosures helped to dispel the cloud of suspicion that hung over Reginald. Whatever else he might have done, he could have had no personal part in the duplicity and in the robbery of the jewels. How far this would help to clear him in the minds of others who might suspect him had yet to be seen. They might argue that he was in league with another man, and that the imposition practised upon Lady Wharton was part of a cunningly laid scheme, all the details of which had been carefully considered and mapped out beforehand. There was, indeed, but little light in the cloud that hung over Florence's husband.

This was the state of Dick's mind when he submitted himself for the third time to the Coroner.

The Coroner: "Since you were examined on Monday, have you continued your search in Mr. Samuel Boyd's house?"

Dick: "Yes, I have carefully searched every room, every cupboard, every drawer."

"Have you found any jewels?"

"None."

"Any bills of acceptance?"

"None."

"Nothing of any value?"

"Nothing."

"Look at this visiting card which was presented to Lady Wharton on Thursday night in Bournemouth. Do you recognise it as one of Mr. Samuel Boyd's regular visiting cards?"

"It is exactly like. There are thirty or forty similar cards in a drawer in the writing table."

"You are doubtless familiar with Mr. Boyd's handwriting?"

"I was very familiar with it, but that is some time ago. I may err in my recollection of it."

"So far as your recollection serves is this letter received by Lady Wharton on the 6th of March, and dated the 5th, in his writing?"

"It cannot be his writing because on the 5th of March he was dead."

"Confine yourself strictly to answering the questions put to you. Should you say it was in Mr. Samuel Boyd's handwriting?"

Dick examined the letter with great care. He had in his pocket at that very moment proof positive in the shape of the incriminating document written by Samuel Boyd only a few hours before he was murdered, the production of which would have caused Reginald's instant arrest. The writing on the letter was like it, and he would have given much to be able to compare them. After a long pause he said, "It looks like his writing, but I am not an expert in caligraphy."

The Coroner made a gesture as if he had exhausted his questions, and Dick was about to step back, when the Juror interposed.

The Juror: "Have you found a pistol of any kind in the house?"

"Now, who is prompting you?" thought Dick, as he confronted the Juror, a sallow-faced, pock-marked man, with an aggressive voice. "No," he answered aloud, "I found no pistol."

The Juror: "The detective officer who has been examined spoke of a recently fired bullet which he extracted from the wall of the office. How is it that in your evidence on Monday you said nothing of this bullet?"

Dick: "In the first place, because I was not asked. In the second place, because on Monday nothing was known about it."

There was a titter in Court at this, and the juror flushed up and was silent.

The Coroner: "When was the bullet found?"

Dick: "Yesterday."

"It had escaped your notice before the detective officer pointed it out?"

"It was I who first pointed it out. We were examining the wall together when I said, 'What is this?' My question led to the discovery of the bullet."

The Coroner: "Call Mr. Reginald Boyd."

A firm pressure of Florence's hand, and Reginald faced the jury. Dick moved a little nearer to the young wife, whose heart was throbbing violently. Reginald was very pale, and traces of the sickness he had passed through were visible in his face, though he bore himself with composure.

The Coroner: "You have been ill, and probably would like to be seated."

Reginald: "Thank you, Mr. Coroner, I prefer to stand."

"As you please. We understand that you went to your father's house in Catchpole Square to see the body of the deceased?"

"Yes, I went there on Sunday.'

"You saw the body?"

"Yes."

"And identified it?"

"Yes. It was my father's body."

"In the teeth of the conflicting evidence that has been given, you are positive?"

"I am positive. I wish with all my heart and soul that there was room for doubt."

"We recognise that your position is a painful one, and we should, of course, wish to hear all the evidence it is in your power to give, but I consider it right to say that you are not compelled to answer every question put to you."

"There is no question that I shall decline to answer. I am a willing witness in a most unhappy tragedy."

"When did you last see your father alive?"

"On Friday the 1st of March."

"Before that day were you in the habit of visiting him regularly?"

"Before that day I had not seen him for two years. I regret to say we were not on friendly terms."

The Juror: "What was the cause of the disagreement between you?"

The Coroner: "We cannot have that at this point of the inquiry."

The Juror: "The witness states that there is no question that he will decline to answer, and the inquiry will be incomplete unless we arrive at all the facts of the case."

Reginald: "I am willing to answer everything."

The Coroner: "We will proceed in something like order. The last time you saw your father alive was on Friday the 1st of March. Did the interview take place in his house in Catchpole Square?"

"Yes, on that day I paid two visits to the house, the first in the afternoon, the second at night."

The Juror: "How did you obtain admittance in the afternoon?"

The Coroner (to the Juror): "I must request you not to make these frequent interruptions; they tend to confuse the issue."

The Juror: "With all due respect, sir, it is the jury who have to return the verdict"----

The Coroner: "Under my guidance and direction."

The Juror: "Not entirely. We are not simply machines. You can advise us, and clear up knotty points, but you cannot dictate to us. Otherwise you might as well hold this inquiry without our aid. The question I put to the witness is a very simple one."

The Coroner: "Very well." (To Reginald.) "Did you obtain admission into your father's house on Friday afternoon in the usual way?"

Reginald: "No. I knocked at the door two or three times, and receiving no answer, admitted myself with a private latchkey I had in my pocket."

The Juror: "You see, Mr. Coroner, I had an object in asking the question."

The Coroner: "How did you become possessed of the latchkey?"

Reginald: "It was one I used when I lived in Catchpole Square with my father. When I left the home I took it with me."

"Having let yourself in, what then did you do?"

"I went upstairs to the office in the expectation of seeing my father. He was not at home. The only person in the house was his clerk, Abel Death."

"You were personally acquainted with Abel Death?"

"Yes."

"And on friendly terms with him?"

"Yes."

"Why did he not open the street door for you?"

"He had been instructed not to admit anyone during my father's absence."

"Not even to go down to the door to see who it was who sought entrance?"

"Not even that. He was ordered not to stir out of the office."

"Was your father a very strict man?"

"Very strict."

"Had you a definite object in view when you paid the visit, apart from the natural desire to see him?"

"I had. My circumstances were not good, and I went to see if I could not improve them. My mother had left me a small fortune, and had appointed a trustee to administer it. This trustee had given me to understand that when I was of age I should come into possession of £8,000. I spent my youth and early manhood abroad, and when I returned home my trustee was dead, and my father had the disposition of my inheritance. He wished me to join him in his business, but I had a distaste for it, and we had many arguments and discussions on the subject."

The Juror: "Quarrels?"

"I suppose they would be considered so. We were equally firm, and the consequence of our disagreement was that there was a breach between us, which ended in my leaving his house."

"Voluntarily?"

"He sent me away. Before I left he asked me what I intended to live upon, and I answered that I had my inheritance. Greatly to my surprise he informed me that all the money had been spent upon me during and three or four years after my minority. He showed me a statement of accounts which I did not understand."

"Interrupting you here, has that statement of accounts been found among your father's papers?"

"No statement of accounts has been found. Shall I proceed?"

"If you wish."

"It is hardly my wish, but I certainly desire to anticipate questions which might be put to me by the jury."

The Juror: "Quite right. It will save trouble."

Reginald: "I questioned the correctness of these accounts, and my father said he was ready to prove their correctness in a court of law. Such a course was repugnant to my feelings, and we parted, my resolve being to carve out a path for myself. I was not fortunate, and on the day I visited my father I was practically penniless. I was then married, and I desired to make a home for my wife, which in my then circumstances was not possible. It was this which drove me to making another appeal to my father to restore money which I believed was rightfully mine. On the occasion of my afternoon visit I remained only a short time with Mr. Abel Death, and before I left I informed him of my intention to come again at night. I paid my second visit at about ten o'clock, which I thought was the best time to find my father alone. I knocked at the door, and he came down and asked who was there. He recognised my voice when I answered him, and he refused to admit me. I told him from without that I was determined to see him, if not that night, the next day or night, and if not then, that I would continue my efforts until I succeeded. Upon that he unlocked and unbolted the door, and I entered and followed him upstairs into the office, where I explained the motive for my visit. I informed him that I was married, and that it was necessary I should provide for my wife. We were together half an hour or so, and he refused to assist me, and denied that any money was due to me. I offered to accept a small sum, and to sign a full quittance, but he turned a deaf ear to all my appeals, and at length I left him. Mr. Coroner, I am aware that in this disclosure I have touched upon matters which do not come strictly within the scope of your inquiry. I have done so because I wish to avoid the suspicion of any reluctance on my part to make known to you and the jury all my proceedings with respect to my father. Private matters have already been introduced which affect me closely, and while I dispute the justice of the direction which this inquiry has taken I recognise that more mischief may be done by silence than by a frank and open confession."

The Coroner: "Your statement is a voluntary one, and much of it is not pertinent to the inquiry. You say that you visited your father at about ten o'clock?"

"At about that hour."

"You left the house before eleven o'clock?"

"Certainly before that hour."

"Were you and your father quite alone?"

"Quite alone."

"Did any one apply for admission while you were with him?"

"No one."

"There was no other person except yourselves in the house?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Did your father accompany you to the street door?"

"I do not think he did."

"Cannot you say with certainty?"

"No. I regret that, as regards the last few minutes of the interview, I cannot entirely depend upon my memory. I was deeply agitated, and my mind was in confusion. I have endeavoured in vain to recall every incident and word, and it has occurred to me that the fever from which I immediately afterwards suffered, and which kept me to my bed for several days, may have been upon me then. I have a recollection--not very clear--that as I went downstairs I felt in my pocket for the latchkey."

"For what reason? You did not need the key to open the door from within?"

"I cannot say why I did it. I can only tell you what is in my mind."

"Have you the latchkey now?"

"No, I have lost it."

"Where?"

"I do not know where."

"Have you searched for it?"

"Yes, without success."

"Between your two visits to your father on that Friday did you come into communication with Mr. Abel Death?"

"No."

"Did you not see him in Catchpole Square, or in its vicinity?"

"I repeat that I did not see him, and had no communication with him."

The Juror: "Angry words passed between you and your father?"

"I am afraid so."

"Threatening words?"

"Not on my part."

"On his?" (A momentary pause.) "I do not insist upon a reply."

"Oh, I will reply. My father threatened to bring an action against me for a balance of £1,200, which he said was due to him on the account."

"You disputed the correctness of the account?"

"Certainly I disputed it."

"Did you accuse your father of fraud?"

The Coroner: "Order, order!"

The question was not answered.

The Juror: "Is it true that during these last two years you have been living under an assumed name?"

"I have been passing as Mr. Reginald. Reginald is my Christian name."

"Was it as Mr. Reginald you introduced yourself to the family of Inspector Robson?"

"I was introduced to them by that name."

"They did not know you were the son of Mr. Samuel Boyd?"

"They did not."

"And you did not inform them?"

"Not for some time--not, indeed, till I was married."

"That is quite lately?"

"Yes."

"Have you any objection to inform us why you suppressed the name of Boyd? Were you ashamed of it?"

"You are pressing me rather hardly."

The Coroner: "I quite agree. Many of these questions are totally irrelevant."

The Juror: "Surely, Mr. Coroner, it is of importance that we should be made acquainted with the true state of the relations existing between Mr. Samuel Boyd and his only child. Putting aside Lady Wharton's statements and impressions, and assuming that the medical evidence is correct, the witness is the last person who saw the deceased alive."

Reginald: "That is not so. Some person or persons must have seen him after I left him on Friday night."

The Juror: "Well, the last person who has given evidence in this Court?"

Reginald: "Yes."

"Have you taken out letters of administration?"

"Yes."

"As matters stand at present you are the only person who has benefited by the death of your father?"

The Coroner: "I will not allow questions of this nature to be put to the witness, who has given his evidence very fairly, and has shown every disposition to assist the Court."

Reginald: "I should like to explain that I did not know my father had not made a will. My impression was that he had made one, disinheriting me. Even now, although no will has yet been found, one may be forthcoming."

The Juror: "Extremely unlikely. There has been plenty of time for its production."

The Coroner: "You have heard the evidence respecting the bullet in the wall. Is it within your knowledge that your father kept a pistol by him?"

Reginald: "During the time I lived with him he always had a loaded pistol. It was a Colt's revolver. I do not know whether, during the last two years, he continued to keep it."

"Did your father ever fire the pistol?"

"Never, to my knowledge."

"On what day were you taken ill?"

"On the day following my visit to my father. I recollect feeling giddy and light-headed when I returned home that night. I went to bed about midnight, and the next morning I was too ill to rise. The circumstances of my marriage have been made public in the course of this inquiry. I was living alone in Park Street, Islington, and I had intervals of consciousness during which I wrote from time to time to my wife, who was living with her parents. Eventually she came to nurse me, and then the secret of our marriage was at an end. She has related how, being alarmed at my condition, she went to Catchpole Square last Tuesday night to inform my father, and, if possible, to bring him to me. I am deeply, deeply grateful to her for the love and devotion she has shown towards me, and to her parents for their kindness and consideration."

"Where were you on Thursday night?"

"Ill in bed. For a week, from Saturday to Saturday, I did not leave my room."

Reginald's loving look towards Florence, and his tender accents in speaking of her, made a strong impression upon the spectators as, his examination concluded, he retired to his seat by her side.

The Coroner (to the jury): "An hour ago I received a communication from a gentleman who stated that he had evidence of importance to tender which he thinks we ought to hear with as little delay as possible. This gentleman, I understand, is in waiting outside. It may be a convenient time to examine him. Call Dr. Pye."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DR. PYE MAKES A STATEMENT.

There was an interval of almost breathless suspense as, upon the Coroner's instructions, an officer left the Court. Dick looked forward to the entrance of Dr. Pye with no less curiosity than the other spectators, but mingled with this curiosity was an element of alarm. Dark forebodings crossed his mind; he feared he knew not what, but still he smiled confidently at Florence when she turned imploringly to him, for she also was in that state of tension which made every fresh feature of the inquiry a terrifying presage. Presently the officer returned, followed by Dr. Pye.

The new witness was tall, with a slight stoop in his shoulders, his face was ashen gray, his brows knit and concentrated, his eyes habitually downcast, but, when raised, irradiated with a keen steady light, giving one the impression that the pupils might be of steel, which was indeed their colour, his mouth with its thin long lips compressed, his hands long and nervous, his voice calm, clear, and deliberate, his manner altogether that of a man of supreme moral strength and self-possession, who could hold his passions in control, and make them subservient to his will.

"In volunteering a communication which may have some relation to your inquiry," he said, addressing the Coroner, without bestowing a glance upon the spectators, "I am impelled simply by a sense of public duty. As to its value you will be the best judge. What I have to offer to the Court is merely the narration of an occurrence which came under my observation on the night of Friday, the 1st of March, when I was making some experiments in chemistry in a room at the

back of my house in Shore Street, the window in which looks out upon Catchpole Square, and commands a front view of the house in which Mr. Samuel Boyd resided. It is my habit to work late, and it was not till three in the morning that my labours were at an end. At that hour I was standing at the window, gazing aimlessly into the solitude of Catchpole Square, when my attention was arrested by movements at Mr. Boyd's street door. It was gradually opened, and the form of a man emerged from the house. The night was dark, and what I saw was necessarily dim and uncertain in my sight, but it appeared to me that the man, halting on the threshold, lingered in the attitude of a person who wished to escape observation. This impression impelled me to a closer scrutiny of the man's movements. I have in my room a device of my own construction in the shape of a small box containing a coil of magnesium wire. By withdrawing the curtain from a glass globe set in this box, and by pressing a spring, I can, upon lighting the wire, throw a powerful light upon objects at a great distance, remaining myself in darkness. There appeared to me to be something so suspicious in the shadowy movements of the person at Mr. Boyd's door at such an hour that I brought my box to the window, and threw the light upon the Square. It was the work of a moment, but in that moment I had a clear view of the man's features. They were of deathlike paleness, and seemed to be convulsed by fear, but, I argued inly, this might have been caused by the fright occasioned by the sudden glare of light falling upon him--resembling in some respects a flash of lightning, and calculated to startle the strongest man. In his attitude of watchfulness--which I may call the first stage of my observation of him--he stood holding the street door partially open, thus providing for himself a swift retreat into the house in the event of a policeman entering the Square. The second stage was his fear-struck appearance, from whatever cause it proceeded. The third stage--occurring when the light was extinguished--was the shadowy movement of a man gliding out of the Square. Then his final disappearance."

The Coroner: "You say, Dr. Pye, that you had a clear view of the man's features. Did you recognise them?"

Dr. Pye: "No, sir, the man was a stranger to me."

"There appears to be some kind of connection between the death of Mr. Samuel Boyd and the disappearance of a clerk in his employ, Mr. Abel Death? Have you any knowledge of this clerk?"

"No, I never saw the man."

"Were you acquainted with Mr. Samuel Boyd?"

"Very slightly."

"If you saw the man again, could you identify him?"

"I think so."

"Have you ever seen any other man in Catchpole Square leaving Mr. Boyd's house in the middle of the night?"

"Never. It was the unusualness of the incident that attracted my attention."

As he uttered these words he raised his eyes and slowly looked around. When they reached the spot where Inspector Robson and his family were seated his gaze was arrested. The eyes of all the spectators, following his, were now fixed upon the group. A wave of magnetism passed through the Court, and, to a more or less degree, affected the nerves of every one present. Aunt Rob clutched her husband's sleeve, and Florence's eyes dilated with a nameless fear. The long pause was broken by Dr. Pye, who murmured, but in a voice loud enough to be heard by all,--

"It is a very strange likeness."

"To whom do you refer?" asked the Coroner.

"To that gentleman," replied Dr. Pye, pointing to Reginald. "He bears a singular resemblance to the man I saw leaving Mr. Samuel Boyd's house in Catchpole Square in the middle of the night."

Reginald started to his feet with an indignant protest on his lips, and there was great confusion in Court, in the midst of which Dick gently pulled Reginald down to his seat. "It is easily disproved," he said, in a low tone. "You were home and in bed before midnight. Be calm, Florence, there is nothing to fear, nothing to fear." But his heart fell; he saw the net closing round those he loved.

The Coroner (to Dr. Pye): "The gentleman you are pointing to is Mr. Samuel Boyd's son."

Dr. Pye: "I did not know. I say he resembles the man."

"Are you sure?"

"Who can be sure of anything? In hundreds of my experiments all my calculations have been overturned at the last moment. I have been sure of success, and the crucial test has given me the lie. It is the same in human affairs, and in this case I can do no more than record my impressions. In spite of the conditions under which I saw the man his likeness to this gentleman is very

striking; but I would impress upon you that great wrongs have been committed by accidental likenesses, and there are cases on record in which men have been condemned to death, the proof of their innocence coming too late to save them." Florence shuddered and closed her eyes. To her fevered mind her beloved husband was on his trial, surrounded by pitiless judges. Dr. Pye continued: "There is a notable instance of this in Charles Dickens's story, 'A Tale of Two Cities,' where, happily, a life is saved instead of being sacrificed. The incident, strangely enough, occurs also in a court of justice."

The Coroner: "That is fiction. This is fact."

Dr. Pye: "True. If you have nothing more to ask I shall be glad to retire. The atmosphere of this Court is unpleasant to me."

The Coroner intimating that he had no further questions to put, Dr. Pye retired, and the inquiry was adjourned till the following day.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DICK IS OF THE OPINION THAT THE MYSTERY SEEMS IMPENETRABLE, BUT IS STILL DETERMINED TO PIERCE IT.

In great agitation Reginald and his party left the Court and turned in the direction of home, followed at a short distance by a few persons, whose appetite, whetted by what had transpired, thirsted for more. Those whose fate seemed to hang upon the result of the inquiry exchanged but few words on the way. Dick was plunged in thought, and Florence clung more closely to Reginald. Inspector Robson and Aunt Rob exchanged disturbed glances; she was wildly indignant, but his official experience warned him that Reginald was in peril.

With respect to the evidence given by Dr. Pye the one chance for the young man lay in his being able to prove that he had returned to his lodgings before twelve o'clock on that fatal Friday night, and did not leave them again. This proof would not only clear him of the suspicion which naturally attached to him through Dr. Pye's evidence, but would clear him in other respects. But was the proof obtainable? Reginald's silence on the point rendered it doubtful. Could he have brought it forward he would have been eager to speak of it.

When the little party reached the street in which Aunt Rob's house was situated Inspector Robson, turning, saw Mr. Lambert, the detective who had given evidence about the finding of the bullet. Telling his people to go into the house, and saying he would join them presently, he crossed over to the detective, and gave him good day, to which the inspector responded. Then they stood a moment or two without saying anything further.

"On duty?" asked Inspector Robson.

"Partly."

"Anything new stirring?"

"Nothing new."

"I won't beat about the bush," said Inspector Robson, "you have been following us."

The detective rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Come, come, Lambert," continued Inspector Robson, "you and I have been friends this many a year, and friends I hope we'll remain. Be frank with me."

"Is it fair to put it that way, Robson?" said the detective. "When duty calls does friendship count?"

"Perhaps not, perhaps not," replied Inspector Robson, hurriedly, "but you see the close personal interest I have in this unfortunate affair. Are you shadowing my son-in-law?"

The detective rubbed his chin again. It was a habit with him when there was anything unusually grave in his mind, and Inspector Robson understood the meaning it conveyed.

"Now, I ask you, Lambert," he said, "could any man in the world have given his evidence more fairly?"

"No man," answered the detective; "but there's the outside of a man, and the inside of a man. We've had some experience of that, I think. If it's intimated to me to take up a case, I take it up. I won't go farther than that, so don't press me. It isn't often that a case so full of mystery crops up, and there'll be a lot of credit for the man who manages to get to the heart of it. It's something more than bread and butter: it's cake, and I don't want another man to get that cake. Now, mind you, I don't offer an opinion, but so far as this case has gone there are two or three parties to it."

"My son-in-law for one?" asked Inspector Robson, anxiously.

"Yes, your son-in-law for one. I don't say that he's not as innocent as the babe unborn, but you've got to convince people. Just you ask a hundred men and women, and half of 'em 'll wag their heads at mention of Mr. Reginald Boyd's name. The other half 'll wag their heads at mention of Mr. Abel Death's name. I'd give a lot to lay hands on that chap. He's the second party in the case. That's a queer story Lady Wharton told, and of course a true story, only it wasn't the real Samuel Boyd she saw. Somebody made up for him. If it wasn't Abel Death, it was the third party in the case. What a nerve!" said the detective, admiringly. "I couldn't have done it better myself."

"That ought to remove the suspicions against my son-in-law," said Inspector Robson. "There are three or four witnesses who can prove he never left his bed for a week."

"That's all right, but lawyers will say collusion, conspiracy. We're speaking confidentially, you know."

"Yes, and I'm obliged to you, Lambert."

"No need to be. We've been long in the service, you and me--boys together, weren't we?--and we can take credit for keeping one thing steady before us. Duty. The case, you see, doesn't hang only on what took place in Bournemouth last Thursday night; it hangs quite as much upon what took place in Catchpole Square the Friday before. A man is accountable for his actions, and if there's a mystery that's got to be cleared up, as this has got to be, and Mr. Reginald Boyd is concerned in it--which there's no denying--the law calls upon him to explain his actions."

"There's many a man held responsible and accountable for what, in the absence of witnesses, he finds it out of his power to explain, and which, in the nature of the circumstances, he couldn't reasonably be expected to explain. But that doesn't prove him guilty."

"I don't say it does. The hardship to that man is that the law is the law, and, in the absence of an explanation that can be proved to be true, refuses to be satisfied. 'Guilty or not guilty?' says the law. 'Not guilty,' says the man. Does the law accept it? No. It proceeds to open the case. Robson, you've my best wishes, and I hope you and yours will come well through it. Let us leave it there. We've had a comfortable chat; let us leave it there."

"Very well," said Inspector Robson, rather stiffly, "we'll leave it there. If any charge is brought against my son-in-law he will be ready to meet it. I pledge you my word that he'll not run away. Perhaps, if any decided step is resolved upon you will give me timely notice, for old friendship's sake, in return for my promise that you will meet with no obstruction in the performance of your duty. It will help me to soften the shock to my dear daughter--our only child, Lambert, the sweetest girl!"----

He turned his head, to hide his emotion. Lambert pressed his hand, and said,

"You shall be the first to hear of it, Robson. Cheer up. Things mayn't be so bad as some people suspect."

Inspector Robson nodded and left him, and rejoined his family in the house. Aunt Rob had seen him talking to the detective from the window, and had been so successful in instilling courage into Florence and Reginald that cheerful faces greeted his entrance; the cloud left his own at this unexpectedly bright reception.

"We've been talking about things, father," said Aunt Rob in a brisk voice, "and have made up our minds not to mope and mourn because a bit of trouble seems to be coming on us. If it passes all the better, but if we've got to fight it we'll fight it bravely."

"Bravo, mother," said Uncle Rob, "that's the right spirit to show. Here's my hand, Reginald."

"And here's mine," said Aunt Rob, "with my heart in it."

"Thank you both," said Reginald. "I can bear anything rather than that you should doubt me."

"No fear of that, my dear. You've behaved like a man, from first to last. Never speak ill of the dead, they say, and I'm not going to. He was your father, and if his ways were not our ways, we're the better for it, and while he lived he was the worse for it. You were right in refusing to take up his business, right in trying to carve out an honourable career for yourself, right in going to see him that Friday, and trying to get the money you were entitled to. Not that you *would* have got it--but, there, I won't say anything against one that's gone to where I hope he'll be forgiven. You were right in everything, Reginald."

"God bless you, mother," said Florence.

"Right even in falling in love with our dear Florence?" said Reginald, tenderly.

"Who could help it, bless her sweet face! Give me a kiss, my son, and you, too, Florence, and you, too, Dick, and you, too, father. And mind you, lad, I'm as glad as glad can be that you gave your evidence as you did to-day, and made a clean breast of it. You spoke the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, with love and innocence in your heart. Now, father, what did the detective have to say to you? Don't be afraid to tell us. Is he keeping an eye upon Reginald?"

"He is, mother; and I said if any charge is brought against him he'll be ready to meet it."

"Of course he will, and we'll stand by him, shoulder to shoulder. Father, you've been thirty years in the service, and you ought by this time to be pretty well used to the ways of witnesses. What is your opinion of Dr. Pye as a witness?"

"He gave his evidence in a straightforward manner," replied Uncle Rob, guardedly. "What one has to consider in reckoning up a witness is the effect he produces upon judge and jury, whether they put faith in what he says, or throw doubt upon it."

"Which way would it be with Dr. Pye?"

"They'd believe every word he spoke."

"What do you think, Dick?" asked Aunt Rob.

"I don't trust him," Dick replied.

"Give your reason."

"Can't. Haven't any?"

"Prejudice, then, Dick," said Uncle Rob.

"Perhaps. Call it that. Aunt, have you never seen a man you disliked, without being able to account for it?"

"It's happened more than once."

"And you've found him out afterwards to be a bad lot?"

"That has happened, too."

"A kind of instinct, you see," said Dick.

"What gets over me," said Aunt Rob, shaking her head, as though she had not made up her mind, "is the way he stood up for Reginald. All he seemed to want was fair play."

"Yes, seemed to want," said Dick, doggedly.

"At all events it was honest in him not to be too positive about the resemblance to the man he saw. Do you know anyone, Dick, that answers to the description and that might be mistaken for Reginald?"

"No one, aunt."

"Not Abel Death?"

"Not a bit like Reginald."

"In the name of all that's mysterious, what is he keeping out of the way for? Did you ever know a case in such a tangle?"

"Never. I don't wonder that Lambert is keen upon it. It would make his fortune to unravel the tangle."

"I mean to unravel it," said Dick. "Oh, you may shake your head, aunt. I've certain ideas I'm not going to speak of just now; you would think me mad if I were to tell you what they were. If you keep your mind upon a thing it's wonderful how ideas crowd upon you."

"Leading too often to confusion," observed Uncle Rob. "The main thing is a starting point."

"I've a dozen," said Dick.

"That's the mischief of it. You put a bloodhound on the track. What's the consequence unless he gets a scent? He flounders; he might as well be a mongrel for all the use he is. Coming back to the evidence that was given in Court to-day, might not the man who presented himself to Lady Wharton as your father, Reginald, be the same man Dr. Pye saw, who made himself up to resemble you in case any one caught sight of him. Such things have been done, you know."

"Look out!" cried Dick, starting forward, and catching Reginald, who was swaying forward.

"We'll talk no more of this miserable business to-day," said Aunt Rob, in a tone of stern decision. "Take him up to bed, Florence, and keep him quiet. If we're not careful he'll be having a relapse."

Reginald, indeed, had overtaxed his strength, and the caution did not come too soon.

"I must be off," said Dick, when Florence and Reginald were gone. "If I'm not back before nine o'clock you need not expect to see me again to-night."

In point of fact he had made up his mind to sleep in Catchpole Square, and to keep secret vigil there. But first he must go to Reginald's old lodgings in Park Street to speak to the landlady. So much depended upon proof being forthcoming that Reginald's account of his movements after leaving his father's house was true that Dick could not rest until he had questioned her.

When Dick said to his uncle that he had ideas which would be considered mad if he revealed them, it was no mere figure of speech. So weird and grotesque was one of these ideas that, even in the midst of his gloomy forebodings, he could not resist a smile as he pondered upon it. "It's a game that two can play at," he muttered, "and my short experience on the stage ought to carry me successfully through. It may be time wasted, but it's worth the trying. We'll see whether that flashlight invention of Dr. Pye will come upon the scene again. If it does he'll see something that will astonish his weak nerves."

He brightened up when he presented himself to the landlady, who not only welcomed him because he was a favourite with every one, but because he might be able to impart something new relating to a mystery with which, through the fact of the son of Samuel Boyd being her lodger, she was indirectly connected. Mrs. Weevil was one of those women to whom a gossip is one of the most enjoyable things in life, and she gave Dick good day with glad anticipation in her voice.

"And 'ow's the poor young gentleman, sir," she said, "after 'is day at the inkwich? I've been readin' about it in the papers, but wot I say is, if it wos the last word I spoke, it ain't no more like 'im than chalk is to cheese."

"What is not like him?" inquired Dick.

"'Is pictcher, sir, and yours, too, sir,' I ses to Mrs. Porter, the 'am and beef shop across the road, 'It's a shame,' I ses, 'that sech things is allowed. If a portrait it is, a portrait it ought to be. Actions 'ave been brought for less.' 'Wot you say, Mrs. Weevil, I say,' ses Mrs. Porter, 'but we're obliged to put up with it. Them newspaper men don't mind wot liberties they take.'"

Dick listened with patience to this and to much more to the same effect, and then approached the object of his visit.

"I've come to ask you," he said, "whether you recollect what occurred last Friday night week."

"Ah," she said, abstractedly, running her eye along the hem of her apron, "there's them as 'as cause to remember; there's them as won't forget to their last hour."

"Meaning?" he asked.

"Mr. Abel Death, sir, and Mr. Samuel Boyd."

"His last hour has gone by; he's past remembering."

"A truer word you never spoke, sir, and it's wot we must all come to. But Mr. Abel Death ain't past remembering, and wot 'e's got on 'is conscience I shouldn't like to 'ave on mine."

"That is one of the things that has yet to be settled," said Dick, ambiguously.

"And settled I 'ope it will be, sir, and better sooner than later, for Mr. Reginald's sake. You see, sir, I speak of 'im as Mr. Reginald because that's the name he went by when he first come to me. 'A reference, is usual, sir,' I ses to 'im, 'if so be as you'll egscuse me for mentionin' of it.' 'Mrs. Weevil,' he ses, 'I can't give you a reference, but I can give you a month in advance.' Wot gentleman could say more? A month in advance 'e paid, from first to last, and never a word between us when I give 'im the book on Monday mornin'--puncchual, because 'e said 'e liked to be. When I 'eard 'e wos Mr. Samuel Boyd's son you might 'ave knocked me down with a feather. I ses to Mrs. Porter, while she wos spreadin' mustard on a sangwitch for a gent as eats six every afternoon of 'is life as the clock strikes three, 'Well,' I ses to 'er, 'of all the strange things!' 'That's *my*
opinion, Mrs. Weevil,' she ses."

"Last Friday week," said Dick, taking up the threads of the subject. "I wish you to tell me at what hour of the night Mr. Reginald came home."

"And you ain't the first as wishes me to tell you. There's been two detectives 'ere, and three newspaper men. 'Do you recollec',' they ses, 'wot time Friday night young Mr. Boyd come 'ome?'

Your own words, sir, as if they wos turned out of a mould. 'No, I don't,' I ses to them. 'I went to bed at ten, when Mr. Reginald was out. I knocked at his door,' I ses, 'to see if 'e wanted anythink, but he didn't answer, and I jest peeped in to make sure 'e was out. Which he wos.' 'Oh,' ses they, 'did 'e keep 'is door unlocked?' 'Yes, 'e did,' I ses, 'and everything else as well. 'E wos always as open as open can be. I wish all wos like 'im, but that can't be egspected, because it takes all sorts to make a world.' They wanted to go up to 'is rooms, but I ses, 'No, you don't. I know my duties as a landlady,' I ses, 'and I won't 'ave no pokin' and pryin' in a gentleman's private apartments.' Would you believe it, sir, they orfered me money to let 'em go in, but they couldn't wheedle me. I ain't one of that sort."

"Try and remember," urged Dick, earnestly, "whether, after you were in bed you didn't hear him come in on Friday night."

"If I tried ever so 'ard, sir, I couldn't recollec' wot I don't remember. Why should a gentleman be spied upon when 'e pays 'is rent reg'lar? Mr. Reginald 'ad 'is own street door key, and wos free to come and go. 'E might 'ave come 'ome any time in the night without me knowin' it.

"It is a very important matter," said Dick, greatly disheartened. "Perhaps your servant may recollect something."

"I'll ring for 'er, sir, and you can arsk 'er yourself."

In answer to the bell the servant came up, a heavy lumbering girl of twenty, in a chronic state of sulks, with whom Dick fared no better than he had with her mistress. She did not know what time she went to bed, nor what time she got up. Sometimes she awoke in the middle of the night, and sometimes she didn't; she generally didn't, and if she did she did not know what time it was. She did not recollect when Friday night was, she could not think so far back as the week before last. All she knew was that it wasn't her night out, and if the gentleman kept talking to her all day long how could she get her work done? So Dick reluctantly let her go, and took his departure himself, no wiser than when he came. 'Reginald's statement that he had returned to his lodgings before midnight was of no value in the absence of corroborative evidence. Thicker and blacker grew the clouds around him.

From Park Street he proceeded to Draper's Mews, and there he met with another disappointment. Mrs. Death opened the door for him, and he saw a change in her. She was embarrassed, suspicious, sorrowful, angry. The old cordiality was gone.

"Is Gracie at home?" he asked, looking around without seeing the sallow, wistful face.

"No, she isn't," answered Mrs. Death, in a constrained voice, "and I don't know where she is. I haven't had misfortune enough, I suppose, that my own child should go against me."

She dashed away the tears that were gathering in her eyes, and Dick gazed at her in pity and surprise.

"Go against you, Mrs. Death!" he exclaimed. "No, no. It isn't in Gracie's nature."

"It wasn't," she retorted, "till you stepped between us."

"You are labouring under some grievous error," he said, sadly. "I have not seen Gracie. I came to ask how she was--as a friend, Mrs. Death, as a true friend."

"Oh, yes," she cried, bitterly, "as a true friend! I'm learning the meaning of that word. It's time, it's time. Hush children!" For one or two, alarmed at their mother's loud voice, began to cry. They were all huddled together on the floor, and had looked up eagerly when Dick entered. "If you're not quiet I'll give you a beating all round." She turned to Dick. "Come into the next room; it isn't right that they should hear us. There, children, there, be good."

With compressed lips, and eyes that seemed to be inwardly searching for an explanation, Dick accompanied her to the adjoining room. Night was coming on, but there was still light enough for them to see each other's face.

"Be fair to me, Mrs. Death," he said, in a gentle tone. "Whatever you may think of me now, think of me for a moment as I was, and tell me first about Gracie."

"There isn't much to tell," she returned; and she, also, seemed to be searching inwardly for something she could not understand. "She does nothing but talk of you. Dr. Vinsen walked home with us from the funeral yesterday, and Gracie wouldn't keep by our side; she walked behind. Two or three times he beckoned to her, but she was rebellious. 'What have you been thinking of, child?' he asked when we got home. 'I've been thinking of Dick,' she answered. 'Always of Dick, Gracie?' he said. 'Yes,' she answered, 'always of Dick.' 'Never of me?' he asked, and no one in the world could have spoken more kindly. 'Oh, yes,' she said, 'I think of you a lot, but in another way.' 'Now, tell me, child,' he said, 'what you think of me?' 'You'd best not ask,' she answered, and ran away. When we were alone I asked her what she meant by behaving so to our best friend. I will not tell you what her reply was; I was shocked and grieved that a child of mine could be so ungrateful. She looked out for you yesterday afternoon and evening, and this afternoon, too. 'Why doesn't Dick come?' she kept on saying. 'Where's Dick?' It's three hours now that she went away,

and I don't know what's become of her. That's all I've got to tell you about Gracie, if you didn't know it before. I want my child, I want my child! Do you hear, Mr. Remington. I want my child! I have lost my husband--am I to lose my Gracie, too?"

"I sincerely hope not," said Dick; "I honestly believe not. She will come back presently. But there is something else in your mind against me, Mrs. Death."

She stepped close to him, and looked fiercely into his eyes.

"Who killed Mr. Samuel Boyd?" she said, in a hissing whisper. "Tell me that."

"I wish to God I could!" he replied.

"I wish to God *I* could!" she retorted, still speaking in a low, fierce whisper, so that the children in the next room should not hear. "But though we don't know, we have our suspicions. I know what mine are. What are yours? Tell me, if you dare!"

He did not answer her. In the presence of misfortune so undeserved, of suffering so keen, how could he breathe a word against her husband?

"No, you do not dare," she continued. "You haven't the courage to say to my face that you believe my poor husband to be guilty of the crime; but you can say so behind my back, you can go about poisoning people's minds against him, and then come to me smiling in pretended friendship. Oh, Mr. Remington," she said, with a remorseful sob, and her changeful moods showed how her heart was torn, "I would not have believed it of you. You make us trust you, you make us love you, and then you turn against us. See here!" She pulled up the sleeve of her gown, and bared her emaciated arm to his pitying gaze. "As this is, so my whole body is, and my soul is on the rack. You have seen us in our poverty, you know the state to which we have been driven, you have witnessed how we live. Is it the work of an honest man to oppress and malign us?"

"It would be the work of a coward," he answered, "if I had done a hundredth part of what you bring against me. I have done you no wrong, no injustice. I think I know who has instilled these thoughts into your mind, but I will not ask you for his name. Doubtless he has laid the seal of silence on your lips----"

"He has not," she interrupted. "What he has said to me he would say to you if you stood before him."

"I think not," said Dick.

"He would. He has been kind and generous to us; if it had not been for him my children would have starved."

"I would have done as much if I could have afforded it," said Dick, with set teeth. "Has it not crossed your mind, Mrs. Death, that you are being deceived?"

"How, deceived?" she asked, and despite the warmth of her championship there was doubt in her face.

"In being led to believe that those who are your friends are your enemies?"

"I speak as I find."

"No," said Dick, firmly, "you speak from ideas which have been put into your head, heaven knows for what purpose. What that man's motive may be----"

"Yes, yes, yes," she interrupted again. "Motive, motive, motive. I've heard enough of motive. What is yours, Mr. Remington? Who is more deeply interested in the death of Mr. Samuel Boyd, who is more directly connected with it, who has more to gain from it, than you and your friend. You speak of motive. What motive brings you here?"

"I have told you."

"You have not told me," she said, violently. "You come to seek information about my poor husband."

"Yes," he admitted, "partly."

"And," she said, very slowly, "to cast suspicion upon him, if the poor dear is alive, and so avert it from yourself and Mr. Reginald Boyd."

Dick was too startled to reply. No need to ask the source of this insidious suggestion.

"If it happened that you found him here," she continued, "would you give information to the police? Would you say, 'Go into that house and arrest the murderer of Mr. Samuel Boyd?' Oh, I know, I know! But we do not fear the truth, and we have a friend who will see that justice is done. That is all we want, and I pray that I may live to see the day."

She had worked herself into a white heat of passion, and Dick saw that no good would result from prolonging his visit. "May there come a happier day for all of us," he said, and passed from her presence.

Night was coming on as he took his way to Catchpole Square, but he did not heed the falling shadows nor the soft drizzling rain that now began to fall. "This is Dr. Vinsen's work," he thought, "and he does not work without a purpose. What motive can he have in fixing suspicion upon me and Reginald, what motive in taking so deep an interest in Mrs. Death? The mystery seems impenetrable, but I will pierce it till light comes. I will, I will, I will!" He did not hear pattering feet behind him, and was not conscious that anyone was by his side till his hand was clutched.

"Dick!"

"Gracie!" he cried. "I am glad you are here. Your mother is terribly anxious about you. Let me take you to her."

"No," she said, panting, "not yet, Dick. I've been looking for you everywhere. I've got something to tell you first. Come, come, come!"

She dragged him in the direction he had been taking, towards Catchpole Square.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

GRACIE MAKES A DISCOVERY.

He did not resist. The enterprise to which he was pledged had so fastened itself upon his imagination that the least thing appertaining to it claimed first place. Except that her breath was short there were no symptoms of excitement in Gracie, but Dick was sufficiently conversant with her peculiar manner to know that she had something of importance to communicate.

"Tell me as we go along," he said.

"No," she answered, "you must see for yourself."

"Don't walk so fast, then. We must not attract attention."

There were only two or three loungers in Catchpole Square. Now that Samuel Boyd was buried the general interest in the house had waned, and public attention was chiefly devoted to the proceedings in the Coroner's Court, in consequence of which there had been intervals during this day when the Square was bare of sight-seers. The two or three idle persons who were staring aimlessly at the walls as Dick and Gracie came near regarded the appearance of the new-comers as an agreeable diversion, and gazed at them instead.

"Now, Gracie, what is it?" asked Dick.

She cast a sharp glance at a little iron gate at the side of the next house to Samuel Boyd's, and replied, "Not while they're here, Dick. Stare them out."

Nothing loth, Dick stared so sternly at the idlers that they became nervous, shifted their gaze, to see him still staring at them when they looked at him again, made awkward movements, and finally strolled away, and left the Square to him and Gracie.

"Let's talk inside the house," she said, with a nod of approval.

"No, Gracie, here. I don't care about taking you in."

"I've been in," she said calmly.

"You've been in!" he exclaimed, hastening to the door. "Is anybody inside now? Ah!" with a sudden thought. "Your father!"

"I didn't see a living soul when I was in the place," she said, mournfully.

"Who opened the door for you?"

"Nobody. I won't talk in the Square, Dick; people'll be coming and interrupting us. I'll show you all about it when we're inside. You'll be glad to know."

Recognising the imprudence of running the chance of being overheard, he unlocked the door, and they stood in the dark passage.

"Don't be frightened, Gracie. What has happened within these walls is eerie enough to send the shivers through one."

"I ain't frightened a bit, Dick."

"Very well, then. Remain here while I go and get a light. The candles and matches are upstairs."

"I'll come with you. You do like me a little, don't you, Dick?"

"I like you a good deal. You're the queerest and bravest little girl I've ever met."

She nestled close to him. They reached the office, and he fumbled about for the matches.

"Where are we, Dick?"

He hesitated a moment, and answered gently, "In the office where your father used to work."

"Father?" she sighed. "Dick, what do you see when you are in the dark?"

"Darkness."

"I see more than that."

"Do you see anything now?" he asked, still groping for the matches.

"I see father. There he stands. He looks so white and thin, and he's holding out his arms to me to save him."

"From what? Ah, here they are at last." He struck a match, and lighted a candle.

"I don't know from what, but I'm going to. Now he's gone. No, no! He's there, he's there! Father, father!"

She darted forward to the hooded chair in which the wax figure of the Chinaman was seated.

"Hold hard, Gracie," said Dick, catching her by the arm. "That's not a man; it's a wax figure."

"Let me go, let me go!" It was not a scream, but a fierce whisper that issued from her lips. She twisted herself out of Dick's grasp, and ran to the chair. She stood awhile before she spoke again, and Dick watched her curiously. "Is he dead?"

"Wax images generally are," said Dick, endeavouring to speak lightly.

She gazed earnestly at the dead white face.

"Has he been here long?"

"A pretty long time, I should say."

"Was he here when Mr. Boyd was murdered?"

"Yes."

"If he could only speak, Dick!"

"Ah, if he only could!"

She crept to the bedroom door. "Is this the room?"

"Yes. I wouldn't go in, Gracie."

"Why not? He's dead and buried; and if his ghost is there it can't do me any harm."

Her black eyes travelled over the walls and ceiling and floor, as though in search of a clue to her father's fate. She evinced a disposition to linger there, but Dick pulled her back into the office.

"Now, Gracie, how did you get into the house?"

"I'll show you. Come downstairs."

Taking the candle with them they descended to the lower part of the premises. There were three small rooms in the basement, in addition to the kitchen, all in a state of ruin. He was filled with wonder when Gracie informed him that there was a cellar underneath the kitchen, for neither he nor the officials who had searched the place knew anything of it.

"Pull up the trap door, Dick. There it is, under that old chair."

The wonder still upon him he removed the chair, and, kneeling, lifted the trap door, beneath which was a short fixed ladder.

"I'll go first," said Gracie, "then you can give me the candle, and come after me." It was done as she directed, and he found himself in a dungeon-like room, about ten feet square, without window or door in it.

"I got in through that wall, Dick."

It was the wall that divided the two houses. Dick looked and saw no means of entrance.

"Can't you see how, Dick?"

"No. You are a spirit."

"Can a spirit do things that we can't?"

"It is what people believe," replied Dick, doubtfully.

"And see things that we can't?"

"So they say."

"If I was a spirit I'd soon find out where poor father is. I ain't a spirit, Dick. Look here."

Stepping to a part of the wall which bore traces of crumbling away, Gracie pushed a brick into the cellar of the adjoining house; she pushed another, and that fell; another, and that fell. A rat scampered past, and gave Dick a shock. Gracie laughed. Then she wedged her small body through, and stood apart from him, he being in one house, and she in another.

"Wait a bit, Gracie," he cried excitedly. "Hold the candle."

There were other loose bricks which yielded to his pressure, and in a few moments he had made a hole large enough for a man to creep through. Dick and Gracie were now side by side.

"Easy, ain't it, Dick? We'd best put up the bricks, in case of accidents."

"You ought to have been a detective," said Dick.

"I shouldn't have made a bad one, I don't think," she answered, with unemotional complacency, proceeding to replace the bricks, which she did very carefully, even fixing the loose mortar about them. The work was done so neatly that nothing but the closest scrutiny would have led to the discovery of the unlawful communication between the houses.

"Dick," said Gracie, "Mr. Samuel Boyd was as artful as they make 'em. Do you think he went in and out through this hole?"

"He'd have been in a rare mess if he did," replied Dick, brushing the dust from his clothes. "The puzzle is what he wanted in an empty house. Supposing he did not wish to go back, how did he get out of it?"

"This way."

He followed her out of the cellar up a short, narrow flight of rickety stairs. At the end of the passage was a door, the lock of which was broken. This door opened upon half a dozen stone steps, and at one time had probably been used as a kitchen entrance for tradesmen. A little rusty gate at the top opened into the Square. Only two of the houses had an entrance of a similar description, and Dick inwardly railed at his own lack of foresight in overlooking this means of getting into Samuel Boyd's residence. Upon further reflection, however, he thought it hardly likely that he would have succeeded in carrying his investigations to the point which Gracie's shrewdness and pertinacity had enabled her to reach.

"It's a good job for me the place is empty," said Gracie. "I had to get into Mr. Boyd's house somehow, you know, even if I had to climb the wall at the back, the way the murderer and the newspaper man did. As I was looking at the houses I saw these steps, and when nobody was in the Square I crept down. It was all a job to push the door open, but I did, and there I was, without anybody seeing me. Then I tried to get into the backyard, but couldn't. I knew there was only a wall between me and the next house, and I thought of the way prisoners make their escape from prison. They made holes in walls--why couldn't I? I found a bit of old iron in the cellar here, and I poked at the bricks with it till I came across one that was looser than the others. It didn't take me long to push it through, and when I got that out the rest was easy. That's the way of it, Dick."

"You were in the dark all the time."

"That didn't matter. I've got cat's eyes."

"You're a clever girl."

"Thank you, Dick. When you say anything like that to me I feel warm all over."

"What made you so anxious to get into Mr. Boyd's house? Surely you did not expect to find your father there?"

"I don't know what I didn't expect. I thought I might find a bit of paper with his writing on it that'd tell me where to look for him. I told you about my dream the night before last, and how I promised father I'd catch the murderer. I dreamt of him again last night. 'Don't forget your promise,' he said. 'Look for me in Catchpole Square.' 'You ain't dead, are you, father?' I asked. 'No,' he said, 'look for me in Catchpole Square, and catch the murderer.' It's a large order, ain't it, Dick?"

There was nothing humorous in the question; her voice was perfectly passionless, but Dick had a clear sense of the absorbing earnestness and the pitiful pathos which lay beneath, unexpressed though they were in tone or gesture.

"Poor little Gracie!" he said. "The body of a mouse and the heart of a lion."

"I *am* small, ain't I? But I shall grow. Did I do right, Dick, in coming to tell you about the hole? Don't say you're mad with me."

"I won't. You did quite right, and I only wish you were a man. You and I together would get at the bottom of a mystery that is making many innocent people unhappy."

"We'll do it as it is, Dick. It's made mother unhappy--oh, so unhappy! The worst of it is"--she paused, and with a grave look added, "Dr. Vinsen. What does he mean by speaking against you?"

"Passes my comprehension, Gracie. There's no love lost between us, that's clear. It is a case of mutual antipathy. But I don't want to do him an injustice. He has been very kind to you."

"Yes," she said. "I wonder why."

"Ah, I wonder."

"I tried to get in at the inquest to-day, but couldn't get near the door. Was he there?"

"I did not see him. His friend was."

"His friend?" she queried.

"Dr. Pye, and he made it hot for us."

"What did he say, Dick, what did he say?"

"Too long to tell you now; you'll hear all about it by and by."

"Give me a ha'penny to buy a paper, Dick, will you?"

"Here's a penny. So, Dr. Vinsen speaks against me?"

"Yes, and smiles and pats me when I stick up for you. He ain't angry, you know; he speaks as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. 'You'll know better, my child,' he says, 'before you are much older, and then you'll stick up for me.' He'll have to wait a long time for that. Mother's wild with me because I don't like him, but I can't, I can't! I feel sometimes as if I could stick a knife in him. I'm sure he'd do you a mischief if he could, so just you take care of him, Dick."

"I will; and I dare say I shall be a match for him in the end. We've talked enough about him, Gracie, my girl. Now we'll get back to the house, and I'll take you to your mother, who is fretting her heart out about you."

"I'd sooner go by myself, Dick, and I'll tell her you found me and sent me home."

"That will do as well. I know you will not break a promise you give me."

"Never, Dick, never! I'd die first!"

They returned to the house the way they came, and she lifted her face to his.

"Kiss me, Dick," she said.

He kissed gladness into her, and they parted at Samuel Boyd's street door.

CHAPTER XL.

THE SPECTRE IN THE FLASH-LIGHT.

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

His task completed, Dr. Pye put into a drawer the papers he had set aside, and with extreme care poured out a glass of wine and held it up to the light. His anticipated enjoyment of the precious draught was heightened by the deep ruby colour which shone through the delicate glass, and he gazed long at it, and at its almost living reflection in a jewel on his white hand. He drank it slowly, and drank a second and a third in the same leisurely manner. Then he rose and went to the window, in the closed shutter of which was a small revolving panel. On a bracket within reach of his right hand was the box containing the flashlight, of which he had spoken in his evidence at the Coroner's Court, and within reach of his left was a tap which controlled the gas. This tap he turned, and the room was in darkness. Then he turned the revolving panel, and through the exposed circle of glass looked out upon the night. All was dark in Catchpole Square. Its silence, its gloom, the utter absence of movement, were in keeping with the tragedy which had made its name a household word.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Without result, of course?"

"Without result."

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

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

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

"Look again--closer, closer!"

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XLI.

HOW A MURDERER MIGHT HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"See what?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You saw none on the first occasion."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"And mine."

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

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

"I will not."

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

code you would make it swifter, surer--eh, my friend?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Stand back."

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

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

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

Dr. Vinsen passed his hand confusedly across his brows.

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

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

The next moment Dr. Pye was alone.

CHAPTER XLII.

A FAMILY COUNCIL.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Has it ever?" asked Reginald.

"Yes. A fifty to one chance."

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

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

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

She glowed with heavenly pity, with indignant pride, with devoted love. The type of a true, brave, honest English girl, she stood embracing the man whose heart, whose life, were linked

with hers, ready to defend him, to suffer for him, to fling back the words of scorn flung at him--if need were, to die for him. It is beneath the stress of a heavy stroke of misfortune that men and women such as she show their noblest qualities.

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

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

Aunt Rob's heart throbbed with exultation.

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

"Amen!" he answered.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"If the law," said Aunt Rob, with fine disdain, "can prevent a son from offering a reward for the discovery of his father's murderer the less we have of it the better. Why, instead of one man looking for the monster, there 'll be a hundred! Dick, you must see to the printing of the bills, and they should be got out at once."

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XLIII.

AUNT ROB PLAYS THE PART OF FAIRY GODMOTHER.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Have you ever seen a bull-baiting without the bull?" said Uncle Rob, gravely. "The public's waiting for the bull, and they won't rest satisfied till he's in the ring. That's where the danger is. They don't care a straw whether it's the right bull or the wrong bull; they want something to bait."

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

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

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

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

"I don't consider it fair."

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

"Conspiring!"

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

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

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

some of us have been treated in court; and the prime mover of it all is Dr. Vinsen, who stands behind and pulls the strings."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No person, in my remembrance."

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

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

"No one saw you go upstairs?"

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

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

"What is it, Dick?"

"Little Gracie is just round the corner, waiting for me; you won't see the tip of her nose unless you turn the street, for I told her to keep out of sight. She's my shadow, you know, and I haven't

the heart to order her not to follow me about. What the child sees in me to haunt me as she does is more than I can understand."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Not a bit."

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

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

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

"You men had best go into the next room and settle your business," she said; "you haven't too much time to spare, and we don't want you meddling with women's affairs." Away they went, meekly. "Gracie, you sit here, and don't be shy with us, my dear, we're only homely people, the same as yourself. Florence, put another spoonful of tea in the pot, and there's the kettle boiling, just in the nick of time. Now, my dear, you make a good breakfast--I want you to drink your tea as hot as you can, it will ease your cough--it's Dick's cup you're drinking out of, you won't mind that, *I* know--he's told us such a lot about you, and everything that's good--cut some more bread and butter, Florence--are you fond of jam, Gracie?--but what a question!--when I was a little girl I could eat a pot, only they wouldn't give me so much at a time--this is Dick's favourite jam, raspberry----" And all the time the good woman chattered she was putting food before Gracie, and coaxing her to eat, shaking her head at the child's attempts not to cough violently, and shaking her head more when she put her hand on the bosom of the poor little frock, and discovered how thinly she was clad. And all the time Gracie sat quiet at the table and ate, not greedily but gratefully, her eyes fixed now on Aunt Rob, and now on Florence, with the sweet thought in her mind, "Dick's told 'em a lot about me, and everything that's good!"

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

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

It was then that Gracie spoke.

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

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

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

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

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

"No one can, Gracie."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I see," said Reginald, composedly.

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

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

"But it is an official bill."

"Couldn't have a better pattern."

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

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

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

"Why, uncle!----"

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

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

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

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

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

"Where's father?"

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

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

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

"I'll try to be, Dick."

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

"Yes, dear Dick."

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

"I will."

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

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

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

CHAPTER XLIV.

IN THE CAUSE OF JUSTICE

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

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

"Go ahead."

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

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

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

"Done what?"

"You know. The murder."

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

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

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

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

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

"You're fond of her, Dick."

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

"Yes, Dick, please."

"Your hand on it."

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

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

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

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

"You."

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

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

"Right you are, my hearty, and there's many a dream that's come true, and likewise many that haven't. 'But it isn't because you've had a dream,' says the captain, 'that *I* shouldn't have a shy at the discovery of him, and that's what I've set *my* mind on, if so be as you've no objections,' he says. 'Objections!' says the first mate, '*I've* no objections'"--Here Dick broke off. "I suppose he hasn't, Gracie?"

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

"Love your heart, I knew you wouldn't have. 'And how are you going to set about it?' says the

first mate. 'Why,' says the captain, planting his wooden leg firmly on the deck--did I tell you he had a wooden leg?"

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

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

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

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

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

"As a matter of course."

"Who'd pay it to him?"

"It would be paid through the captain."

"Through you?"

"Through me."

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

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

"How much is the reward, Dick?"

"Two hundred pounds."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No."

"You could find out, I dare say."

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

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

"I'll do it, Dick."

"You're a brick. Here we are at the printer's. But you mustn't go away without the needful for current ex's. You might want to jump into a bus, and if you keep out all day you'll want something to eat. Hold out your hand--one shilling, two shillings, a sixpence, and some coppers. If you've anything to tell me come to Aunt Rob's house any time between six and eight. I've a particular reason for not wanting to be seen with you in Catchpole Square to-night. Here are a couple more coppers for brandyballs for the babies at home. Now, off with you, my little detective. No sleeping partners in our firm. You and I, working together, will make Scotland Yard sit up. We'll

beat the Criminal Investigation Department, even if it has a dozen Dr. Vinsens to back it up. Here's a kiss for good luck, Gracie."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XLV.

CROSS PURPOSES.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The bill was stuck, and people were stopping to read it. Even in these days of huge and startling advertisements on the walls--not the least conspicuous of which are the lank figures of blue or scarlet females in outrageous costumes and impossible postures, the product of a mischievous school of impressionists--even amidst these monstrous parodies of art a double-demy poster offering a reward of £500 for the discovery of a Murderer is certain to command an audience. So it was natural enough that a little crowd should gather, and that eager comments and opinions should be exchanged.

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

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

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

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

"What's good for the complaint?"

"Quartern o' rum, to commence with."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Can't you?" retorted Dick.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Quartern o' rum."

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

"True bill?"

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

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

"Oh, that's the game," said Dick, concealing his uneasiness. "And what a game it is--oh, what a game it is! Says I to myself, when I gets detective Lambert's evidence read out to me--'there's a man for you! with eyes all over him, and one to spare'--says I to myself when I hears that evidence, 'rope and grapnel over the wall--by the Lord, he's hit it!' Then I asks the boy that's reading the paper to me, 'And who may that be the picture of?' 'That,' says he, 'is the picture of Mr. Dick Remington, nephew of Inspector Robson, and cousin of the young lady as goes and marries the son of Samuel Boyd on the sly.' He's a sharp little boy, almost as sharp as you, Mr.

Dick Remington. 'O-ho!' says I to him, 'and does Mr. Dick Remington give evidence at the inquest?' 'Yes, he does,' says the boy, and he reads it out to me. 'You've missed something,' I says. 'You've missed what Mr. Dick Remington says about the rope and grapnel.' 'He don't say nothing at all about it,' says the boy. 'It must be in another paper,' I says, and I buys 'em all, and has 'em all read out to me, word for word, and if you'll believe me there ain't a word in one of 'em about the use that Mr. Dick Remington makes of the rope and grapnel he bought of a honest tradesman as sweats hisself thin to get a living, and then can't get it. That's what I call a coinci-dence. What do you call it?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was vague, but effective, and it was Dick's good fortune that the hazardous shot told. Indeed, it had gone straight to the bull's eye. Many were the questionable transactions in which, from time to time, Mr. Higgins had been engaged. Petty thieves in the neighbourhood were in the habit of selling their small spoils across his counter; this modern Fagin was always ready to buy, and no questions asked. He had been in trouble more than once, and was in mortal dread of getting into trouble again. This, of course, was unknown to Dick, and it was only from his familiarity with the nature of much of the business transacted in some of these second-hand shops in mean streets that he had ventured upon the bold attack. He could have hugged himself when he saw the effect it produced upon Mr. Higgins.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Good morning," said Dick.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, Queen's evidence."

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

"In course he would," said the man in corduroy, answering for Lambert. "That's the beauty of it. Only wish *I* was an accomplice in this here blooming murder, with them words in that there bill orfered by the Government. I'd touch, mates, pretty quick, that's what *I'd* do. But as it stands,

where's the indoocement? It ain't 'arf a bill without the indoocement."

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

"A bold move," remarked Lambert.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dick laughed; Lambert made a movement of departure.

"Are you off?" asked Dick.

"Off I am. Take care of yourself."

"I'll try to."

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

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

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

"That's the famous Detective Lambert, who gave evidence at the inquest. And what a ferret he is! Search France and England through, and you won't meet his match. He had his eye on you, I

noticed." Mr. Higgins shivered. "If ever you get into his clutches look out for snakes. It's a pleasure to work with a man like that. He and I are on the same lay."

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

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

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

CHAPTER XLVI.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XLVII.

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

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

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

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

"Did he work long hours?"

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

"He was not happy in his situation?"

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

"They had frequent disagreements?"

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

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

"Yes, sir."

"He hoped it would be granted?"

"We fully expected it, sir."

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

"It almost broke his heart, sir."

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

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

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

"I suppose there was, sir."

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

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

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

"That was what my husband believed."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, sir. Foul play."

"Did he have any enemies?"

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

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

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

"Why do you pause? Go on."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"About that time, sir."

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

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

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

"Yes, sir."

"You knocked more than once?"

"Several times, sir."

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

"For the answer that never came, sir."

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

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

"That brings us to half past three?"

"Yes, sir."

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

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

"No, sir."

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

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

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

The Constable: "I do myself, sir."

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

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

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

The Constable: "Quite plainly, sir."

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

some time in the Square?"

"I must have been there half an hour."

"And you remained some time afterwards?"

"For as long again."

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

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

"You did not move out of the Square?"

"No, sir."

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

"No, sir."

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

"No, sir."

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

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

"You are quite positive?"

"Quite positive, sir."

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

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

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

The Juror: "It is uncorroborated."

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

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

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

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE CORONER'S SUMMING-UP.

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

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

"That the crime should have remained undiscovered so long is due to the peculiar domestic habits of the deceased, and to the facts that he kept no servants in his house, that he lived quite

alone, and that on the evening of the 1st of March he dismissed the only person whom he kept regularly employed. Had this dismissal not been given, and had Mr. Abel Death, his clerk, gone to his work as usual on the following morning, the discovery of the murder would have been made within a few hours of its perpetration, and the task before you would have been rendered far less difficult. I would not have you attach too much importance to the apparent connection between the perpetration of the murder and the disappearance of Mr. Abel Death. Coincidences as strange are not uncommon in matters less serious, and it is not because this matter is serious that the coincidence should be construed to the disadvantage of a man who is absent. Up to Friday, the 1st of March, his relations with his employer were as fairly satisfactory as could have been expected from the miserable stipend he received and from the character of the murdered man, and, unpleasant as those relations became on that last day, there was nothing in them, so far as we are aware, to supply a reason for the committal of a deliberate and dastardly murder, all the details of which must have been carefully planned. If Mr. Abel Death had been a party to this plan he would hardly have asked his employer for a loan of ten pounds, a small sum for a rich man to grant to his confidential clerk.

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

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

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

"I do not see how we can carry the matter farther as regards Mr. Death. To assume that he is admitted to the house, and that Mr. Boyd went to bed in his presence, is so wildly improbable that we may at once reject it. If anything can be said to be ridiculous in so awful a tragedy it would be to suppose that Mr. Boyd thus placed himself in the power and at the mercy of a man whom he knew to be embittered against him, and who was in a sense desperate. As to Mr. Abel Death's subsequent movements we are left in mystery. His wife suggests foul play. That a man left in the position to which my argument has carried him should deliberately conceal himself without a distinct motive is not to be thought of, and for this reason I consider the suggestion of foul play tenable. From whom, or from what quarter, who shall say? But we are not here to inquire into this matter; it is not the fate of Mr. Death we have to deliberate upon, and I advise you therefore to narrow the issue, which is sufficiently wide and perplexing, by setting him aside. There is nothing whatever to connect him with the crime beyond the merest conjectures, and were he alone concerned the only verdict that could be returned would be one of 'Murder by some person or persons unknown.'

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

"Returning to my argument concerning Mr. Samuel Boyd's movements within his house on the

night in question, we behold him still alone at about eleven o'clock, his office business finished, the visit of Mr. Abel Death disposed of, and he preparing for bed. And here Mr. Reginald Boyd comes into the picture.

"We have heard from his lips his account of what took place during his interview with his father, and we have to accept or reject it. They were alone together, there were no witnesses, and we have only Mr. Reginald Boyd's word to go upon. You must not allow this to militate against him. In the circumstances of the case it is hardly possible that there could have been witnesses to corroborate the account he gave, and I have no hesitation in declaring that his bearing in the witness box bore the impress of truth. It has been objected to that in the course of this inquiry private domestic affairs have been dragged into the light which seemingly had no connection with it, but painful as this must have been to certain of the witnesses, it has established more than one point which, in the opinion of some of you, may be of importance--such, for instance, as the nature of the relations which existed between Mr. Samuel Boyd and his son, and the fact that the latter was in extremely straitened circumstances. I do not think that any blame is to be attached to the son for having renounced the name of Boyd two years ago, when the strained relations between him and his father led to his leaving, or being turned from, his home in Catchpole Square. It is not an instance without parallel; men have changed their names for motives less powerful than this. Mr. Reginald Boyd's bearing while giving his evidence here, was that of a high-spirited, independent young gentleman, who held in abhorrence the business tactics and practices of his father, and it is not unnatural, when the connection was severed, that he should resolve to be quit of a name which carried with it a disreputable stigma.

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

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

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

"I was coming to Dr. Pye," said the Coroner. "Yes, there was nothing in his conduct in the witness box that would warrant a belief that he was not speaking truthfully. It cannot be denied that the evidence he gave threw a startling suspicion on Mr. Reginald Boyd, and were it not for the evidence of Mrs. Abel Death which, in point of time, is in direct conflict with that of Dr. Pye, I should be addressing you in different terms, so far as Mr. Reginald Boyd is concerned. Here we are confronted with a most singular discrepancy. Dr. Pye states that he saw a man issue from Mr. Samuel Boyd's house at three o'clock in the morning. Mrs. Abel Death states that she was in Catchpole Square from half past two till half past three on the same morning, and that during the whole of that time the door of Mr. Boyd's house was not opened. I do not see how these conflicting statements can be brought into reconcilement. The presumption that Mrs. Death may have been mistaken as to the time of her visit to, and her departure from, Catchpole Square is disposed of by her further statement that, while she was in Catchpole Square, she heard the hour of three struck from a neighbouring church clock. And we have evidence that the chimes of Saint Michael's Church can be heard in the Square."

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

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

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

"So much of the morbid interest attaching to this case has been centred upon Mr. Reginald Boyd and Mr. Abel Death, that there is a danger of matters being overlooked which have an important bearing upon the inquiry. The disposal of the body in bed and the composing of the

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XLIX.

LITTLE GRACIE DEATH ON THE TRAIL.

While her mother was being examined in the Coroner's Court, little Gracie Death, glowing with gratitude to Aunt Rob and her family, and solemnly impressed with a sense of the importance of the task she had undertaken, set out on the trail of Dr. Vinsen. She clearly

understood that she was serving Dick's friends as well as Dick himself, but it was of Dick she thought most, and it was him she most ardently wished to serve. The attachments formed by children, and the ideals they create, are often stronger and more binding than those of men and women; and no stronger attachment was ever formed by a child, and no more lofty and beautiful an ideal created than those which reigned in Gracie's soul for Dick. Her heart throbbed with pride to think that the man she loved best in the world next to her father had taken her into partnership, and had entrusted her with a mission. There was no indication of this on her quiet, sallow face, or in her black eyes. When passion is demonstrative it is far less enduring than when it lies hidden in the soul.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And she, also, strolled out of Draper's Mews, and followed Dr. Vinsen at a distance so carefully and warily, and apparently with so much unconcern, that no one would have suspected that she was engaged upon the most important task she had ever undertaken. "Now I've got you," was her thought, "and I don't let you go." She kept her sharp eyes fixed upon him. When he stopped she stopped, when he lingered she lingered, when he walked slowly she walked slowly, when he quickened his steps she quickened hers. It appeared as if he were undecided as to the course he should pursue, for now and then he looked about him, and seemed to debate which way to turn. It was evident that he had no definite business to attend to, and no definite goal to reach. Passing a public house of a superior kind, he had gone a dozen yards beyond it when he turned back and

entered the private bar. Grace made a rapid survey, to see how many doors there were by which he could leave. In point of fact, although of course it was a corner house, there was only one, but of this she was not aware, so she posted herself on the opposite corner and watched all the doors, and if there had been twice as many she would have had eyes for them all. He remained a long time in the private bar, and when he made his reappearance he was still as undecided as to his course. It may have been out of mere idleness that he entered a chemist's shop and purchased something, which he put into his pocket as he came out. In this aimless way he and Gracie strolled on through Park Street, Islington, at one part of which he crossed the road and looked up at the windows of a house. It was the house in which Reginald had lodged. Gracie noted the number, and would not forget it. So they strolled on, past the Grand Theatre, past Sadler's Wells, through Clerkenwell into Holborn, where he hailed a bus for Charing Cross, and got inside. "It's a good job Dick gave me some money," thought Gracie, as she scrambled to the top without being observed by the gentleman she had been following.

CHAPTER L.

EZRA LYNN, THE MONEY-LENDER.

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

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

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

Under a verandah in front of this warehouse were a number of trunks, a few of which bore on their lids the names or initials, newly painted in white, of the customers for whom they had been made. Two bore the same name, Signor Corsi, and it was these which had the greatest attraction for Dr. Vinsen. They were of large size and special make, far superior to the ordinary travelling trunk. Entering the warehouse, he came out presently accompanied by a man, either the proprietor or one of his salesmen, who opened one of the trunks and pointed out its exceptional features. It was of peculiar construction; the interior was padded, and there were receptacles lined with soft material, in which articles could be deposited with little fear of breakage. The interest which Dr. Vinsen took in the trunks and the long conversation between him and the salesman, whetted Gracie's curiosity, and she burned to know the why and the wherefore; but being compelled to keep at a safe distance, she could not hear a word that was spoken. Finally,

Dr. Vinsen entered the warehouse again, and did not make his reappearance for twelve minutes by a clock in the shop near which she was lingering. He and the salesman stood chattering at the door for another minute or two, and it seemed to Gracie as if he had given an order, for he made an entry in his pocketbook; then he turned his face Kennington way and hailed a tramcar. Gracie scrambled up to the roof, where she opened her paper and read the report of the inquest up to the time of going to press. Folding the paper carefully, she put it in the bosom of her frock.

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

She felt hungry, it being now past three o'clock, and she went into a baker's shop nearly opposite the house of Ezra Lynn and asked for a penny loaf. Behind the counter was a motherly woman with a baby in her arms. She gazed kindly at Gracie, and passed the crummiest penny loaf in her stock across the counter.

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

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

"And hungry," said the woman.

"Yes, I *am* hungry."

"Wouldn't you like a bun better?"

"This is more filling," said practical Gracie.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

me."

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

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

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

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

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

"That's no comfort. Look here, missis, just cast your eye over this"--he pulled out a tattered penny account book--"it's all set down in plain figures. Twelve months ago--here's the date--he lent me four pounds, and took a bill of sale on my bits of sticks. I didn't get the four pounds--it was eighteen shillings short, for expenses and inquiries and interest in advance. Three pound two, that's as much as I got, and I had to pay half-a-crown a week for fifty-two weeks. If I was a week behindhand there was a fine of sixpence, which kept on being charged and put down against me till that week was paid up. It was all a muddle, and I don't pretend to understand it, but a mate of mine that's quick at reckoning has figured it out, and he says it comes to more than six hundred per cent, interest. All I know is that I've paid five pound ten for that three pound two I got from him, and now he makes out I owe him twice as much again. And the law gives him right. What I say is, damn the law, and them that made it, and them that fatten on it!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER LI.

A DEAD LOCK.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

object to be driven.'

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

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile, news of the rewards offered by Reginald for the discovery of the murderer and of Abel Death had become widely known, and was freely discussed. And upon the top of this came another piece of news. All over London billstickers were pasting offers of another reward offered by Lady Wharton's lawyers for the discovery of her jewels, of which a detailed list was printed in the bills. Advertisements were also inserted in the evening journals to the same effect. So the excitement was fed and kept up.

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

"A long job," he said.

"A wickedly long job," responded Uncle Rob.

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

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

"Will it be paid?"

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

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

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

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

"Yes."

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

"And then?"

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

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

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

"Yes."

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

"He's prepared for anything, Lambert; he's made up his mind to it: so have we all." Uncle Rob

spoke in a sad tone; these two men perfectly understood each other, though the meaning of what they said would not have been clear to a stranger.

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

"Yes," said Uncle Rob, mechanically.

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

"How?"

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

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

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

"Whatever the verdict is?"

"Whatever the verdict is."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I'll wait a reasonable time; I can't say more than that, because I shouldn't be surprised--and don't you be--if something happens that I can't call to mind has ever happened before in a murder inquest, and that is, that the jury will either give no verdict at all, or will give one that the

Coroner will refuse to accept. There's a man among them who's bent upon having his own way, and that will stick out like grim death if he can't bring the others to his way of thinking. He's a kind of animal not often met with on juries, but there he is, and has to be reckoned with. A curious point, isn't it? But you can make up your mind to one thing. So far as justice is concerned there will be no dead lock. I've got hold of the reins, and I'll see to that."

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

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

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

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

"What is it?"

"That's *my* secret. When I let it out you'll see what I'm driving at. I've done one or two things in my time, and this will be the climax." He smacked his lips with a relish, and repeated, "The climax. I put it to you, Robson, old man, whether it isn't better that the arrest should be made by a friendly hand than by the hand of a stranger? I'm not the only one who's itching to get the credit of clearing up a mystery that's set all London ringing; and we're not half done with it yet, not half done. It's a feather in one's cap to be mixed up with it." He rubbed his hands. "No wonder others are keen upon it, but there s only one man in England that's got his finger on the pulse of the mystery, and that's the man that's talking to you now, and taking you, in a manner of speaking, into his confidence."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The court then broke up.

There were still a great many spectators who had waited in the expectation that a verdict would be delivered, and they filed out slowly, eagerly discussing the position of affairs, one man declaring that the Catchpole Square Mystery, from first to last, was nothing but a series of the most startling sensations, adding, "And I'm greatly mistaken if there's not more to come." He rolled this round his tongue, as if it were a delectable morsel. Detective Lambert, without seeming to notice Reginald, was almost the first to leave the court, and he stood outside, smoothing his chin, a target for all eyes, for his fame had travelled far and wide, and it was already rumoured that he had "taken up" the Catchpole Square Mystery. Two or three of the jurymen still lingered within the court, and glanced with curiosity at the Robson group and at Mrs. Death, whose state of agitation it was pitiable to witness. Now she beat the air with her trembling hands, now she clasped them convulsively, while inarticulate words of protest dropped from her quivering lips. All these persons moved slowly to the door of the courthouse.

CHAPTER LII.

ARRESTED FOR MURDER.

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

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

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

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

"For me?"

"For you."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Be brave, for my sake, dearest."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Who's hindering you?"

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

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

"Why should you be?" remarked Lambert quietly. "It's the name you were born to. I'm not ashamed of mine; to tell you the truth, I'm rather proud of it. What we've got to do with our names, whether we like 'em or not, is to make 'em a credit to ourselves and our families. And we're born, not only to names that stick to us, but to tempers that stick to us. Now, when I see a man showing a nasty temper, I cast about in my mind for something that will soothe his ruffled feelings. That's what I've been thinking about. 'What can I do,' says I to myself, 'that will soothe Mr. Rawdon's ruffled feelings?' And it's come over me to put it in the shape of a question, if you've no objection."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Quite ready, Mr. Lambert."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Will it be heard to-morrow?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It is being attended to, aunt."

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

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

"On the just side, Dick."

"That is what I meant, aunt."

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

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

"No, under instructions, he says."

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

"Yes. He is an honourable man."

"He is; and a man that judges and magistrates listen to with respect. That is not the case with all lawyers. There are black sheep among them that damn a case the moment their names appear in it. I have a pair of solicitors in my mind now, a couple of sharp, sneaking scoundrels who never yet have had the handling of a reputable case. Mr. Lamb is not a very eminent solicitor, but he is a respectable man, and it was he who suggested Mr. Pallaret. Don't be faint-hearted, Reginald; we'll pull you out of this with flying colours. Have any of you seen little Gracie Death to-day?"

No, none of them had seen her.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Hush! They must not hear us. I mean that neither you nor they will know where I am for a few days. There will be a notice stuck up on the house in Catchpole Square to the effect that all inquiries for me are to be made at your house, and that all letters for me are to be left there. If any inquiries are made, tell Aunt Rob and Florence that they're to say they are expecting me home at any moment, and don't know where I have gone to. Nothing more than that. I must leave this to you, for I cannot confide in them. I am bound to keep my secret, and I could not answer the questions they would put to me in their anxiety."

"But, Dick----"

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

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

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

"Yes, my lad."

"A face you can trust?"

"Yes."

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

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

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

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

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

When all the formalities were concluded Florence and Reginald, clasped in each other's arms,

exchanged tender words of comfort and hope.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER LIII.

GRACIE RELATES THE STORY OF HER ADVENTURES.

"Any news, Gracie," asked Dick.

"Lots," replied Gracie.

"About which one?"

"Both of 'em."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I wouldn't," said Gracie.

"That's a nice thing to say to me," said Aunt Rob, sarcastically. "I'm in the habit of beating

children black and blue--everybody who knows me knows that."

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

"Yes, I will."

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

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

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

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

"It was an odd fancy of mine to call myself the captain and Gracie the first mate of the ship that was going on this voyage of discovery, and it's my opinion there will be high jinks if we succeed in bringing that ship to anchor. Now, mate, for your news. Have you seen Dr. Vinsen?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I wasn't there."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

They were aglow with excitement, and they replied simultaneously,

"We promise, Dick."

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

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

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

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

"Nothing more?" cried Aunt Rob.

"No, ma'am."

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

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

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

And thus she rattled on to put Gracie at her ease, and under the influence of a spirit so buoyant and hopeful a fuller meal was eaten than would otherwise have been the case, and they were all the happier for it. Then Gracie arose, and thanking them quietly said that her mother would be worrying about her, and if they would excuse her she would like to go home. There was a grave look on Aunt Rob's face at mention of Gracie's mother, for she thought of Mrs. Death's

conduct an hour or two ago at the Coroner's Court, but she said nothing except that Gracie ought to go home at once. She would have liked to wrap up what was left of the cake, and give it to the child to take to her little brothers and sisters, but she felt that the kindly act might be misconstrued, and might get Gracie into trouble.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER LIV.

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

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

To the disappointment of the sight-seers in the adjoining wider thoroughfares the accused man was driven to Bishop Street through side streets but little frequented, and so skilfully were

the police arrangements carried out that he was conducted into the court by the rear entrance before the general public were aware that he had started from the station. The Court was crowded, and among those assembled were the wife and mother-in-law of the prisoner, who it was understood had had an interview with him before the commencement of the proceedings.

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

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

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

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

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

"He walked quietly with you to the station?"

"Quite quietly."

"Did he make any statement?"

"No. I advised him to say nothing."

"What was his reply to that?"

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

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

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

CHAPTER LV.

CONSTABLE APPLEBEE ON THE WATCH.

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

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

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

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

"Good evening," said Constable Applebee.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No, I can't."

"Will he be back soon?"

"I don't know."

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

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

"Not for anything very particular."

"Perhaps you'll leave a message."

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

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

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

CHAPTER LVI.

EXTRACTED FROM THE DIARY OF DAVID LAMBERT DETECTIVE OFFICER.

Thursday, March 15th, 1896.

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

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

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

Why arrest him, then?

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

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

In the third place, because, had the arrest not been made by me, I should have no excuse for interviewing Dr. Pye. I hope to have something to tell my French brother-in arms, Joseph Pitou, that will astonish his weak nerves. He writes to me from Milan, where he is making inquiries, he says. Is sorry he can't come over to London, he says. I am not. I don't want him yet awhile. Keep away, friend Joseph, keep away, till I send for you. There's plenty to puzzle over in this Catchpole Square Mystery without having the other mystery of Louis Lorenz piled on the top of it--that's what most men would think. I'm not one of them. It needs something big in the way of sensation to wake people up in this year of grace. If all turns out well, they'll get it. Besides take Louis Lorenz out of the case, and what becomes of Dr. Pye?

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

minute.

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

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

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

One o'clock. I must get to bed.

Friday, March 16th, 1896.

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

By the first post a letter from friend Joseph. I passed it across the table to my wife to translate. She shook her head. "Why," I said, "you translated his other letters." "They were in French," she replied; "this is in Italian. I don't understand Italian." And there the rubbish lay on my table, and me staring helplessly at it, exasperating me to that degree----!

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

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

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

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

Now, what is the meaning of that? On my way to Dr. Pye's to-night I met Constable Applebee, on night duty there. When I see there's something on a man's mind that's as likely as not to be of service to me if I can get at it, I encourage that man to talk. I saw there was something on Applebee's mind--you can see through him with half an eye--and I encouraged *him* to talk. Glad enough he was, and willing enough. And what do you think he asked me? Why, if I knew where Dick Remington was hanging out? "In Catchpole Square, of course," I answered, quite innocently. "That he isn't," said Applebee, as triumphantly as if we were playing a hand at cards and he had won a trick by fine play. "There's a notice pasted on the door that he's not to be found there; he's gone away on business it says." "Well," said I, "if he's not to be found in Catchpole Square you'll

find him at Inspector Robson's house." "No, I sha'n't," he answered, thinking he'd scored another trick. "I've been there, and from what Mrs. Robson said it's my belief she doesn't know where he is." "That's singular," I said, "what do *you* make of it?" "What do you make of it, Mr. Lambert?" he asked. I considered a moment, and then said I gave it up. "But *you've* an opinion," said I, insinuatingly. "Let's have it." Upon which he volunteered his conviction that Dick Remington had cut and run. "Why should he cut and run?" I asked, as innocent as any baby. "That," he answered, solemnly shutting himself up, "I must keep to myself." I laughed in my sleeve. *He* wants to discover the murderer of Samuel Boyd, and collar the reward, and he has come to the conclusion that Dick Remington's the man. It's comic. I give you my word, it's comic.

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

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

A man was standing at a table, holding a glass containing a liquid up to the gas light. Two other glasses containing liquid were on the table; the glasses were long and thin, and the liquid of different colours. With the exception of these glasses, the table, and two wooden chairs, the room was bare of furniture. The mantelshelf had not an article upon it, there was not a picture on the walls. The house is double-fronted, and must contain a great many rooms; the one I was in faced Shore Street; there was a shutter to the window, partly closed.

"Dr. Pye?" I said.

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

I stood still and silent, and waited.

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

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

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

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

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

In the matter of expression I never met a man who seemed so utterly devoid of it as Dr. Pye. His features might have been carved in wood, his eyes might have been steel balls, for all the indication they gave of what was passing in his mind. When you have any business on hand with a man of that kind, beware. I had no need of the warning, having all my wits about me, and having come prepared for possible squalls; and whatever were my feelings regarding Dr. Pye, admiration was certainly one of them. The prospect of a battle royal with such an antagonist exhilarated me.

We continued to gaze at each other for a few moments, and I was careful not to change my expression. That he was disappointed in my manner I did not doubt; I was not exactly the kind of

man he would have liked me to be. My mind was my own; he had no power over it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"As a destroyer?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"In what case?"

"The Catchpole Square case."

"No," he said, "such cases have no attraction for me. I used to take in the daily newspapers, but I found that they distracted my attention from my pursuits, so now I read only scientific papers."

"But you gave evidence at the inquest, doctor!"

"I know I did. A friend mentioned the matter to me, spoke of incidents connected with it, and said that the murder must have taken place on the night of Friday, the 1st of March. I recollected that I was up late that night, and that, as I stood at my window at three in the morning, some unusual movement in the Square forced itself upon my attention; I recollected that I had used an insignificant little invention of mine, a new kind of flash-light, to ascertain precisely the details of the movement. I spoke of this to my friend, who said it was my duty to come forward and relate what had come under my observation. In consequence of that remark I tendered my evidence, and was glad to be rid of the affair."

"But you are not rid of it, doctor," I said.

"How is that?"

"Have you not heard that Mr. Reginald Boyd has been arrested for the murder?"

"No, I have not seen a newspaper this week, and you are the first visitor I have had. The young man has been arrested, has he? I trust he will be able to clear himself. When did the arrest take place?"

"Yesterday evening. I made it. It is news to you, then, that he was brought before the magistrate this morning?"

"Yes, it is quite new to me. What was the result?"

"He is remanded for a week. It takes some time to get up a case of this kind, and when we take one in hand we don't like to be beaten. I've had to do with many, Dr. Pye, and I've never been beaten yet. I don't mean to be beaten now."

There was the faintest show of interest on his countenance. "Do you believe, in the young man's guilt, Mr. Lambert?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered. "Don't you?"

"How is it possible for me to have an opinion?" he said, and I looked upon it as an astonishing remark for him to make after the evidence he had given at the inquest.

"But you saw him leave the house on the night of the murder, doctor, and under most suspicious circumstances, as if he were mortally afraid of being caught. Is not that enough to base an opinion upon?"

"I must be just, Mr. Lambert. When my eyes fell upon Mr. Reginald Boyd in the Court I was startled by the resemblance he bore to the man I saw in the Square. If attention had not been called to my feeling of astonishment, which I suppose was expressed in my face, I am not sure whether I should have spoken of the resemblance."

"But consider, doctor. You came forward in the interests of justice."

"Undoubtedly."

"Of your own accord. Without being summoned."

"Yes."

"Would it have been in the interests of justice that you should conceal this startling resemblance?"

"It is a fair question. It would not. But still I say I might have reflected upon the matter before I gave my suspicion tongue."

"You would have left the Court without revealing the secret?"

"Secret!" he exclaimed.

"Well, it was a matter known only to yourself. May we not call such a knowledge a secret?"

"You argue skilfully, and have drawn me into a conversation which I would have perferred to avoid. My time is valuable, Mr. Lambert."

"So is mine, Dr. Pye."

There was a pause; each was waiting for the other to speak, and I was determined he should be the first.

"May I inquire," he said, "your reason for evincing so extraordinary an interest in this affair?"

Here was an opportunity for a bit of acting; I took advantage of it. Leaning forward I said in my most serious tone, "Dr. Pye, my reputation is at stake. It is a dangerous admission to make, but we are closeted together in confidence, and may say anything to each other without fear. No one can hear us"--(I was not so sure of that, but it suited my purpose to say it)--"and if either of us were called upon to give an account of our interview--though there is nothing more unlikely--we might say what we pleased, invent what we pleased, put into each other's mouth anything we pleased. That is the advantage of speaking without witnesses."

"You are very frank," he said.

"It pays me to be so. I repeat, my reputation is at stake. I have arrested a man for murder, and I am bound to prove him guilty. There are jealousies in all professions; there are jealousies in mine. I am surrounded by men who envy me, and who would like to step in my shoes. They would clap their hands in delight if I let the man I arrested slip through my fingers. Well, I don't intend to give them this satisfaction. My present visit to you is partly private, partly professional. Of course, if you say to me, 'Mr. Lambert, I decline to have anything to do with your private feelings,' the only thing open to me would be to keep those private feelings to myself, and to treat you, professionally, as a witness who was not disposed to assist me."

"Justice must not be thwarted," he said.

"Exactly. You hit the nail on the head. May we continue the conversation on the lines that will suit you?"

"Well, continue," he said; "it is rather novel to me, and I will endeavour to work up an interest in a matter so entirely foreign to me. You see," he added, and I was not sure whether he intended to be humorous or serious, "there is nothing scientific in it."

"Not in a strict sense, perhaps, but, allowing a latitude, there is something scientific in the methods we detectives pursue. The piecing together of the loose bits of evidence which we hunt up, a bit here, a bit there, arguing upon it, drawing conclusions from it, rejecting what will not fit, filling up the empty spaces, until we present the whole case without a crack in it for a guilty man to slip through--that is what we call circumstantial evidence, and it is really a science, doctor. Where did we break off? I was contending that it would have been wrong for you to have left the Court without speaking of the startling resemblance between Mr. Reginald Boyd and the man you saw coming from his father's house in the middle of the night. It would have been worse than wrong, it would have been criminal. Now, doctor, a man of your penetration could not be mistaken. He says he was home and in bed at the time, but it is impossible for him to prove it. And why? Because there is not a shadow of doubt that he was the man you saw. There must be no wavering in your evidence on this point; the crime must be brought home to him; he must not escape. Doctor Pye, you must let no feeling of compassion prevent you from stating the honest truth. You see what is at stake in this matter."

I may say, without vanity, that I was playing my cards well, and if I did not laugh in his face--which would have been foolish, though I could have done so with much enjoyment--I am entitled to my laugh at the recollection of the scene.

"Your reputation is at stake," he said.

"I don't deny it; and the ends of justice; a much more important thing to a gentleman of your position."

"Am I to infer that my presence will be necessary in a criminal court?"

"It cannot be dispensed with. You will be served with a notice to appear as a witness."

"When?"

"Next Friday at the Bishop Street Police Court. There is a clever lawyer against us, Mr. Pallaret, and my instructions are to make the case in its initial stages as strong as possible, for he will exert all his powers to break it down."

"I must appear, I suppose," he said.

"And you will maintain that Mr. Reginald Boyd is the man."

"Yes, to the best of my knowledge and belief."

"Mr. Pallaret is a skilful cross-examiner."

"I will be prepared for him."

"He will endeavour to throw discredit upon your statement."

There was just the suspicion of a smile on his lips as he said, "Let him try."

"It will be the more necessary for you to be firm, doctor," I said, and I was curious to see whether he would fall into the trap, "because Mrs. Death's evidence as to the time you saw Mr. Reginald Boyd come out of the house is in direct contradiction to yours."

"Yes, I know."

"She says she heard the clock of Saint Michael's Church strike three when she was in the Square."

"She is mistaken. She might easily be, alarmed as she was for the safety of her husband."

He had fallen into the trap. Here was a man who had stated that I was the first visitor he had had this week, and that he had not seen a newspaper, acknowledging in his last replies to me that he was acquainted with the evidence Mrs. Death had given in the Coroner's Court yesterday. If it occurred to him that he had contradicted himself he did not gather from me that I was aware of it. I rose to go, and kept my face to him.

"I will wish you good night, doctor," I said, and then I lingered. "By the way, might I see that clever little device of yours for throwing light to a distance?"

"I am sorry I cannot show it to you," he replied. "It is being repaired. Good night."

He was anxious to be rid of me, but I still lingered.

"It is from the back windows of your house, doctor, that you can see into Catchpole Square?"

"Yes," he replied, and his voice was not cordial; but that I judge it seldom is. I mean, that it was more guarded.

"Would you mind showing me the window you looked out of when you saw Mr. Reginald Boyd?"

"I cannot show you the room to-night. It is used as a sleeping apartment by one of the females in the house."

"I beg your pardon; but I should like to see it before next Friday."

"There will be no difficulty. Good night."

"Good night," I said again.

He accompanied me to the street door, inviting me by a motion of his hand to precede him down the stairs. I would not be so impolite. I insisted upon his going first, and I followed him, with my right hand in the pocket containing my little revolver. Our last salutations exchanged, he shut the street door upon me.

I walked to the end of the street, and then, on the opposite side of the road, slowly retraced my steps till I was within twenty yards or so of the house, and waited till Constable Applebee came round on his beat.

"You will remain here," I said to him, "and keep Dr. Pye's house under observation, without drawing attention upon yourself, till I return. I shall be back in less than half an hour. Report to me if any person enters or leaves the house during my absence."

When I returned it was in the company of an officer in plain clothes, whom I had instructed to keep watch on the house until I sent another man to relieve him. Applebee reported that Dr. Pye's street door had not been opened.

Well, the train is laid. When it is fired, if friend Joseph Pitou is not following a will-o'-the-wisp, there will be a rare explosion. Even if he is, I think I can promise one.

What annoys me is, that I have been unable to get the particulars of the case of Louis Lorenz.

A postman's knock at the door! The telegram!

Yes, here it is: "Letter, in French, to-morrow. Pitou."

CHAPTER LVII.

DETECTIVE LAMBERT CONTINUES HIS DIARY.

On Monday morning Detective Lambert, as recorded in his diary, received Joseph Pitou's letter from Milan--this time written in French, which, being duly translated by Mrs. Lambert, caused the English detective profound astonishment and delight. It was in keeping with the literary methods he pursued that he did not insert the letter in his diary, and gave no intelligible account of its contents. Neither would it have been in accordance with his methods to have omitted mysterious reference to it:

"Letter from Joseph Pitou, commencing, 'My Very Dear and Very Illustrious Compatriot and Brother-in-arms,' which I look upon as foreign bunkum. I don't object to the 'illustrious,' but we English would have put it differently.

"If I were not so closely mixed up with the Catchpole Square Mystery I should regard friend Joseph's letter as being copied out of a romance. It reads like romance. But it isn't; it is a chapter, or several chapters, out of real life. It is a feather in one's cap to be connected with such a character--not friend Joseph, but the game we are hunting. Big game. The idea of coming face to face with it is enough to scare a timid man, but that kind of risk doesn't scare an Englishman. I won't do friend Joseph the injustice to say it might scare him.

"He sends me the portrait of Louis Lorenz. The mischief of it is that Lorenz's face is covered with hair--a fine crop which in the present instance, I do not admire. When a criminal is condemned to death in Gallicia don't they shave him? A felon loses his rights as a citizen, and his moustachios and whiskers are the property of the State.

"My man is clean shaven, but the blue shade on his chin and cheeks show that he has a fine stiff crop of his own. So have hundreds of thousands of other men. Still it is a link, though not a strong one.

"The point of resemblance is in the forehead and eyes. I took as clear a view as possible of his face, and I did not fail to observe that, whether by accident or design, he sat with his back to the light. True, he did not shift his chair to place himself in that position, but for all that I decide it was design and not accident. He seldom raised his eyes; when he did he found me ready for him. Now, if it had been Applebee who sat opposite him----"

And here, presumably, Lambert broke off to indulge in a laugh.

Near midnight on the same day he continued his diary, but there was no reference to Joseph Pitou or Louis Lorenz.

"At three o'clock called on Dr. Pye. An old woman opened the door. 'Dr. Pye at home?' I asked. 'Not at home,' she answered. 'Take my card up to him,' I said. 'Not at home,' she repeated, and jammed my leg in the door. I remonstrated. 'Take your leg away,' she said. Seeing that she was determined, and having no authority to enter the house, I took my leg away, and she slammed the door in my face. Faithful creature--and well paid for her services, I'll swear. Told the lie with a face of brass, for a lie it was. Dr. Pye was at home. Where is my maid from Norfolk? She was seen to leave the house on Saturday morning. Cab at the door. Small japanned box brought out, containing her wardrobe. Cab drove off with box on the roof and my Norfolk maid inside. I ought to have had more than one man on the watch, for then I should have known where the cab drove to. Most probably to a railway station, to take my maid to her native village. Norfolk has many villages. Why was Dr. Pye so anxious to be rid of her? Answer--because she did not slam the door in my face, as the old woman did.

"With the exception of two visits from Mr. Ezra Lynn (from the description given of the man there could be no mistake it was he) there has been nothing discovered. These visits were made on Saturday night and last night. On each occasion he came at eight o'clock. On Saturday night he remained two hours, last night he remained three. Dr. Pye has not been seen to leave the house. From the tradesmen who call there nothing has been learned. The establishment is carried on on ready money lines. Everything sent home is paid for at the servants' entrance. As a ready money customer Dr. Pye bears a good name in the neighbourhood.

"I was not content with one visit to Dr. Pye to-day. At five o'clock I presented myself again--on official business. The same old woman opened the door. 'Dr. Pye at home?' 'Not at home.' 'I must see him.' 'Not at home.' There was no chance of my putting my leg inside; the door was on the chain. 'I serve this notice upon him,' I said, thrusting the paper into the old woman's hand. 'It is an order for him to appear as a witness at the Bishop Street Police Court next Friday morning, the 22nd of March, at eleven o'clock, to give evidence in the case of the murder of Samuel Boyd.' The woman took the notice, and left me alone once more on the wrong side of the door.

"I have treated Mr. Rawdon, the contentious juryman, to a sight of me on three separate occasions. Not a word have I addressed to him; I have simply given him to understand in a silent manner that he is under observation. He does understand it, and does not appear to be very comfortable.

"Where is Mr. Dick Remington? He has not been seen by any of my people since Thursday last. Has he been spirited away? Is there any connection between his disappearance and the disappearance of Abel Death? To both questions I answer, no. The notice of his absence still remains on the house in Catchpole Square. Applebee informs me that the door of that house has not been opened from the day the notice was posted on it. He is keeping close watch upon the house, and I am keeping close watch upon him. When he makes a move, or discovers anything, I shall be at hand. Things can't remain in this quiet state much longer. Some time this week there will be a flare up. Don't you think so?"

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE CRYPTOGRAM.

While Detective Lambert was making these entries, events of which he had no suspicion were progressing in another quarter. Some premonition of startling incidents soon to happen must have been very strong within him, or he would not have been out of bed a couple of hours after midnight, prowling, in a safe disguise, in the vicinity of Catchpole Square and Shore Street.

Constable Applebee came across him twice without recognising him, although Lambert gave him every opportunity, asking him on both occasions the way to Holborn. Lambert apparently was the worse for drink, and Applebee would probably have had more to say to him, and might indeed have "run him in" as a suspicious character had it not been for the interest he took in the immediate neighbourhood of Samuel Boyd's house, to which particular spot he devoted more attention than was consistent with his duties on the space of ground covered by his beat. The second time Lambert asked him the way to Holborn, the constable proffered a sensible piece of advice, to the effect that the man would be better in bed, to which he was advised to go if he did not wish to get into trouble. "Is that your advice?" asked Lambert, with a tipsy lurch. "Yes, it is," replied Applebee, "and if you're not a born fool you'll take it." "I'd have you know," retorted Lambert, "that I'm a respectable mechanic, and my advice to you is not to be so cocky. I'd make as good a bobby as you any day in the week." This angered Applebee, but did not move him to retaliatory action, and Lambert walked off, laughing in his sleeve. His light mood did not last long. Dark clouds were coming into the sky; a few drops of rain fell. There was a flash of lightning and a clap of thunder. "We shall have a storm," he muttered.

At that very moment Dr. Vinsen and Dr. Pye were closeted together, and events were approaching a climax. On the afternoon of that day Dr. Pye had received a note from his friend, announcing that he intended to pay him a visit at midnight. It was a strange hour to choose for a friendly call, and Dr. Pye was not pleased, but these men were in a certain sense dependent upon each other, and neither could just now afford to open up a quarrel; therefore, when Dr. Vinsen's summons at the street door was heard by Dr. Pye he went down himself and admitted his visitor. The interview was held at the back of the house, in the room with shuttered windows, from which a view of Samuel Boyd's house could be obtained.

"It is a dangerous time for a visit," were Dr. Pye's first words.

"By daylight," said Dr. Vinsen, "the danger would be greater. I took care to see, before I knocked, that there was no person in the street. Besides, I trust you as little as you trust me."

"You have a reason for the remark," observed Dr. Pye.

"I have, or I should not have made it. But let us be amicable--be a-mi-ca-ble. I am willing to converse in a spirit of confidence. You have wounded me by your suspicions, and you have a design which you are hiding from me--from me, your best friend. Has your spectre appeared again?"

"An hour ago I saw it at the window."

Dr. Vinsen looked at his host incredulously. Dr. Pye placed a portrait before him.

"I took this negative last night; I developed it this morning. Do you recognise it?"

Dr. Vinsen's face grew pale as he gazed at the portrait of Samuel Boyd.

"Are you mad?" he asked, "or am I?"

"Do not be alarmed," said Dr. Pye, calmly; "the man is not there. It is the picture of a vision, and is one step farther in our knowledge of the power of the human will. When I received your letter this afternoon I determined that I would search the house to-night in your company; or, if you prefer it, I will search alone."

"No; it shall be in my company. I am not afraid of ghosts."

Dr. Pye smiled scornfully.

"You turned white at the sight of the picture."

"A momentary discomposure, nothing more. I do not deny that I have not your iron nerve. I am very human, my friend;--ve-ry hu-man."

"Drop the mask," said Dr. Pye, sternly. "I am sick of your whining. Will you have some wine?"

"Something stronger than wine."

"To fortify yourself for a meeting with our spectre?" Dr. Pye laughed in derision, and produced a decanter of brandy, to which his visitor helped himself liberally. From the bottom of a cupboard he took a cobwebbed bottle of wine, which he handled and opened very carefully. He smiled as he held the glass up to the light, and then drank it slowly, as if it were really the elixir of life which popular rumour credited him with searching for. "I would give much," he said, "for that store of old wine which Samuel Boyd left behind him. Had it not been for you I would have had every bottle in this house."

"And so risked discovery," said Dr. Vinsen. "As it was you courted danger by taking two bottles to gratify your insane tastes."

"I have courted greater dangers and escaped them. You are too cautious, my friend. All my life I have found safety in boldness. You accuse me of withholding from your knowledge a design

which I have in view. What design?"

"In good time, my very dear friend. There are other matters first. Before we go into them, a question. Does your patient remain in the same state?"

"There is no change in him."

"He will disclose nothing?"

"His mind is a blank."

"That is the result of your fine plan," said Dr. Vinsen, with a sneer. "Perhaps you will acknowledge that my plan was the best--to silence him and leave him in the cellar."

"I acknowledge nothing. The reasonable presumption was that he could have given us a clue. Time enough then to have silenced him. As it happens he has failed to be of service to us."

"How will you dispose of him now without drawing suspicion upon you?"

"Upon us, you mean." Dr. Vinsen shifted uneasily upon his seat. "I will find a way, and you shall share the risk." He smiled as he added, "I will insure your safety for a small premium, so we will not waste time in recrimination. Come to the 'other matters' you have referred to, and of which I am as yet in ignorance."

"Not quite in ignorance, my friend. Surely I have prepared you, surely I have been patient. I decline to be placed in a false light." He took out a pocketbook and laid it on the table, guarding it with his hand. "I have a conscience; I must justify myself even in your eyes."

"Is it worth while to make the attempt?"

"I think so; I really think so. I must lay my head upon my pillow with my mind at ease--my mind at ease. You, with your lofty notions and your wild search for the unattainable, you with your spectres and visions, know little of the sufferings of a sensitive spirit such as mine."

"Faugh! Is *this* worth while?"

"You have your ways, I have mine," said Dr. Vinsen, with a sly smile. "I must trouble you to listen while I go over the ground."

"So be it. And if my suspicions are correct--and they generally are--I may trouble *you* to listen while *I* go over the ground."

"It will be a pleasure. I think it is three years since you and I became acquainted. Correct me if I am wrong."

"It is immaterial. Say three years--or thirty."

"No, my friend; let us be exact. This is an affair of figures. It is three years since you wrote to me in acknowledgment of a circular you received from me. I had money to lend, you required a loan. I advanced you five hundred pounds."

"Four."

"Five, my friend, five. The odd hundred was deducted as payment of interest in advance."

"Part payment."

"You have an excellent memory. I need not go into the details. In the course of a few months you required more money and I advanced it to you."

"Spare me the details of each transaction. Come to the point."

"I will. Up to the present day you have had from me, in various sums, at various times, a total of three thousand pounds----"

"In actual money, not half that."

"Which, with interest added," continued Dr. Vinsen, alias Ezra Lynn, not troubling himself to argue the point, "amounts now to a trifle over five thousand pounds. Will you oblige me by looking over these figures and verifying them?"

"No, I will take your word that they are correct, according to your reckoning."

"I thank you for your confidence," said Dr. Vinsen, who did not, however, seem to appreciate this indifference. "It is not to be supposed that I advanced my hard-earned capital without some sort of security. You gave it to me in the shape of a bill of sale over these art treasures of yours, for which you have an absurd passion, and which I do not deny have a marketable value, and over every piece of portable property in this house. From time to time I have urged you to discharge the debt, wholly or in part, and my appeals have been disregarded. My dear friend, there is a

time when one's patience becomes exhausted. Need I say more?"

"Yes. You are only in the middle of the chapter. Samuel Boyd has to be introduced. Proceed."

"At your wish," said Dr. Vinsen, with evident reluctance. "Some six weeks ago, when I was pressing you for repayment, you made mention to me----"

"Stop. When you were pressing me for repayment and threatening to sell me up--you left out the latter clause."

"You made mention to me of a plan, which would not only enable you to repay me what you owed me, but would result to our mutual advantage. You had, you said, secret access to the house of Samuel Boyd, who was in the habit of keeping there considerable sums of money, of which it would be easy to obtain possession. Without risk, without danger. You laid particular stress upon that."

"I did," said Dr. Pye, and the inscrutable smile which accompanied the words did not add to his confederate's composure.

"You needed a partner in the execution of your plan, a sleeping partner, you said, who would have nothing to do but to assist in removing the cash and valuables from his house to this, for which assistance he was to receive half the proceeds."

"Say spoil."

"The proceeds. I objected, not being willing to be a party to an act of personal violence. I am a peaceable man, and have made my money by peaceable means."

"By peaceable fraud."

"Why use harsh terms? All my transactions are legal, and protected by the law. In reply to my objection to a deed of violence you told me that you could in a moment render a sleeping man so utterly insensible and oblivious to all that was passing around him as to utterly remove every possible chance of risk. We were to enter the house when Samuel Boyd was asleep; you were to go into his chamber and render him insensible and unconscious."

"While you remained outside," said Dr. Pye, still with the inscrutable smile on his lips, "in happy ignorance of the sleeping man's fate."

"I object to these interruptions," said Dr. Vinsen, sulkily. "Finish the story your own way."

"I will. I informed you that Samuel Boyd, for an unknown purpose of his own, had been for some weeks past withdrawing large sums of money from the bank, and had been selling securities, and that I expected he would have in his safe on the night of March the 1st several thousand pounds, of which I offered you half for the tame part you were to play in the robbery. Your cupidity was aroused; you could not resist the bait, and you consented to become my partner in the crime. You do not like the terms I use; they are the correct terms. I am no canting psalm-singer; when I commit a crime I accept the responsibility; I do not shirk and whine; and as for the penalty, trust me for evading it. It was arranged that out of my share of the spoil I was to pay you what I owed you, so that you had a double interest in the success of the plan. The night arrived, and you were here, jubilant, expectant, greedy for the gold, but yet with a craven cowardice for which I despised you. However, you screwed your courage to the sticking point, and when all the lights in Samuel Boyd's house were extinguished I showed you how I obtained access to the premises. We entered in silence, and undetected; we made our way up the stairs and entered the office which contained the safe. You shook like an aspen, and I left you in the office and went alone into the bedroom, carrying a light. At that very moment Samuel Boyd awoke and started up in bed before I had time to press upon his face the handkerchief which I had prepared to render him unconscious. He sprang from the bed, and the handkerchief fell from my hand. One cry escaped his lips--only one, for my hand was on his throat. But he was strong, a more powerful man than I had conceived him to be, and he struggled with me so determinedly that we stumbled together into the office, where you stood, white-faced and trembling. By some means he got hold of a pistol, and fired two shots. One bullet went into the wall, where it was found by our good friend Remington, evidence of which was given by him and Lambert the detective at the inquest. Where the other bullet went has not yet been discovered. I thought I was struck, and for a moment my hold on Samuel Boyd relaxed. His eyes fell upon you, and your name escaped his lips, which was the first intimation I received that you had had transactions with him. That roused you to action, for you knew that if he were left alive you were doomed. You sprang upon him, and bore him to the ground. Then it was two to one. Our hands were at his throat. Whose fingers gave him the *coup de grace?*"

"Yours," said Dr. Vinsen, in a hoarse whisper.

"Yours," said Dr. Pye, calmly, "as I am ready to testify on my oath. However it was, there lay Samuel Boyd, dead before our eyes. We came to commit a robbery; we had committed murder. As we stood gazing upon the dead body we heard a knock at the street door, and I thought you would have fainted, you were so terror struck. In a whisper you suggested flight; had your advice been followed we were lost, for there was no time to mask the means by which we had obtained

access to the house. The knocking continued, and it was then that the opportunity was afforded me of displaying one of my talents. As a mimicker of voices I am unrivalled, and you are aware of my skill in another histrionic achievement. It was imperative that the summons should be answered, or the neighbourhood might have been aroused. I seized your hand, my dear accomplice in crime, and we descended to the street door. Mimicking Samuel Boyd's voice I inquired who was there. The reply was, 'It is I, sir, Abel Death. For God's sake let me speak to you!' Fearing the result if the demand was not complied with I drew the bolt and the chain, and dragged the man in; and as he entered you struck him with such force that he fell to the ground senseless. I have never inquired why you struck him."

"It was an impulse of passion," said Dr. Vinsen, in a faltering voice.

"Foist those subterfuges upon weaker men. I did not inquire because I knew. You held the candle above your head, and Abel Death saw your face, as the man we had murdered had done, and recognised you, as he had done. Why do you wince? We did murder him, comrade in crime, and are both 'liable to the law for the deed." Quietly as he spoke he seemed to take delight in associating Dr. Vinsen with himself in the ruthless work. "Your thought, when you struck Abel Death down, was that if he were allowed to go free he would be able to give evidence against you."

"And against you."

"Thanks for your consideration of me, but I can see to my own safety without aid from such as you. When yours is imperilled there is something of the savage in you; I give you credit for so much manliness. You would have killed him where he lay."

"Had you made an end of him," said Dr. Vinsen, morosely----

"Or had you done it," interrupted Dr. Pye. "Why give me all the honour of the task we were engaged upon?"

"His tongue would have been silenced for ever," concluded Dr. Vinsen, "and we should have been safe."

"I am not so sure of that. Anyway I deemed it prudent that he should live till we had made search for Samuel Boyd's treasure. If that search had been successful I might have handed the poor clerk over to your tender mercy. But it was not successful. In the safe we found a paltry two hundred pounds, and bills, and documents, and books of accounts. The books were valuable to us, for if they had fallen into other hands, it would have been seen that we were both indebted to the man we killed. Among the bills were many of mine, and some of yours. It was not till then that I learned you owed him money; and your motive for joining me in the robbery was partly explained. The books and bills destroyed, and the man dead, your indebtedness to him was cancelled. You are a cunning dog, Ezra Lynn. There were also Lord Wharton's bills, which, I fear, are valueless to us."

"You have not kept them!" cried Dr. Vinsen.

"I have, and every document we took away."

"But they implicate *me!*"

"It is perhaps for that reason I have not destroyed them," said Dr. Pye, coolly. "We sink or swim together, Ezra Lynn, so long as we remain in England. Among the documents was the list of Lady Wharton's jewels, and a statement of how Samuel Boyd became possessed of them, with other statements which informed us that he was expected to present himself at Bournemouth on the following Wednesday, with the fifteen hundred pounds he had arranged to advance to her. But where were the jewels? We hunted for them in vain, and to this hour have been unable to lay hands upon them, although we know they must be there."

"They may not be. The burglar who broke into the house on the night you went to Bournemouth may have found them."

"No. What we could not find he did not find. On the night I went to Bournemouth!" said Dr. Pye, and for the first time a laugh escaped him. "Tell me another man who could have so successfully imposed upon her ladyship, who would have had the audacity to carry out a deception so hazardous? Do you not feel proud in having a partner so bold and daring? Judge by that of what I am capable, and whether I am fitted to hold command. After what I have seen these five nights past, the image of Samuel Boyd, who lies dead in his grave, would any other man have the hardihood to enter that house? I am a stranger to fear, Ezra Lynn. When our conversation is ended we make search for the lost jewels; it may be the last chance we shall have. To finish the story of that Friday night before you disclose what is in your mind. I made Abel Death secure by plunging him into a state of insensibility from which it was impossible for him to recover till late the following day, and then we removed the books and papers, leaving behind us one document which fixed the guilt of the murder upon Mr. Reginald Boyd."

"How is it," asked Dr. Vinsen, "that that accusation has not been produced?"

"There are more ways than one of accounting for it. The man who made the burglarious entrance into the house may have seized the papers we left upon the table, in the expectation that he could turn them to profit, to discover later that to produce them would be putting himself into the criminal dock; or it may be that Mr. Richard Remington appropriated the document and destroyed it, out of regard for Inspector Robson's family, and probably also because he believes in Mr. Reginald Boyd's innocence. Hark! Do you hear the thunder? A storm is approaching. All the better for our purpose. It is two o'clock, and we have little time to waste. I will make short work of the conclusion of that night's proceedings. At your suggestion we placed the body of Samuel Boyd comfortably in its bed, and cleared away all traces of the struggle. Your argument was that, as it would become known that Mr. Reginald Boyd visited his father that night, it would be supposed he had adopted the expedient to make it appear that the murdered man died a natural death, and so avert suspicion from himself. It was a lame argument, for the marks of our fingers were on his throat, but I humoured you, as we humour a child who asks a harmless question. The last thing we did was to carry Abel Death from the house. Some days afterwards we learned that Mr. Richard Remington was taking an active interest in the disappearance of the clerk, and for the purpose of ascertaining to what extent he was in communication with Mrs. Death you introduced yourself to her under the false name, by which you are known to her and to him. I raised no objection to the plan; the risk was yours, and I was willing that you should run it. You used my name without my authority, and I understand why you did so. It was to make me a partner in the risk, was it not?"

"Yes," replied Dr. Vinsen, sullenly.

"An honest confession. You feared that I should shirk the consequences of our crime--let us call it by its usual name--to which you attach so much importance. You are mistaken; I am ready to meet them, always, always ready. I have overcome greater dangers, have steered my way safely over rocks and quicksands far more perilous. Shall I recapitulate the particulars of a later incident in this affair? That it chanced that one of the men summoned on the jury was a person who owed you money which he could not pay; that you held him so completely in your power that you could bring worldly ruin upon him; that you entered into a conspiracy with him to use his influence with his brother jurymen in order that a verdict of wilful murder against Reginald Boyd should be returned; that you----"

"Enough of that," interposed Dr. Vinsen. "Surely it is not necessary to go into these details."

"A statement of them refreshes the memory; it is important not to lose sight of the smallest incident in this complex matter--but as you will. And now, my worthy partner, before we proceed to the house that faces this window, explain what you mean by saying that your patience is exhausted, and by your threat with reference to the art treasures I have gathered, which I value as I value my life?"

"You have had a large sum of money from me," said Dr. Vinsen, doggedly. "I claim my own. The debt must be discharged."

"And if payment is impossible just now?"

"I cannot wait any longer."

"Shall we say you will not?"

"You goad me to it. I will not."

"But it happens that you must wait my pleasure--aye, *must!* Ezra Lynn, you little know the man upon whose fate yours depends, and who would have no more compunction in striking you dead where you sit than in plucking the leaves from a rose. You would rob me of my treasures--the treasures I have purchased with blood. Not while I live--not while I live. Here is beauty that I can worship, the work of the great masters of the past, exquisite colour and perfect form, in the production of which genius toiled with a divine end in view. If my history ever becomes known the world will read the story of a man who greatly dared, of one who loved beauty in its every shape and form, of one who, unblessed with wealth, stopped at no crime to gain it, in order to follow his star, and who, when all was lost--if such a fate befall him--defied his enemies and defeated them in the moment of their victory. You start at the word crime. It is a common word, and I use it in the common sense, but not in the sense in which *I* view it. All things are justified to men who dare as I have dared. What is the sacrifice of a human life in the endeavour to wrest nature's sublime secrets from her breast? Man wars with man, and strews the battlefield with the slain. Is that called a crime? We glorify it, we sing hymns to it, the church cries 'Hosanna!' and its priests praise the Lord of Hosts who crowned our banners with victory. If victory crown mine--and it may yet, in the teeth of all obstacles--so shall I be praised and glorified. Crime! There is no such word to the victor. I laugh at the law that would make a criminal of a hero. Not for the first time shall I have successfully defied it."

He paused, and smiled scornfully as a flash of lightning pierced a chink in the window, which he instantly unshuttered.

"We may be seen!" cried Dr. Vinsen, catching his arm.

He took no heed of the warning, but stood at the window, and smiled again at the peal of

thunder at the lightning's heels. Whether the words he had uttered were or were not the ravings of a madman, it was clear that he was terribly in earnest.

"It is but a commencement of the storm," he said presently, in a calmer tone, turning from the window. "There is still something further to explain. You accused me of concealing a design from you."

Dr. Vinsen fortified himself with brandy before replying. His nerves were shaken, and the liquor gave him courage.

"Why have you had two travelling trunks made, and inscribed with the name of Corsi?"

"Ah, you have discovered that. It is the name I shall assume when I leave these shores for another country. The trunks, as you have doubtless observed, are specially constructed for the safe transport of works of art."

"I forbid you to remove them," cried Dr. Vinsen. "They no longer belong to you."

"How so?"

"How so?" echoed Dr. Vinsen. "You will not deny your signature?"

"No, I will not deny it."

"By this document," said Dr. Vinsen, taking a paper from his pocket-book, "which I had duly stamped on the day you signed it, they became my property if, in six months from that date, you had not discharged your debt to me. The six months expired to-day."

"Pause a moment before you open it. When did you read it last?"

"Yesterday, and put it in my pocket-book to bring here to-night."

"If my memory does not play me false, the date was the 18th of September, 1897. I did not approve of the document you asked me to sign, and you wrote another at this table, worded somewhat differently. One hundred and eighty-three days have elapsed since then. I am curious to see if I timed it correctly. Open the paper."

Dr. Vinsen unfolded it, and started in amazement. The paper was blank, nothing appearing on it but the red Government stamp.

"It was a vulgar trick," said Dr. Pye. "You wrote and I signed, not in ink which gradually fades, but which suddenly disappears at an appointed hour. Content yourself, my worthy friend, and thank me for saving you from a danger which would have sent you to the hulks. Had you attempted to dispose of these gems to a dealer in any European city you would have been immediately arrested. They have been bought with blood, and there is not a police court that has not a list of them. Priceless treasures! Here are vases, medallions, and bronzes of Benvenuto Cellini, for which collectors would give thousands of guineas, and every one known throughout the civilised world. That wondrous artificer saw visions, as I do, and his progress was marked with blood, as mine has been. Content yourself, I say; when I make my fortune you shall be paid, and if we discover the jewels to-night you shall have the lion's share. Now, follow me, if you have the courage."

* * * * *

Noiseless footsteps on the dark stairs, noiseless footsteps in the passages--the footsteps of men in their stocking feet. They reach the landing on which Samuel Boyd's bedroom and office are situated.

The storm rages without, tearing through the Square with fierce, shrieking moans and cries, like a forest of wild beasts in pain. There is a leak in the roof of the house, and the men within it, when there is a lull, hear the raindrops falling, pat, pat, pat. One of the men shudders at a terrifying thought, born of the memory of a night when a murder was committed there. If a human being were on the roof, stabbed to the heart, so might *his* life's blood drip through the aperture. In the terrified man's fancy he sees the red stains on the floor, sees them spread through the air, though nothing is visible in his actual sight. A muffled cry escapes him.

"Hush!" From the other man. "Do not raise your voice above a whisper."

"Why not?" From the trembling man. "There is no one here but ourselves."

"Fool! The house may be watched. Why do you shrink from me? Are you afraid?"

"No." But the speaker's lips and face are white. "Can we not have a light?"

"Not here. I have matches and a candle with me. There is a screen in the office--here is the door--step in, softly, softly! Now, help me move the screen before the window. Come, ghost, spectre, or vision, show yourself!"

"For God's sake, stop!"

"Coward! Ah, that lightning flash! And now the thunder! Listen to the rain. It is a deluge."

They stoop and light the candle, crouching by the writing-table.

"Keep the light near the ground. The window is masked, but if the candle is raised its glimmer might be seen from the Square. Move this way. Nearer to this dumb image of wax in its hooded chair. It would be a rare achievement to breathe life into it, to compel it to speak, and reveal where the treasure we seek is hidden."

So low are their voices that it would be impossible for any person acquainted with the speakers to recognise them by that sound. They are standing at the back of the hooded chair, and the waxwork figure of the Chinaman, with its fixed and pallid face, stares straight at vacancy.

"Speak!" whispers the bolder of the two, in savage derision, and shakes the chair--so violently that the Charles the Second cane it holds in its hand slips and falls to the ground.

"I recall a story," he continues, picking up the stick, and still in a whispered voice, "of a treasure of great value being concealed for generations in a cane like this. If this were hollow it could be used for just such a purpose. What are these protuberances round the rim? Hold the light closer, closer! A circlet of old English letters."

By accident he presses one of the letters, and as he does so is conscious of a movement in the silver knob at the top of the cane. Bending over it he sees that the letter he pressed is B, and that the pressure has caused the figure 2 to spring up on the surface of the knob.

"B, the second letter in the alphabet, stands for 2," he whispers excitedly. "The last words written by Samuel Boyd on the memorandum which would send his son to the gallows if it were found, were 'Notation 2647.' The sixth letter in the alphabet is F." He presses the letter, and the figure 6 appears on the knob. "Ha, ha! The fourth letter, D." He presses that, and the figure 4 appears, the figures now ranging 264. "The seventh letter, G. The notation is complete--2647!"

Such perfect control did the speaker have over himself that even in that moment of excitement his voice does not rise above a whisper. Both men are now in a standing posture, the discoverer of the simple cryptogram holding the cane.

"Now for the test," he says, and with the ball of his broad thumb he presses hard upon the four figures. A click is heard. The silver knob springs up.

"The jewels!" he whispers, exultantly. "They are here--they are here! See!"

In the utterance of the word a vivid flash of lightning illumines the room, and one man utters a startled exclamation, the other a frenzied shriek, for in that momentary flash they see the figure of the Chinaman rise suddenly from its chair. The candle is dashed to the ground, enveloping them in black darkness, and the cane, with its concealed treasure, is plucked from the hand that held it!

CHAPTER LIX.

CONSTABLE APPLEBEE DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF.

Constable Applebee, seeking shelter from the storm beneath the roof of Deadman's Court, kept his face and his thoughts in the direction of Samuel Boyd's house, for such complete possession had the mystery taken of him that lightning, wind, and rain were powerless to drive it from his mind. Besides which, as he afterwards informed his wife, he had a presentiment that "something was going to happen." The latest flash of lightning caused him to clap his hand instinctively upon his eyes; the crash of thunder that followed caused him to drop his hand. Then, as though the elements had exhausted themselves, there was a sudden hush, for the sound of the fast-falling rain was faint in his ears after the deafening thunderpeal. So faint, indeed, that, in the belief that the storm was spent, he stepped into Catchpole Square and looked around, distinguishing only the outlines of the buildings because of the darkness of the night. Almost on the instant the door of Samuel Boyd's house was violently opened, and a man rushed out,

slamming it behind him. With such frantic haste did he run that he came into collision with the constable, and both were nearly upset. . They recovered their equilibrium simultaneously, and before the man could get his breath Applebee proved himself equal to the occasion.

"Easy, there!" he exclaimed, and with one hand caught the man by the throat, while with the other he raised his whistle to his lips, and blew a loud and vigorous summons for assistance.

"Let me go!" cried the man, struggling to get free. "Come into the house with me--quick, quick, or the murderers will escape!"

"*You* don't escape," said Applebee. "Keep still, or I'll knock you on the head." And he tightened his hand on the man's throat.

At this moment his summons for assistance was answered by the respectable mechanic who had twice inquired the way to Holborn. "What's up?" he inquired.

Applebee pulled out his bull's eye lamp, and turned its light upon the new arrival. "Oh, it's you," he said. "I call upon you in the Queen's name to assist me in arresting this man."

"Right you are," replied Lambert, in the half tipsy voice of the mechanic.

"Are you mad?" cried the man. "They will escape, I tell you! Come with me into that house!"

"Keep still!" growled Applebee, shaking his captive roughly.

"What do you charge him with?" asked Lambert, keeping up the fiction.

"Murder," said Applebee. "The murder of Samuel Boyd!"

"That's a find," said Lambert. "Let's have a look at him." And to the constable's astonishment he also pulled out a bull's-eye lamp.

"Who are you?" demanded Applebee.

"My name is Lambert," said the detective, dropping his disguise.

"I might have guessed it; but don't forget that *I* made this arrest."

"You shall have the credit of it." The light of two bull's-eye lamps was thrown upon the man's face. "By George! It's Dick Remington."

"Absent on business," observed Applebee, sarcastically. "The murder's out. What's that he's dropped?" Lambert picked it up. "A mask!"

It was the mask of a Chinaman's face; and moreover, Dick's outer garment was that of a Mongolian, resembling the garment of the wax figure in the office from which but a few minutes ago he had escaped.

"Look here, Mr. Lambert, look here, Applebee," said Dick, eagerly----

"Stop, Dick Remington," interrupted Lambert. "Don't you think you had better shut your mouth? We're bound to take you to the station, and charge you. When you're brought before the magistrate you can tell your story if you like. Take my advice."

"So far as my story is concerned I will," said Dick, "but in that house are the murderers of Samuel Boyd. For heaven's sake don't leave the place without arresting them!"

"If he gets us into the house," remarked Applebee, "we're done for."

"We shall be three to two," urged Dick, despairingly.

"If your story's true," corrected Applebee, "we shall be two to three. What's this in your hand? A sword-stick?"

"No," said Dick, and his heart fell; he was beginning to realise the danger he was in, "it is not a weapon. I will explain everything at the proper time. Mr. Lambert, I implore you to search that house."

"Constable Applebee has spoken like a careful and sensible man," said Lambert, "but we'll see if we can equalise matters." Taking his police call from his pocket he sent his summons through Deadman's Court. "Blow yours, too, Applebee."

The first to answer the call was Constable Pond, to whom the affair was hastily explained; and presently they were joined by another officer.

"I see no harm in humouring Mr. Remington," then said Lambert. "Pond, you and this officer keep watch in the Square while we go into the house. There's only one way out of it, and there's only one way out of the Square."

"There's the wall at the back," said Dick.

"Which they've got over before this time----"

"Supposing," Applebee put in, "there was anyone to get over it."

"Yes, supposing that. When daylight comes we shall be able to ascertain if there are any fresh marks of a grapnel there." Dick set his teeth; his rope and grapnel were under the bed of his room in Constable Pond's house. "You wish to go into the house with us, Mr. Remington?"

"Yes."

"We must handcuff you. Give me the stick." He took possession of it, and Dick, with a groan, held out his hands. "Behind your back, Mr. Remington. I am sorry for the necessity, but there's no help for it. There, that's comfortable. Have you the key of the street door?"

"In my trousers' pocket."

Lambert put his hand beneath Dick's outer garment, and took the key from the pocket. Then he showed his revolver. "If we're attacked, Applebee, I'll account for the two men. Now, then." He opened the door. "You go first, Mr. Remington. Applebee, keep behind me, and be prepared."

Throwing light upon their way with their bull's-eye lamps the two officers, preceded by Dick, ascended the stairs to the office. No person was there, nor in the bedroom. They went through all the rooms in the upper part of the house, with the same result. Lambert's experienced eye sought diligently for some sign of the presence of the men Dick had spoken of, but without success.

"A trumped-up story," said Applebee aside to him, "but *I* knew that all along."

Lambert made no reply, but turned to Dick, "Anywhere else, Mr. Remington?"

"The bottom of the house," replied Dick. Hope was dying within him. He knew that he would be searched at the police station, and that, in addition to other incriminating evidence, there would be found in his pocket the last words written by Samuel Boyd, the production of which would be fatal to Reginald. "Fool!" he thought. "Why have I kept it about me? Why did I not destroy it?"

"Is there a cellar?" asked Lambert.

"Yes."

"I draw the line at cellars," objected Applebee.

"We will go there," said Lambert curtly, and the constable was compelled to accompany them.

"There is a trap door leading to the cellar," said Dick, hopelessly, when they reached the kitchen, for he saw that it had not been disturbed since he had last lifted it himself. Lambert raised it, and let himself down; ascending, he shook the dust from his clothes.

"A regular rat hole," he said. "There's no one there."

"Nor anywhere else," said Applebee, sulkily. "We're only wasting time. Let's get to the station."

Caught, as it were, in a trap of his own preparing, Dick conveyed to Lambert, in one of those secret glances which to an intelligent mind are as good as speech, an entreaty for a private word.

"Remain outside a minute, Applebee," said Lambert, as they stood in the passage leading to the street door. "There's something I wish to ask Mr. Remington."

Applebee would have refused if he dared, but Lambert's standing in the force was too high, and the part he had played in the mystery too conspicuous, for him to venture opposition, so, with a dissatisfied mind and a discontented face, he walked slowly forward, and waited in the Square by the street door.

"This is a bad business, Dick," said Lambert, becoming familiar. His kind tone brought tears into the young man's eyes.

"It is even worse than it appears," said Dick, "as you will discover when we reach the station. You might take the handcuffs off, Mr. Lambert. I'll go quietly." Lambert instantly released him. "Thank you. Handle that cane gently, and carry it upright, if you don't care to entrust me with it. You will know why soon. It is worth more than its weight in gold. Do you think I have been lying?" Lambert stroked his chin. "It is an unfair question, perhaps. Ill answer it myself. As I hope for mercy from our heavenly Judge I have spoken the truth."

"Who were the men you left in the office? Don't say unless you like, and don't speak one word that will tell against yourself. Understand me--I sha'n't use anything to your disadvantage unless I have the best of reasons for it. And don't *mis*understand me. I intend to do my duty without

regard to consequences. After all, the proper course is silence."

"I *must* speak. I don't know for certain who the men were. You see my dress and the mask I dropped. I had it made in Covent Garden, and partly helped to make it myself. I have been in this house since Friday night last, and have sat in that Chinaman's chair whenever I heard a sound outside the room, made up to resemble him. I acted another part, too--I could smile at it if it wasn't for what I see before me. There's new misery in store for those I love best in the world, and it is I who will bring it home to them."

"Be a man, Dick, be a man."

"It is because I *am* a man that I feel it as I do. I have been working to save them, and as likely as not I have brought destruction upon them. I waited for my chance in this house, and to-night it came; and it has been spoilt at the last moment by a----"

"By a man who was doing his duty," said Lambert, persuasively. "I am sure that is what you were going to say. Did you not see the men?"

"I could not. They were at the back of the hooded chair all the time, and of course I didn't dare to turn my head, or they'd have stuck a knife in me. Do you think I'm clever enough to have invented the story?" he asked pathetically.

"I think you are clever enough to invent anything," replied Lambert. He had great admiration for the young fellow, and great sympathy with him; notwithstanding which he would not commit himself. "Be quick. I've no time to listen to a long story; Applebee will be getting impatient. Didn't you hear their voices?"

"I could not distinguish them. They spoke in whispers, and I only caught a word here and there. But I suspect--I suspect----"

"Yes?"

"I more than suspect. I believe them to be Dr. Pye and the wretch Vinsen, who is no doctor, but a money-lender named Ezra Lynn, in league with that scoundrel of a juryman, Rawdon."

"I know all about Ezra Lynn and Rawdon. How did the men you suspect get out of the house?"

"I cannot tell. There is some awful mystery yet to be brought to light. *I* hoped to do it, but now I shall be deprived of my liberty----" He groaned, and clasped his hands convulsively. "Mr. Lambert, our only hope is in you. You want to see justice done, don't you?"

"I *will* see it done," said Lambert, sternly.

"Don't be misled--don't be thrown off the right track! However strong appearances may be against me, and against Reginald Boyd, I swear, by all we hold most sacred, that we are both innocent!"

"Isn't it time we were moving, Mr. Lambert," called Applebee, from without.

"In one moment, Applebee."

"Must I be taken to Bishop Street Station?" asked Dick.

"We daren't take you to another," replied Lambert, gravely. "It will be a terrible shock to Inspector Robson."

"My poor uncle! I would give my right hand if it could be spared him. What will he think--what will his dear wife and daughter think?" Dick was suffering physically as well as mentally; he had not tasted food for twenty hours.

Again Applebee's voice was heard from without.

"A last word," said Lambert, hurriedly. "My duty will be performed, whatever happens; no consideration will be allowed to interfere with its proper performance. There will be a search warrant. I don't ask you if there is anything in your room in Pond's house that will tell against you--don't speak; I will not listen--I don't ask you that. If anything is found it will be brought forward without fear or favour, and evidence given in a straightforward manner. But it may console you to know, quite privately and confidentially"--Dick nodded--"that I am working up a case against the men whose names you mentioned, and that if I succeed you may not be the worse off for it. Give me your word that you will keep this to yourself. Enough said. We're ready, Applebee."

Pond and his fellow constable, reporting that no person had passed through the Square, received instructions to keep watch, one in the front, the other at the back of the house until they were relieved, and to arrest all suspicious characters. Then Lambert, Applebee, and Dick, walked to the Bishop Street Station.

Inspector Robson's face was worn and anxious, and when he saw Dick and heard the charge it

became haggard. He held up his hand, as if imploring a short respite of silence, and they averted their eyes until he spoke. Raising their heads, a dead white face confronted them, its lips sternly compressed. He did not avoid their glance, but it was noticeable that not for a single moment did his own rest upon his nephew. "That is a man," thought Lambert, "who would go straight to his death at the call of duty. It makes one proud to be an Englishman." They were all very grave as, without faltering, he took down the charge at the dictation of Constable Applebee.

"Before I am searched," said Dick, "I may be allowed to speak, I suppose."

"I would not," advised Lambert.

"But I will, if I am not prevented by force. To be silent would be an admission of guilt, and I am innocent. I wish all in this place to hear my story, every word of which is true."

There was no one in the office except those immediately concerned, Lambert, when they entered, having taken the precaution to order the constable in attendance outside. In a voice shaken by emotion, but weak from want of rest and food, Dick related as briefly as possible the particulars of the part he had played in the mystery. He himself emptied his pockets, and handed the document falsely incriminating Reginald to his uncle.

"I kept these matters to myself," he said, "because I saw that there was a strong case of circumstantial evidence against Mr. Reginald Boyd, and that the knowledge I had gained would strengthen it. Had I revealed at the inquest what I knew nothing could have prevented a verdict of wilful murder against him being returned. Convinced of his innocence my aim was to spare him and those he loved the agony which this additional evidence would have caused them. I felt that time was required to bring the guilt home to those who had committed the crime, and to that task I bent all my energies. I may have erred, but I acted for the best, as I believed, and as I still believe; for even now I do not despair that the truth will be made known. As to what that hollow cane contains I am as ignorant as yourselves, except that before I snatched it from the hands of the men who were searching the room I heard one of them say, 'The jewels! They are here--they are here!' If I had been left at liberty I should have hunted the wretches down, but now----"

He had spoken under the influence of intense excitement, but sleepless nights, hunger, and the consciousness of the torture which his uncle Rob was undergoing, overpowered him here, and with a pitiable endeavour to continue, he broke completely down. A long deep sigh escaped him, and he sank into the arms of Lambert, who had expected and was waiting for the collapse. In this state he was conveyed to a cell.

An examination of the contents of the cane made Applebee open his eyes wide with astonishment. Lambert had in his pocket a list of the jewels which Lady Wharton had given Samuel Boyd on the night of the murder, and he ticked them off as Inspector Robson entered them on the charge sheet.

"You will understand, Constable Applebee," said Lambert, when the business was concluded, "that what passes in Inspector Robson's office is not public property. The arrest is not to be spoken of outside. I have heard it said in high quarters that there is too much babbling and boasting among certain members of the force. If it continues severe measures will be resorted to."

"I understand, Mr. Lambert," replied Applebee, with the air of an injured being. Before they reached the police station he had been inclined to regard himself as a hero, but his reception had not pleased him, and he returned to his beat in a state of mind not exactly amiable. He soon consoled himself, however. "It's jealousy, that's what it is," he said to himself. "He's riled because he didn't make the arrest, and can't claim the reward. If it belongs to anybody it belongs to me, and if they try to do me out of it I'll go to law with them. There's nothing that I know of in the regulations to keep it from me. Anyway, there's the reward for the jewels, and it's me that found them. Her ladyship wouldn't be mean enough to go from her word." Thus did Applebee muse, and thus does Mammon poison many a man's nature. For Applebee had always been an inoffensive, harmless, kindly man, but the glare of gold had brought into play the baser part of him.

Despite Lambert's warning, which had been given partly out of consideration for the feelings of Inspector Robson, a whisper of the arrest, and, more or less true, of the incidents connected with it, did get about, and the excitement in the neighbourhood of Bishop Street Police Station, where great numbers of people congregated in the hope of catching sight of Dick, was no less than on the preceding Friday, when proceedings against Reginald were commenced.

CHAPTER LX.

FROM THE DIARY OF DETECTIVE LAMBERT.

Tuesday, March 19th, 1896.

"Dick Remington brought before the magistrate this morning. Court crowded, proceedings very brief. Formal evidence of the arrest only was given, and Dick remanded till Friday, when he and Reginald Boyd will be brought up together. Mr. Pallaret was in court, and made a point of insisting that the case shall be fully gone into on Friday. He is hurrying the prosecution on, and doesn't intend to allow it to lag. Am not sure whether it is quite wise of him, but I could no more teach him his business than he could teach me mine. Dick looked better, and fairly self-possessed. The only time he seemed on the point of breaking down, as he broke down in the station, was when he looked in the direction of Mrs. Inspector Robson and Mrs. Reginald Boyd. They almost broke down, too. They were very white and miserable. Inspector Robson looked ten years older, but held up bravely. Mrs. Abel Death was there. When the case was over saw her talking excitedly to the Robsons. To my surprise she came up to me, and asked if I knew where her little daughter Gracie was. I did not know. She seemed in great distress. Mrs. Inspector Robson and her daughter avoided me, and I did not intrude myself upon them. Of course they regard me as their enemy. As it happens it may turn out I am their best friend. Don't you think so?

"Coming away from the court played some good cards. One, a subp[oe]na on Dr. Vinsen, summoning him to appear as a witness on Friday. Left it at Dr. Pye's house. Asked to see Dr. Pye. 'Not at home.' Detailed two men to shadow the pair of them there. Travelling trunks were delivered at the house at eleven o'clock. My man caught sight of the name painted on them. Signer Corsi. Good. Preparing for a foreign trip. Not without my consent, Dr. Pye.

"Second card. A subp[oe]na on Ezra Lynn, summoning *him* to appear as a witness. I can't help laughing. He will be scratching his bald pate to get at the meaning of it. Let him scratch. Detailed a man to watch *his* house, and follow him wherever he goes.

"Third card. A subp[oe]na on Stephen Rawdon, requesting *his*
attendance at the magistrate's court on Friday. I can see the sweat running down his face. Can't you? Did not detail a man to watch *his*
movements. *He* won't run away.

"Three good shots.

"Letter from friend Joseph Pitou in reply to mine of Friday last--this time in English. He is well up in languages, is friend Joseph. Says my man is his man, he believes. Expects to be in London on Thursday night or Friday morning. If so, he will be present in the magistrate's court on Friday, and will have a good view of our gentleman. Gives me a piece of information. Says that he had our gentleman in his custody once, and allowed him to slip through his fingers. Very stupid of you, friend Joseph. Says our gentleman is the kind of man who never forgets a face, and that when he sees friend Joseph we shall know from the start he will give what impression this meeting of old friends has upon him. I doubt it, Joseph. Our gentleman is the kind of man who never gives a start. A modern Sphinx, and, according to Joseph, as desperate a character as one would wish to put the darbies on.

"Forgot to say that Lady Wharton was not in Court this morning. Her ladyship is in the country. She will present herself on Friday, to identify the jewels. Applebee expects to get the reward. Now, it was Dick Remington who found them. I mentioned this to Applebee, and made him uneasy. What a plucky chap that Dick is! As for his story, I believe every word of it. Friday will be a regular field day."

CHAPTER LXI.

FROM "THE LITTLE BUSY BEE" OF THURSDAY, MARCH, 21st

In view of the surprising turn the Mystery of Catchpole Square has taken, considerable interest was manifested in the proceedings at the Coroner's Court this morning, a large share of public attention being bestowed upon the juror who has taken so prominent a part in the inquiry. All the jurymen were in attendance at the appointed hour, and the Coroner, in a brief address,

expressed the hope that a sensible and just verdict would now be returned. He would make no comment, he said, upon the singular differences of opinion between them, nor upon the no less singular and unusual form in which those differences were presented to him--contrary, he was bound to add, to all precedent and established modes of procedure. It would be obviously improper to make any comment upon the altered position of affairs; such alteration was not for their consideration, and should not be allowed to influence them. The verdict they returned should be strictly in accordance with the evidence that had been presented to them. He would now dismiss them to their duties.

Upon this occasion, contrary to the general expectation, the jury remained in deliberation but a very short time. After a lapse of twenty minutes they agreed upon the verdict of Wilful Murder against some Person or Persons unknown, which, being received by the Coroner, the inquiry came to an end.

In connection with this extraordinary case (new developments of which may be expected to-morrow at the Bishop Street Police Court), we may mention that no light has yet been thrown upon the disappearance of Mr. Abel Death. And in this connection we may further add that Mrs. Death is in deep distress at the disappearance of her young daughter Gracie, who has been absent from her home since Tuesday. Any person who can give information concerning her may address themselves to our Office, or to Mrs. Death, 7, Draper's Mews.

We understand that some portion of Lady Wharton's jewels has been found, and that her ladyship will attend at the Police Court to-morrow to identify them.

CHAPTER LXII.

AT THE MAGISTRATE'S COURT.

There was an unusual bustle in the Bishop Street Police Court on Friday morning, every person who could gain admittance and every person in the crowds outside being on the tiptoe of expectation. Mr. Mallandaine, the magistrate, was in attendance early, and half-a-dozen minor cases of drunkenness were disposed of by eleven o'clock, before which time every seat was occupied, and there was not a vacant inch of standing room. If there had been any intention on the part of Dr. Pye and Mr. Ezra Lynn not to present themselves it was frustrated by the vigilance of Detective Lambert, who had stepped outside the boundary of his duties to secure their attendance. There was not a trace of discomposure on the countenance of Dr. Pye. In marked contrast to his composed demeanour was that of Mr. Ezra Lynn, who, while assuming an air of amused benevolence, was not entirely successful in concealing his inward agitation. No information had reached him as to whether he had been subp[oe]naed as a witness for the prosecution or the defence; he knew that this was irregular, but he did not dare disobey the summons. No token of recognition passed between him and Dr. Pye, although Lambert had man[oe]uvred that they should be seated next to each other. Immediately behind Dr. Pye sat an individual who might have been French or Italian; his swarthy complexion and curled moustache proclaimed him to be certainly not an Englishman. He took his seat, the position of which had also been arranged by Lambert, after the entrance of Dr. Pye, so that the former, who did not once turn his head, was not aware of his presence. Mr. Rawdon, the recalcitrant juror, was within hail, and manifestly as little at ease as Mr. Ezra Lynn. Near them sat Mrs. Abel Death, worn and haggard with anxiety, all her efforts to find Gracie having failed. Uncle and Aunt Rob and Florence were on another bench, and the eyes that rested on their suffering faces were filled with pity and kindly sympathy; and near them were seated Lady Wharton and her brother, Lord Fairfax. Mr. Higgins, in skull cap and list slippers, was also present.

There was scarcely elbow-room at the long narrow table below the magistrate's chair. Mr. Finnis, Q.C., representing her ladyship, was there, and Mr. Marlow for the prosecution, and Mr. Pallaret for the defence, with the solicitors engaged in the case, and the newspaper reporters, who were so numerous that accommodation could not be found for more than half of them; those who could not obtain seats stood at the back, and plied their pencils industriously.

A buzz of excitement ran through the Court as Reginald and Dick appeared in the dock. They were ushered in separately, and this was the first time they had met since Reginald's arrest, but messages had passed between them through friends and solicitors, and their first action now, as they stood side by side, was to hold out their hands in token of hearty friendship and confidence. Upon some of the spectators this friendly greeting produced a favourable impression; upon others the reverse. Of the two young men, it was clear that Reginald felt his position the more acutely; Dick had recovered his bright and cheery manner, and it was hard to believe that he stood charged with a horrible crime.

Upon the case being called, Mr. Pallaret rose and said that he appeared for both the accused. "In expressing the hope," added the learned counsel, "that the case for the prosecution will be fully disclosed, and in such a comprehensive manner as to enable your worship to decide to-day whether you will discharge the accused or commit them for trial, I am carrying out their strong wish, with which my own view of what is just and right coincides."

Mr. Mallandaine: "It is certainly advisable that a charge of this nature should not be kept hanging over the heads of the accused for an unreasonable length of time, but we have to be guided, to some extent, by the counsel for the prosecution."

Mr. Marlow: "There is no desire on our part for delay. In a matter of this grave import every opportunity for defence should be given to an accused person, and in our proceedings to-day I say frankly that I do not intend to hold anything back. At the conclusion of the evidence it will be for your worship to decide whether the facts disclosed are sufficient to warrant the committal of the prisoners. I venture to say that there have been few cases of the kind in which the circumstantial evidence is so strong and direct. I would point out to your worship that the case assumes a different complexion from that which it presented this day week. Then there was only one person charged, now there are two, and I shall be able to prove collusion in the committal of a murder as brutal as any which can be found in the whole calendar of crime. The arrest of the second prisoner, Richard Remington, cousin of the first, Reginald Boyd, instead of complicating the issue, has cleared it, for much that was mysterious is now capable of explanation. The medical evidence will establish that the murder was committed on the night of Friday, the 1st of March----"

Mr. Pallaret: "Or on the night of Saturday, the 2nd. My learned brother will see the point."

Mr. Marlow: "Yes, I see it, but I shall contend that it was committed on Friday, on which night Reginald Boyd visited his father, for the purpose, as he has himself admitted, of obtaining money from him, he being then, upon his own confession, in an impecunious state. The notes of his evidence at the inquest will be read to you----"

Mr. Pallaret: "It will shorten the proceedings by my admitting the visit and its purpose. Mr. Reginald Boyd gave his evidence of his own free will."

Mr. Mallandaine: "Nevertheless, Mr. Pallaret, the evidence had better be read from the Coroner's notes, in which you may possibly find discrepancies."

Mr. Pallaret: "There are parts which I wish to be read, in proof of the ingenuous part played by Mr. Reginald Boyd."

Mr. Marlow: "We will read the whole of it. There will also be submitted to your worship proof of identification of the body, with the Coroner's notes, and the evidence of the two prisoners on that point."

Mr. Pallaret: "We admit that. There can be no possible doubt that the man murdered was Mr. Samuel Boyd, and I may state explicitly that there is not the least intention on our parts to dispute matters of fact."

Mr. Marlow: "On the night in question three incidents occurred of which we have positive knowledge. The first was the summary discharge by the murdered man of his clerk, Mr. Abel Death, whose singular disappearance has yet to be accounted for; the second was the visit of Lady Wharton to Mr. Samuel Boyd, and her depositing with him certain articles of jewellery which her ladyship will be called upon to identify; the third, the visit of Reginald Boyd to his father under the circumstances I have mentioned. I name these incidents in the order of their occurrence. From the first discovery of the murder suspicion pointed to Reginald Boyd as its probable perpetrator, but the disclosures made up to a certain point of the inquiry in the Coroner's Court were not considered sufficiently conclusive by the police to warrant his arrest. But he was kept under observation. Towards the conclusion of the second day of the inquiry an important witness came forward in the person of Dr. Pye, a gentleman who, we understand, has devoted his life to scientific pursuits. This gentleman resides in Shore Street, a street running parallel to Catchpole Square. The windows at the back of Dr. Pye's house directly face the front of the house occupied by Mr. Samuel Boyd. It has been his habit for years to keep up late at night for the purpose of making scientific experiments, and on the night of Friday the 1st of March he was so employed. At three o'clock on that night--that is to say, on the morning of Saturday, the 2nd--he was standing at the window of the room in which he was at work, when his attention was attracted by an unusual movement at the door of Samuel Boyd's house. It will be necessary to bear in mind that Catchpole Square is a *cul de sac,* and that it is very rarely indeed that any person enters there, and none, unless it be an entire stranger, with the intention of passing through. The entrance to the Square is through a hooded passage bearing the ominous name of Deadman's Court. As I have told you, Dr. Pye was standing at the window--as he will tell you aimlessly, and as I submit in the abstracted mood habitual to students after some hours of secluded work--when he dimly observed the opening of the street door. An incident so unusual and suspicious made a strong impression upon him, and for the purpose of ascertaining the cause he brought forward an ingenious contrivance of his own invention by means of which he is enabled to throw a flashlight a considerable distance upon any desired spot, while the operator remains in shadow. The flashlight revealed the figure of a man standing at the door in an attitude

of fear; Dr. Pye distinguished quite clearly the features of this man, who at that time was a stranger to him. The man remained at the door in his fear-struck attitude for several moments; then, the flashlight extinguished, Dr. Pye observed the shadow of a man--the night was dark, and he could distinguish no more than the shadow--slink cautiously and stealthily out of the Square. This was the end of the incident. During the inquest Dr. Pye properly conceived it to be his duty, in the interests of justice, to make the incident public, and he addressed a note to the Coroner, stating that he had evidence of more or less importance to tender. He was called and examined, and the statement he made was to the effect I have described. His examination over, a remarkable incident occurred. Glancing around the Court his eyes fell upon Reginald Boyd, and he was instantly struck with the resemblance he bore to the man he had seen in Catchpole Square; and his further examination elicited this fact. It is a proof of his fair-mindedness that he warned the jury not to be led into a possible error by attaching a too great importance to this resemblance, which he suggested might be accidental. If so, it was a remarkable accident. While offering this warning against a possible miscarriage of justice--of which I admit there are instances on record--he was not to be shaken from the positive fact of the extraordinary resemblance. Observe that he was not aware that the man whom he pointed out in the Coroner's Court was the son of Samuel Boyd. Now, in this connection, there will be found a discrepancy between Dr. Pye and another witness, Mrs. Abel Death, as to the hour at which the man emerged from the house. Dr. Pye says it was three o'clock, while Mrs. Death avers that she was in Catchpole Square from half-past two till half-past three, during which space of time the door of the house in Catchpole Square was not opened. Dr. Pye fixes the time by his watch, which he says he consulted, while Mrs. Death fixes it by the striking of the hour from St. Michael's Church, which is in the immediate vicinity of Catchpole Square. Stress will no doubt be laid upon this discrepancy to discredit Dr. Pye's evidence, but it should not be allowed to weigh with you. Either of these witnesses may be reasonably and blamelessly mistaken, and the strong probability is that it is Mrs. Death, who does not possess a watch or a clock, and whose agitation at the disappearance of her husband may easily have led her into error. But anyway this discrepancy is of small significance. Whether it was at three or two o'clock does not affect the fact that a man was seen coming from the house----"

Mr. Pallaret: "I beg my learned friend's pardon. The unsupported evidence of a witness in relation to the important incident he describes does not establish the fact, and such a word should not be used."

Mr. Marlow: "I withdraw the word. You will have the evidence, and will judge of its value. It is not conceivable that Dr. Pye had any personal interest to serve in coming forward----"

Mr. Pallaret: "Again I beg pardon. What is conceivable and not conceivable will probably be made clear before we finish."

Mr. Marlow: "I will pass over the incident. The presumption is that the man was either the murderer or an accomplice. Now, how does the prisoner, Reginald Boyd, stand in relation to what took place on that night? We have his own statement that he left his father's house and was in his lodgings by midnight, and if he could produce a witness or witnesses to confirm his statement, and to prove that he did not leave his lodgings again during the night, it would effectually dispose of the peril in which he stands in regard to the resemblance between him and the man whom Dr. Pye saw. But such a witness has not been, and I venture to say will not be, produced, and we have only his bare word to fall back upon. Remember that he had a latchkey, and could let himself into the house without the knowledge of the inmate. We may take it for granted that Samuel Boyd, before he retired to bed, chained and bolted the street door, and in these circumstances the latchkey would be useless.

"I come now to the other prisoner, Richard Remington. No suspicion was entertained of his complicity in the crime, and there was no evidence connecting him with it until Monday night of this week. When Reginald Boyd was arrested Richard Remington was acting as his cousin's attorney, and on that very day he was seen posting up bills of large rewards, as stated therein, for the discovery of the murderer and Mr. Abel Death. On the face of it this simultaneous posting up of the two bills would go some way to directly associate Mr. Abel Death with the murder. I do not say that this was the intention, but it is open to that construction. If such an intention existed the design was artful and wicked, and Richard Remington's personal participation in the bill-posting--bill-sticking not being his trade--is open to another construction, that it was done for the purpose of averting suspicion from himself. On the following day, Friday, a notice appeared on the street door of the house in Catchpole Square, which stated that Richard Remington was absent on business, and that all communications for him were to be left at a certain address. Inquiry was made for him at that address by a witness who will be called, and nothing could be learned about him. I mention this incidentally, as indicating that he wished it to be supposed he was living at that address. If this were so, for what reason did he make it public, when he was not to be found there? Saturday, Sunday, and the daylight of Monday, passed without anything being heard of him; but late that night an incident of a very startling nature occurred, in which he was the principal actor.

"Constable Applebee was on his beat, which embraced Catchpole Square, and during the storm which came on suddenly at two in the morning, he took refuge in Deadman's Court, which you will recollect is the only approach to the Square. During a lull in the storm the constable stepped from his shelter to reconnoitre the houses in the Square. He had not been there a minute before the door of Samuel Boyd's house was flung open, and a man ran out, almost into the

constable's arms. This man was Richard Remington."

CHAPTER LXIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE TRIAL.

"His outer garments were such as a Mongolian wears, and in his hand was the mask of a Chinaman's face. He carried also in his hand a hollow cane of the reign of Charles the Second, in which, as you will presently hear, a singular discovery was made. It is not for me to say why this disguise was assumed; it is sufficient to state the fact. In response to Constable Applebee's calls for assistance Detective Lambert came up, and afterwards Constable Pond and another. The prisoner gave no explanation of his singular disguise, but made some rambling statement to the effect that the murderers of Samuel Boyd were in the house. In compliance with his urgent and reiterated requests the officers Lambert and Applebee accompanied him into the house, and made a thorough search, from top to bottom, without discovering any person there. Remington was then taken to the police station, and charged. When he was searched a document was found upon him of a nature so incriminating, and so direct in its terms, as to furnish the strongest proof of the guilt of the prisoner, Reginald Boyd. The defence will probably call this evidence presumptive; I call it conclusive. The document runs as follows:--

(Mr. Marlow here read the Memoranda made by Samuel Boyd on the night of Friday, March 1st, with which our readers are already acquainted.[1])

"You will perceive that the document is dated the 1st of March, and there can be no doubt that it was the last writing made by Samuel Boyd before he was cruelly murdered. That he was in dread of violence at the hands of his son is clear. No reference is made in the document to the prisoner Remington, but there is a presumptive accusation against the missing man, Abel Death, of being in a conspiracy to rob him. Observe also the reference to the latchkey possessed by his son, and the words, 'If he does not get in through the front door he will find some other way; he is better acquainted with the ins and outs of this house than I am myself.' In this voice from the grave--for so it may be aptly termed--is revealed a deplorable state of feeling between father and son which strengthens the case against the prisoner Boyd. They were at enmity; each accused the other of robbery or attempted robbery, and matters thus were ripe for violence. Is it too wild a presumption that Remington removed the incriminating document for the purpose of shielding his confederate, and, by implication, himself? The document informed them, also, that Samuel Boyd had not yet made his will, and that if he died that night his son would become heir at law. A strange feature in the case is that the paper was not immediately destroyed, but there are numbers of instances in which criminals have been brought to justice by over-confidence and by their neglect to attend to small matters over which they believed themselves to have absolute control. In addition to this document another remarkable discovery was made at the police station. On the night of the murder Lady Wharton had deposited with Samuel Boyd certain valuable jewels as security for an advance of money to be made to her, and up to last Monday night no trace of these jewels had been discovered. Now, the Charles the Second cane carried from the house by the prisoner Remington was hollow, and in it were found the missing jewels. Lady Wharton will be called to identify them. Against Remington a search of his lodgings furnished further evidence. Under his bed was found a rope and grapnel, which he purchased on Friday the 1st of March----"

Mr. Pallaret: "Will the date be proved?"

Mr. Marlow: "The shopkeeper from whom he purchased it will give evidence of the date. It may be asked, what object could there have been in Remington purchasing a rope and grapnel to get over the wall at the back when Reginald Boyd, with whom we accuse him of being in collusion, possessed a key to the front door? The answer to that is that they deemed it necessary to be prepared, in case the street door was chained and bolted. Or it may have been done, and the rope and grapnel used, to divert suspicion from themselves, and to make it appear that burglars unacquainted with the premises had effected an entrance and committed the crime. It is most suspicious that in Remington's evidence at the inquest he made no allusion to the rope and grapnel, although the statement of Detective Lambert was before him. For what other reason than to screen himself could he have been guilty of the suppression? Another piece of evidence will be forthcoming. Before either of the prisoners was arrested Detective Lambert, during his examination of the house, took photographs of the bloody footprints leading from Samuel Boyd's bedroom to the small window at the back, through which the person or persons effecting an unlawful entrance had passed. Since Remington's arrest photographs have been taken of the soles of his boots, and they exactly correspond with those of the bloody footprints. As to another

startling incident in this remarkable crime--the visit of the man disguised as Samuel Boyd to Lady Wharton in Bournemouth--we have only conjecture, and I make no comment upon it other than that it is a mystery which has yet to be elucidated.

"I have now gone through the principal features of the murder and its attendant circumstances, and I think your worship will agree with me that there is no course open to you except to put the prisoners on their trial at the Criminal Court."

At the conclusion of this address the general opinion of the disinterested persons in court was that the accused were guilty, and that there was no escape for them. There were, however, seated at the solicitors' table a few more experienced who judged from Mr. Pallaret's manner that he by no means despaired of an acquittal. A twisted note had been handed to him, on which was written, "He is the man. Call Joseph Pitou."

Witnesses for the prosecution were then examined, of whom the first was Lambert, whose evidence was similar to that given at the inquest, and who testified to the execution of the search warrant in Dick's lodgings. Mr. Pallaret asked him but few questions.

"You have been engaged in getting up this case?"

"Yes, under instructions."

"From time to time you have come into communication with Mr. Richard Remington?"

"Yes."

"Has he assisted or retarded you in your inquiries?"

"He has been of material assistance to me."

"At whose suggestion were photographs of his boots taken?"

"At his. Since his arrest I received a message from him saying that he had a communication to make to me. He then related the circumstances of his breaking into the house in Catchpole Square, and gave me his boots. He also showed me traces of a scar on his hand, caused by a wound he received when he broke the window at the back of the house, from which the blood had dropped as he walked through the passages and rooms."

"Did it appear to you as if he wished to conceal anything?"

"It did not. He was quite frank and open with me."

"In pursuance of your duties you served subp[oe]nas upon certain witnesses?"

"Yes."

"Among others, upon Dr. Pye?"

"Yes."

"In an interview with him you asked him to show you the flashlight device by means of which, according to his statement, he saw a man come from the house in Catchpole Square in the middle of the night?"

"Yes."

"What was his reply?"

"That it was under repair, and he could not produce it."

Then followed the evidence of the reporter of "The Little Busy Bee," and that of Constable Applebee, neither of whom was cross-examined by the defence.

At this point of the trial it was observed that a communication was made to Detective Lambert, who hastily took his departure, but not before he had passed a piece of paper to Mr. Pallaret, upon which was scribbled, "If you do not see me in Court delay the proceedings as long as possible. If Dr. Pye's examination is over before I return do not allow him to leave the Court. Most important."

Lady Wharton was next called. She narrated the circumstances under which she had entrusted her jewels to Samuel Boyd, and identified them. Among the questions put to her under cross-examination, which was purposely prolonged by Mr. Pallaret, were the following:

"Are any of the jewels you gave the deceased on Friday, March 1st, missing?"

"No. They are all here."

"Have you a list of the jewels you gave the person who personated Samuel Boyd in Bournemouth on the following Friday night?"

"Yes."

"You could identify them?"

"Certainly I could. I wish I had the opportunity."

Mr. Higgins then appeared in the witness box, shaking visibly, his features twitching spasmodically. From him the prosecution elicited that Dick had purchased a rope and grapnel at his shop on March 1st, and had paid half the purchase money at the time, promising to pay the balance in the course of the following week, which promise had not been kept. Dick could not understand what his object was in giving this false evidence as to the date of the purchase, unless it were that he conceived himself injured by not obtaining the blackmail he had hoped to gain. He was subjected to a long cross-examination, in the course of which he became hopelessly involved, and contradicted himself so repeatedly that he was warned by the magistrate. He finally retired from the witness box utterly discredited and demoralised.

Dr. Pye's name being called, he took his place in the witness box. His face was calm and composed, and he cast his eyes around with a sense of power which produced a profound impression among the spectators. In a passionless voice he repeated the statement he had made at the Coroner's Court, not deviating by a word from his description of the events of the fatal night. His statement finished, the examination proceeded:

"When you gave your evidence at the inquest you expressed some doubt as to the prisoner Reginald Boyd being the man you saw come from the house?"

"There came to my mind instances of mistaken resemblance in past trials of importance, and I conceived it my duty to warn the jury not to be led into error."

"You suggested that you might be mistaken?"

"I made the suggestion. No man is infallible."

"Have you carefully considered the matter since you appeared in the Coroner's Court?"

"I have."

"Has that consideration strengthened or removed any doubts you may have had?"

"It has removed any possible doubt that may have been in my mind."

"Look at the prisoner, Reginald Boyd. Can you say now with certainty that he is the man you saw?"

"I can say he is, with certainty."

"You are positive?"

"Quite positive. The resemblance is so startling that there is only the barest possibility of my being mistaken."

"Now, as to the hour. You looked at your watch?"

"The incident was so unusual that I instinctively took my watch from my pocket. It was within a minute of three o'clock."

"You are aware that another witness, who will probably be called for the defence, states that she was in Catchpole Square at that hour, that she heard the clock of Saint Michael's Church strike three, and that the door of the house of the deceased was not opened?"

"I am aware of it. She is mistaken."

"Did you hear the clock of St. Michael's Church strike?"

"I did not."

"That is all, Dr. Pye."

Mr. Pallaret then rose and commenced his cross-examination, which had been looked forward to with some eagerness.

"Your name is Pye?"

"That is my name."

"Christian name?"

"Charles Stuart."

"Charles Stuart Pye. Have you ever passed under any other name?"

"The question is an insult."

"I do not intend it as such. I am defending two men who are accused of an atrocious crime, one of them the son of the man who was murdered. Have you ever passed under any other name?"

"Never."

"Are you English born?"

"My parents were English. I was born in Switzerland. If I speak with a slight foreign accent it is to be ascribed to the fact that my childhood was passed away from England, and that in my youth I travelled much in foreign countries."

"Your English is very good. You speak more than one language?"

"I speak French, German, and Italian."

"How old are you?"

"Forty-eight, I think. I cannot say with certainty, as my parents did not keep up my birthday."

"In what part of Switzerland were you born?"

"In Geneva, I believe. My parents never informed me, and I did not inquire."

"It was a matter of no interest to you?"

"None whatever."

If you were born in Geneva the record of your birth will be found there?"

"Probably."

"You call yourself Dr. Do you hold a diploma?"

"I do not. I am called Dr. by courtesy."

"Whose courtesy?"

"General courtesy. It has grown into a fashion. I regard it as a compliment."

The Magistrate: "Are these questions relevant, Mr. Pallaret?"

Mr. Pallaret: "Quite relevant, as your worship will see farther on. I shall not ask a question which does not affect the issue." (To the witness.) "I understand that you volunteered to give evidence at the inquest in the interests of justice?"

"Simply that."

"And had no personal interest to serve?"

"None."

"Are you acquainted with a person of the name of Ezra Lynn?

"I am."

"He is a money-lender?"

"Yes. My acquaintance with him results from that."

"I am sorry to hear it. Are you acquainted with a person of the name of Vinsen--calling himself Dr. Vinsen?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen him lately?"

"Not within the last few days."

"We were anxious to have him here to-day, but I do not see him. We issued a subp[oe]na demanding his attendance. Not being able to ascertain his address we left it at your house. You are aware of that?"

"Yes."

"Has he received the summons?

"I am not aware that he has."

"Can you inform us where he lives?"

"I cannot."

"Nor where he is at the present moment?"

"I cannot inform you."

Upon Dr. Pye's countenance there was not a trace of discomposure, and there was not a tremor in his voice; but the experienced lawyer, as skilful a judge of character as the man he was examining, knew that if a look could kill his minutes were numbered. There was one person in court, Mrs. Abel Death, who listened in bewilderment to the answers given by the witness with reference to Dr. Vinsen. This man, who had presented himself to her as Dr. Pye's viceroy, who had given her money, who had poisoned her ears against Reginald Boyd and Dick Remington, was sitting within a few yards of her, and yet Dr. Pye denied all knowledge of his whereabouts. What was the meaning of this falsehood? Looking at Dr. Vinsen she saw that his eyes were wandering around, as though seeking a means of escape. His face was pallid, his lips were quivering, his hands trembled as they wiped the moisture from his forehead. Gracie had hated him from the first, and it was this, perhaps, that had caused her to absent herself from home. The mother's heart was wrung with anguish, with doubt, with despair.

Mr. Pallaret continued his cross-examination.

"Now, about this flashlight of yours, which revealed the face of the man you say you saw. A contrivance or device of your own, I understand?"

"Yes."

"Have you brought it into court?"

"I have not."

"Is it in your house?"

"It is not."

"No person connected with this inquiry has seen it. You refused to show it to Detective Lambert, saying it was under repair. Is it still under repair?"

"Yes."

"Give me the name of the tradesman who is repairing it?"

"I decline to give it. The device is a secret invention, and I will not run the danger of losing the benefit of it."

"The question is one I cannot compel you to answer, so I will not repeat it; but if the men whom I am defending are put on their trial in a higher court we will see that this so-called flashlight is produced. I gather from you that on the night of the 1st of March you were induced to use it by seeing with your naked eye a man standing at the door of Samuel Boyd's house. The night was very dark. How did you know it was a man?"

"Dark as it was I distinguished the figure of a man."

"On that night there was no suspicion that a murder had been committed. What made you regard as suspicious so simple a circumstance as a man coming out of the house?"

"I had never before seen any one in Catchpole Square at that hour of the night."

"Shall we call it a kind of instinct that whispered of a foul deed done?"

"Call it what you please. You are drawing upon your fancy; I am stating facts."

"Very well; we will stick to facts. You saw the figure of a man, and your suspicions were aroused. How long a time elapsed before you had recourse to your flashlight?"

"I used it almost immediately."

"Your process of reasoning was almost as swift as your flashlight. Do you keep your device in the room in which you were standing?"

"Yes."

"How far from the window?"

"Within reach of my hand."

"Before it was ready for its work some little time must have elapsed. How is the light produced?"

"By an arrangement of magnesium wire."

"Which requires to be ignited?"

"Yes."

"By means of a match?"

"Yes."

"It is, I suppose, necessary that the device be opened before you can light the wire?"

"Yes."

"You saw the figure of a man, your suspicions were aroused, you brought forward the flashlight, you opened it, you found the match box, you took from it a match, you struck the match, you applied the flame to the magnesium wire, you threw the light upon the door in Catchpole Square. That is how it was done?"

"Yes."

"To strike a match requires two hands, one to hold the box, the other to hold the match. You admit that?"

"Yes."

"So that, having brought forward your flashlight device, you had to set it down before you could strike the match?"

"Yes."

"And then you had to lift the box again before you could apply the flame of the match to the magnesium wire. Do you expect us to believe that all these operations were executed simultaneously and instantaneously?"

"No, I do not."

"Good. Timing these various processes of thought and action, we may assume that they occupied a couple of minutes?"

"Not so long."

"A minute and a half? I don't think I can accept less than a minute and a half for the accomplishment of the work I have described?"

"Say a minute and a half."

"I accept it. And all this time the man was standing at the door, waiting for you?"

"Again, these are your words, not mine."

"Do you realise how long a minute and a half is to a murderer under these circumstances? It is an eternity. Place yourself in the position of the man, and time it by your watch. How slowly the seconds pass! Between each there is a thrill of agony. I put it to you that it is incredible that a murderer, in fear of momentary detection, eager to make a swift escape from the scene of his horrible crime, standing in a place so lonely and deserted as Catchpole Square, would remain for so long a time at the door in suspense?"

"He must have done so, for I witnessed it."

"I pass to another subject. I am anxious, like yourself, to adhere to fact. Cast your eyes around the court; let them rest upon the seat you vacated to take your place in the witness box. Close to that seat do you see Dr. Vinsen?"

"I do not." Not a muscle in Dr. Pye's face moved as he gave this answer.

"You see the man I am pointing at, the man next to whom you have been seated these last two hours. Is not that man Dr. Vinsen?"

"He is not."

"Who is he, then?"

"His name is Ezra Lynn."

Unable to control herself, Mrs. Death rose and exclaimed,

"It is not true! It is Dr. Vinsen!"

A wave of excitement passed over the court; the spectators craned their necks, exclamations of astonishment escaped their lips, and for a few moments all was confusion. When order was restored, Mr. Pallaret said,--

"I have done with you for the present, Dr. Pye. I must ask your worship not to allow the witness, or any of the witnesses, to leave the court."

The Magistrate: "They will all remain. The officers will see to it."

Apparently unmoved and unruffled, Dr. Pye returned to his seat. Those of the spectators who were in a position to see observed a smile on his lips.

Mr. Pallaret, turning to the magistrate, then said that it was not customary in such cases as the present for the defence to make a long speech in a police court, but he was induced by special circumstances to deviate from the usual custom, and he was influenced also by the accused, whose earnest desire it was that all their proceedings should be made public with as little delay as possible. The only important witness brought forward by the prosecution against Mr. Reginald Boyd was Dr. Pye, and he should be able to prove that this witness was utterly unworthy of credit. Evidence of a startling nature would be presented which would suggest the gravest doubts in connection with him. (At this moment a slight bustle took place in court, caused by the hurried entrance of a messenger bearing a note for Mr. Pallaret. The learned counsel paused to receive and read the note, and then wrote a line in reply, which was handed to the messenger, who immediately departed.)

"I do not disguise from your worship," continued Mr. Pallaret, "that my object is to obtain the immediate acquittal of the accused at your hands, or, in the event of their being committed for trial, to show that the case against them is so flimsy and unreliable, that to refuse bail would be a distinct injustice. Stripped of the defence which I am in a position to make, I admit that the circumstantial evidence would be sufficiently strong to render their detention necessary, but even without the defence it would not be strong enough to prove their guilt. I take the opportunity of emphasising the extreme danger that lies in evidence of this character. One of our greatest writers has said, 'Circumstances may accumulate so strongly even against an innocent man, that, directed, sharpened, and pointed, they may slay him.' Such might have been the issue of the charge brought against the men I am defending, but happily they are in a position to meet it in a conclusive manner, and, I do not hesitate to say, to prove their innocence. Although not quite relevant to the issue affecting themselves, I cannot refrain from saying that in establishing their innocence they will also establish the innocence of an absent man against whom the finger of suspicion has been pointed. I refer to Mr. Abel Death. With respect to one of the accused I shall unfold a story which has in it many of the elements of romance."

Mr. Pallaret then described the part which Dick had played in the Mystery. With breathless interest the spectators listened to the recital, the effect of which was heightened by the eloquence of the narrator.

"Mr. Richard Remington" (proceeded Mr. Pallaret), "convinced of the innocence of his cousin's husband, recognising the dangerous position in which he stood, and with a certain suspicion in his mind, conceived and carried out a plan as novel, as ingenious, and as *bizarre*, as has ever been disclosed in a court of justice. On two nights, when he was in the house of the murdered man, he had observed that a flashlight had been thrown upon the windows from the back room of the house inhabited by Dr. Pye. He resolved to present a problem to that person. As skilful in disguise--I may mention that he had been a short time on the stage--as the villain who personated Samuel Boyd, and robbed Lady Wharton of her jewels in Bournemouth, he dressed himself in a suit of Samuel Boyd's clothes, and, in theatrical parlance, 'made up' his face to resemble that of the murdered man. Thus disguised he stationed himself at the front window of Samuel Boyd's house, and upon more than one occasion experienced the satisfaction of having the flashlight thrown upon him. He put into execution another and a bolder idea, the successful result of which led to his arrest under circumstances which you have heard described by Constable Applebee and Detective Lambert. He was convinced that persons found access to the house by some means and in some way unknown to him. If his suspicions were verified the natural conclusion would be that those persons (I use the plural advisedly) were the murderers. He determined to set watch for them, and to remain hidden in the house for several days and nights. In order to carry this out successfully, and to throw dust into the eyes of the suspected persons, he affixed a notice to the street door, to the effect that he would be absent from the house for some time.

"In the room on the first floor which had been used as an office there is, among other singular articles, the wax figure of a Chinaman, suitably attired. This figure is sitting in a hooded chair, what is called, I believe, a grandmother's chair. Mr. Remington had procured from a theatrical costumier in Covent Garden the mask of a Chinaman's face and a costume similar to that which clothed the wax figure. His design was, when he heard sounds of any person or persons moving in any part of the house, to place the wax figure in a cupboard in the office, and take its place. It was a bold and hazardous design, fraught with danger to himself, but, determined if possible to bring the miscreants to justice, he allowed no considerations for his personal safety to stand in his way. He entered the house on the Thursday night of last week, and did not leave it until the Monday night of this week. Animated by his high resolve, stern and fixed in his purpose, behold him in that lonely house, on the watch! Thursday and Friday nights passed, and nothing occurred. Neither was he disturbed on the nights of Saturday and Sunday. He remained there in

absolute darkness, confident that the time would come.

"And here let me offer my tribute of praise and admiration for the courage, the patience, I may say the heroism he displayed during this long vigil, this arduous and almost sleepless watch, undertaken out of affection for the family to which he is related, and to prove the innocence of a man falsely accused of a horrible crime.

"On Monday night, or rather at about two o'clock on Tuesday morning, his patience was rewarded. He heard sounds in the passage below which, faint as they were, denoted that he was not now alone in the house. He had already assumed his disguise and removed the wax figure of the Chinaman from the chair. All he had to do was to take its place. The back of the hooded chair being towards the door he could not see who entered when it was softly opened. Nor could he distinguish the voices of the men, for they spoke in whispers. They moved about the room in their stocking feet, and from the few words that reached his ears he gathered that they had come once more to search for the jewels which Lady Wharton had given Mr. Samuel Boyd on the night of her visit to him. Now, I call your attention to the last words of the document written by the unfortunate man on that fatal night--'Notation 2647.' Mr. Remington did not dare to turn his head to watch the movements of the men as they moved about the room. Disappointed in their search one of the men, in his passion, shook the hooded chair so violently that the cane in the hand of the supposed wax figure--which Mr. Remington also held, in order to completely carry out the deception--slipped from his grasp to the ground. The man who picked it up pressed, by accident, one of the raised letters in the knob of the cane. This pressure caused the figure 2 to spring up. In a state of intense excitement the man drew his companion's attention to the circumstance, and made a reference to the notation, thus proving that he was familiar with it. He had pressed the letter B, the second in the alphabet, and it had released the figure 2. He pressed the sixth letter, F, and the figure 6 was released, the fourth letter, D, and the figure 4 was released, and the seventh letter, G, releasing the figure 7, the notation was complete, 2647. Mr. Remington, his sense of hearing preternaturally sharpened, heard the whispered comments of the men as figure after figure was released, and heard the click of the silver knob as it sprang up and revealed to the delighted eyes of the conspirators the jewels which had been concealed in the hollow of the cane. Thanks to Mr. Remington's prompt action their delight was short-lived. You will recollect that at this hour on Monday night a storm was raging, and that the lightning was very vivid. What followed was the work of a moment. Mr. Remington started to his feet, and as he did so a flash of lightning illumined the scene. One of the conspirators held in his hand a lighted candle, the other the cane containing the treasure. He seized the cane, and dashed the lighted candle to the ground, thereby plunging the room in darkness, all the blacker because of the lightning flash that had passed through it, and flew into the passage and out of the house, to fall into the hands of Constable Applebee. It is unfortunate that in that brief moment of rapid and resolute action he did not see the faces of the conspirators, but he has his suspicions who they were, and has communicated them to me. Before these proceedings are ended we may see those suspicions verified. I have now related the true story of Mr. Remington's adventures, with all its strange and remarkable episodes, and with the trite remark that truth is stranger than fiction I will call the witnesses for the defence."

The first witness was the costumier in Covent Garden, who testified to Dick's purchase of the Chinese mask and costume. He thought they were for the stage. Such purchases were made of him every day.

The next witness was Mrs. Abel Death, who, despite her distress, gave her evidence of the disappearance of her husband and her search for him in a fairly clear manner. When she was questioned as to the disappearance of her daughter Gracie, the counsel for the prosecution intervened, and contended that these private domestic matters had nothing to do with the case. Mr. Pallaret, answering that before he was done he would show that they had a direct bearing upon it, was allowed to proceed.

"Now, Mrs. Death, on the day on which you made your application in this Court respecting your husband's disappearance you were visited by a person who introduced himself as a doctor. What name did he give?"

"Dr. Vinsen, sir."

"He spoke of Dr. Pye as his intimate friend?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you see Dr. Vinsen in Court at the present moment?"

"Yes, sir, I see him."

Mr. Pallaret: "Let the man seated next to Dr. Pye stand up."

With evident reluctance, and vainly endeavouring to conceal his agitation, Dr. Vinsen stood up.

"Is that Dr. Vinsen?"

"Yes, sir, that is the gentleman."

"But Dr. Pye, his intimate friend, declares he is not Dr. Vinsen?"

"I can't help that, sir. He *is* Dr. Vinsen."

"You swear it?"

"I swear it, sir."

"Is there the slightest doubt in your mind?"

"Not the slightest, sir."

"Can you give me any reason why Dr. Pye, Dr. Vinsen's intimate friend, should say he had not seen him for some days past?"

"No, sir, I can't make it out."

"In his visits to you did you have any conversation about the murder?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he make any reference to Mr. Reginald Boyd and Mr. Richard Remington in connection with it?"

"Yes, sir. It was his opinion, he said, that Mr. Reginald Boyd did it, and that Mr. Remington was mixed up with it, and that, to keep off suspicion from themselves, they were trying to throw it on my poor husband."

"Did you believe it?"

"I didn't know what to believe, sir, I've been that distracted."

"I sincerely pity you; but do not lose heart. Did your daughter Gracie believe it----but stop, I must put it another way. Did your daughter Gracie say anything to you on the subject?"

"Yes, sir. She said she didn't believe it. The poor child didn't like Dr. Vinsen."

"That is all, Mrs. Death."

No questions being asked by the counsel for the prosecution, Mrs. Death's place was taken by Mr. Rawdon, whose face was very white when he stepped into the box.

"You were one of the jury at the inquest held upon the body of Mr. Samuel Boyd?"

"I was."

"You are acquainted with Mr. Ezra Lynn?"

"I have had business dealings with him."

"Borrowed money of him?"

"Yes."

"I will trouble Mr. Ezra Lynn, or Dr. Vinsen, to stand up again. Thank you. Is that Mr. Ezra Lynn?"

"Yes."

"Not Dr. Vinsen?"

"I don't know Dr. Vinsen."

"The inquest extended over a period of eleven days. Now, I ask you whether, during those eleven days, you had frequent communication with Mr. Ezra Lynn?"

"I saw him once or twice."

"Be careful. Did you not see him six or seven times?"

"Probably."

"You owe him a large sum of money?"

"I owe him money."

"He holds an execution over all your goods and furniture which he can put into execution at any moment? No evasions, sir!"

"Yes."

"On those six or seven occasions on which you saw Mr. Lynn while the inquest was in progress what was the subject of conversation between you?"

"The money I owe him."

"Nothing else? Not the murder?"

"It was mentioned. Everybody was talking of it."

"Now, there is no obligation upon you to answer the question I am about to put, but if you reply I warn you to bear in mind that you are upon your oath. In the course of your conversations with the man who could sell you up at a moment's notice, did he express a wish that a particular verdict should be returned, and did he supply you with any information concerning Mr. Reginald Boyd to guide you in furthering that wish? You are silent. Do you decline to answer?"

"Yes, I do. It has nothing to do with the case. Everybody has an opinion about the murder."

"I am not asking you about his opinion, but about his wish, and about certain information with which he supplied you. You are still silent. We shall know what construction to place upon your refusal to give a plain answer to a plain question. You can return to your seat, Mr. Rawdon, unless counsel for the prosecution desires to cross-examine you."

Mr. Marlow: "I have no questions to ask the witness; and I may add that I fail to see the drift of several of the questions my learned friend has put to the witnesses."

Mr. Pallaret: "When I have finished it will be seen that there is not a question I have put which is not justified. In all my experience I have never known so foul a conspiracy as that which I hope to lay bare. Call Joseph Pitou."

The foreign gentleman with the curled moustache who had been stationed behind Dr. Pye left his seat, and made his way to the witness box, and for the first time Dr. Pye had a full view of his swarthy face. They gazed steadily at each other, and for so long a time that it seemed to be a challenge which should drop his eyes first. This strange and steadfast gaze drew upon the two actors the attention of every person in Court. At length, with a gesture expressive of satisfaction, Joseph Pitou turned to Mr. Pallaret, who had watched the scene so earnestly that it almost appeared as if he were also playing a part in it.

CHAPTER LXIV.

A STARTLING DENOUEMENT.

"What is your name and calling?"

"I am of the Criminal Investigation Department in Paris. Joseph Pitou, a name well known."

"We are familiar with it in England. You have come to London on special business?"

"In association with my esteemed *confrère*, Monsieur Lambert, I have come to make the arrest of a notorious criminal."

"You speak excellent English?"

"You are pleased to say so. It is to me as my mother tongue; as is also Italian, German, and various dialects of the Turkish and Polish languages."

"What is the name of the notorious criminal you have come to arrest?"

"Louis Lorenz."

"Do you hope to be able to lay hands on him?"

"I can lay this hand on him at any moment."

"What is the nature of his crime?"

"Permit me. Of his many crimes. Many robberies, attended with extreme brutality. And worse than robberies. One positive murder in Gallicia; another probable murder in Vienna; another in St. Petersburg."

"Up to this day he has escaped?"

"Yes, he has escaped, always escaped. Condemned to the galleys in Vienna; a week afterwards, flown. Sent to Siberia in Russia; disappeared on the road. Sentenced to death in Gallicia; his cell empty the day after he was put into it."

"A man of rare talent?"

"Of immense talent. His plans laid with the brain of a master; money ready for bribes; confederates ready to obey orders. Nothing has been too difficult for him to accomplish."

"What was the principal motive for his crimes? Money?"

"It is curious. Money sometimes, but never money alone. In every case his victim was possessed of some rare treasures of art which Lorenz coveted, and would have trodden through blood to obtain. As it happens, he trod through much blood. In this way many valuable antiques have disappeared. I have a record of them. Search has been made for them throughout the wide world, and they are still undiscovered. For years I have been on the track of them. A clue fell into my hands, and I followed it up. I hold a warrant for the man's arrest, and soon justice will be satisfied."

"Louis Lorenz can be no common criminal?"

"My faith, no! Louis Lorenz is a prince, an emperor of criminals. I have hunted for him in every city in Europe and America, and for the art treasures he has stolen. Not one has seen the light; not one has been offered to dealers or connoisseurs. He has been known here, and known there, as a man who dabbled in science. It has been said he is in search of the Philosopher's Stone, of the elixir of life. He has imposed even upon *savants*, who have been seduced into believing in the miracles he declared he would one day accomplish."

"But if he presented himself in his own proper person how is it that he has not been caught, that he is still free?"

"Never did he present himself in his own proper person. Always so disguised that it was impossible to identify him. He is an actor of the first class, a match for the Evil One himself. But for the powers of darkness man is sometimes a match."

"'Be sure thy sin will find thee out?'"

"Ah, monsieur, it is true."

"You say it would be impossible to identify him with his clothes on. Would it be impossible to identify him with his clothes off?"

"'Ah, no, that is a different matter. He is branded on the back, on the breast."

Mr. Marlow: "Is not my learned friend wandering from the case we are investigating--the murder of Samuel Boyd of Catchpole Square?"

Mr. Pallaret: "No. Be patient, and you will understand; I will not keep you long in suspense." (To the witness.) "You say you can lay hands on Louis Lorenz at any moment. At this moment?"

"At this moment."

"Here in this court?"

"Here in this court."

"Then he must be in attendance?

"He is in attendance."

"Point him out."

The witness extended his arm dramatically, and pointed to Dr. Pye.

"That is the man!"

A scene of indescribable excitement ensued. Exclamations of astonishment were heard on all sides, and everyone, with the exception of the French detective, the counsel for the defence, and Dr. Pye, was in commotion. They remained unmoved, the two former silent and watchful, the latter exhibiting not the least trace of agitation. In the midst of this excited scene loud exclamations were heard outside the court, where the people appeared to have caught the contagion, and presently the policemen near the door leading to the public thoroughfare were seen to be busily forcing a passage for the entrance of two persons, one a little girl, carried in the arms of detective Lambert, the other a man, white and emaciated, reclining in the arms of two constables. As they came into view a shriek from Mrs. Death resounded through the Court.

"Abel! Abel!" she screamed, and her frenzied cry was followed by an interval of dead silence.

Abel Death raised his head, and looked at his wife with a wan, affectionate smile; and Gracie, with a strange glitter in her large black eyes, cried in a hoarse voice,

"It's all right, mother! It's all right, Dick! I said I'd find father, didn't I?"

Mr. Pallaret: "Let these witnesses be brought forward to this table, where they will have more breathing space. I must ask your worship to excuse me while I speak privately to them."

Abel Death, who was very weak, was accommodated with a seat at the table, where he reclined, with a cushion at his back; Gracie, holding his hand, sat by his side; and between them and Mr. Pallaret and Lambert, a whispered conference was held, lasting several minutes. The conference over, Mr. Pallaret addressed the magistrate:

"The proceedings in this case have been somewhat irregular, but not less irregular than I anticipated when I opened the defence. My object, as I informed your worship, was to obtain, not an adjournment of the case, but the immediate acquittal of the accused. I made the observation that the only evidence against Mr. Reginald Boyd was that given by the person who calls himself Dr. Pye, and it will not be disputed that his evidence is entirely discredited. Nay, I will go farther and say that it was fabricated for the purpose of weaving so strong a case of circumstantial evidence against two innocent men as to practically ensure their conviction of a crime which they did not commit. With respect to Mr. Richard Remington, you have heard the strange but true story of the part he has played in this mystery. When he was caught last Monday night in Catchpole Square his appeals to his captors to hurry into the house for the purpose of arresting the two men who were searching for treasure there while, disguised to resemble the wax figure of the Chinaman, he was seated in its chair, was doubtless regarded by many in this court as a mere invention; but I shall now be able to prove that it was no invention, and at the same time to establish the truth of the story I have related to you. The proof will be forthcoming in the evidence of this brave little girl, Gracie Death, who has played a part in this strange mystery as adventurous and romantic as that of Richard Remington himself. After she has given her evidence I shall call her father, Mr. Abel Death, if he is strong enough, to relate what he knows. He has, as it were, risen from the grave, and thanks to his brave little daughter, is enabled to make his appearance here to-day. I shudder to think what might have been his fate had the vile conspiracy I am unmasking been allowed to proceed, and had the conspirators been allowed to leave the court. In a charge so serious, and in circumstances so strange and unprecedented, I am confident that your worship and my learned friend for the prosecution will allow me every latitude; and in furtherance of this appeal I ask to be permitted to suspend the examination of Monsieur Joseph Pitou, for the purpose of examining the two new witnesses who are manifestly unfit to remain for a long time in the air of this Court."

Mr. Marlow: "I have no objection to offer."

"I thank my learned friend. Let Gracie Death go into the witness box."

But before this could be done Gracie was seized with a fit of coughing which terribly shook her slight frame. There were few among the spectators that did not pity the child, who made brave efforts to check the cough, and who, when it was over, looked lovingly at her mother, and said,

"It's all right, mother, don't you worry about it; only I've had to hold it back so long!"

Then, all eyes upon her, she was assisted into the witness box, and a stool placed for her to stand upon, Detective Lambert stationing himself by her side to render her assistance if she needed it. When the Bible was handed to her the magistrate asked if she understood the nature of an oath; she replied that she was to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and that she didn't mean to tell anything else. This being deemed satisfactory she was sworn, and her examination proceeded with.

"What is your name?"

"Gracie Death."

"How old are you?"

"I shall be thirteen soon, sha'n't I, mother?"

"You left your home last Tuesday morning?"

"Yes, sir, I did, and I was sorry for mother because I knew she'd worry. But I had to."

"Why?"

"Because of Dick."

The Magistrate: "Who is Dick?"

"Dick Remington, my lordship."

The magistrate was not the only one who smiled at the form of this reply.

"What had Dick to do with your leaving your home? Tell us as much as you can?"

"Well, sir, Dick and me had gone partners to find father, and to find out who murdered Samuel Boyd. I was sure father didn't do it, though a lot of people was wicked enough to say so, and Dick was sure Mr. Reginald didn't do it, and I believed what Dick believed, so I was sure, too. Dick was the captain of the ship, and I was first mate. He gave me things to do, and I did 'em as well as I could. I found out that Dr. Vinsen wasn't Dr. Vinsen at all, but Ezra Lynn, a money-lender. I always knew he was no good--yes, I did, mother! And I caught the sham doctor talking to Mr. Rawdon, the ironmonger, the man that was on the jury, and I saw him go into his shop. Well, when I saw the notice posted up in Catchpole Square that Dick had gone away, I couldn't make it out, though I knew that Dick was doing the right thing--he always does, you know--but I didn't like to be left out of it. I went to Mrs. Inspector Robson, who's been I can't tell you how kind to me--and so has Mr. Inspector Robson and that poor young lady there--but she couldn't say where Dick was, and I was that worried you'd hardly believe. Wait a bit, please--there's that cough of mine coming back again." After a silence of a minute or so, except for the hollow, rasping sounds she made, she said, with an odd kind of pathetic resignation, "It's taking it out of me now because I wouldn't let it have its way when it wanted to. I didn't dare, you know. Well, I worried and worried, and last Monday night I had my dream again."

"What dream?"

"About father. I've had it I don't know how many times, and every time father's come crying out to me to save him and to look for him in Catchpole Square. When I woke up on Tuesday morning I kept on thinking and thinking about it, and then I heard that Dick was taken up for the murder, and I had him to save as well as father. He'd been caught coming out of the house, where he'd been watching since Friday, so I says to myself, 'What Dick can do I can do,' and I makes up my mind to watch as he'd done, on the chance of catching the murderers. Dick said they'd been there, you know, and if they come once they might come again, all the more now that Dick was out of the way. That's where I've been from Tuesday night up till now."

"How did you get into the house?"

"Didn't Dick tell you? It's through the next house, where you can push open the door at the bottom of the steps. Then you go down to the cellar, and there's some bricks in the wall that you can take out and put back again. That's the way you get into the cellar of Samuel Boyd's house. There's a trap door in the ceiling that you can reach by standing on a broken chair; you push it up and scramble through, and there you are in Samuel Boyd's kitchen. I showed it to Dick, and perhaps he made use of it when he didn't want anybody to know how he got in and out of Mr. Boyd's house. And you can put everything back that artful that it'd take a clever one to find it out. So there I was in the house, with a loaf of bread that I bought with some money Dick give me. The water was on, and with that and the bread there was no fear of my starving for a little while. Nobody come on Tuesday night, and I kept myself snug. And nobody come on Wednesday. But I wouldn't give it up as a bad job, and I kept on watching and listening all day yesterday. Well, I don't know how late in the night it was, but I think it must have been two or three in the morning, when I heard somebody talking to somebody else in the downstairs passage. They talked very soft, but I heard 'em, and then they crept upstairs, and I slips into my hiding place, and watches through a chink. For I says to myself, 'If they come anywhere they'll come into the office.'"

"Where was your hiding place?"

"You'd never guess. There's a large pianner in the office where father worked, and would you believe it, there's nothing inside it? It's hollow, and it stands against the wall of another little room at the side. Oh, it's artful, I can tell you! You go into that little room, and you push a sliding panel in the wall just at the back of the pianner, and you creep in. Then you push the sliding panel back, and there you are, shut up in a box like. And if there's a light in the office you can peep through a chink, and see all that's going on. I hadn't long to wait; the trouble was that my cough was tickling my throat, but I kept it down, though it almost choked me. If I hadn't you wouldn't have seen me here. The door opens, and two men come in, without a light. 'What's the good of that?' I thinks. But presently they strike a match and light a candle, and they keep it close to the ground. I knew why they did that--so that the light couldn't be seen through the window outside in the Square. What with their backs being to me I couldn't catch sight of their faces, but I kept my eye glued to the chink, waiting for my chance. And all at once I saw them."

"Did you know them?"

"One of 'em I did, but not the other. I guessed, though."

"We will make sure. Look around the court, and tell me whether you see the other man?"

Gracie's sharp eyes had lighted on Dr. Vinsen the moment she was in the witness-box, and they kindled when they rested on Dr. Pye, but with rare self-control she had restrained herself from crying out, the dramatic instinct within her assuring her that the right moment would come for denouncing him. Being now directed, it was her turn to ask a question.

Gracie: "Who is that next Dr. Vinsen?"

Mr. Pallaret, hesitating in his reply, some person called out, "It is Dr. Pye," whereupon an

officer cried, "Order in the court!" But, irregular as was this proceeding, neither the counsel for the prosecution nor the magistrate intervened.

Gracie: "That is the other man."

Mr. Pallaret: "Take time. Look again. Be absolutely certain."

Gracie: "I am. The other man in Dr. Pye."

Mr. Pallaret: "Still you may be mistaken?"

Gracie: "I can't be. I'd pick him out of a thousand. There ain't another man in the world like him."

Mr. Pallaret: "Well, you saw them. What happened next?"

Gracie: "They searched about the room a good deal, and I think they were disappointed at not finding something. After that they began to talk louder. Dr. Vinsen--I wouldn't call him that, because it ain't his proper name, but it comes easier--he said it was madness to come into the house, where they were in danger of being caught any minute. He looked very frightened: His face was as white as chalk. Dr. Pye called him a coward. There's a lot of wine in the office--father used to tell of it--and Dr. Pye took up a bottle, and opened it with a corkscrew. Then he went to the bedroom, and brought out a glass, and poured the wine into it. Dr. Vinsen wouldn't drink, and Dr. Pye laughed and said something about eating and drinking to-day and dying to-morrow. 'Look,' he said, 'it was just on this very spot you squeezed the last breath out of Samuel Boyd.' 'It's a lie!' Dr. Vinsen cried, 'it was you that did it.' 'You are a liar,' Dr. Pye said. 'Your knee was on his chest, and your hands at his throat.' Then they began to quarrel, Dr. Vinsen speaking loud and Dr. Pye soft, and laughing and drinking all the time. 'You've been the ruin of me,' Dr. Vinsen said. 'If I escape with my life I shall think myself lucky.' 'To be hanged by the neck till you're dead,' said Dr. Pye, laughing again, 'and the Lord have mercy on your soul. You blubbering fool!' I couldn't catch everything they said. 'What are we to do if things don't turn out well to-morrow?' Dr. Vinsen said. 'I am prepared,' Dr. Pye said. 'Perhaps when I get home I'll set fire to the house, and vanish in the smoke. Only I'd like to have a settling first with Mr. Dick Remington.' Take care of yourself, Dick, he looked like a devil! Soon afterwards I heard father's name--I don't know which one spoke it--and my heart beat so I was afraid they'd hear it. In a little while they said it was no use stopping any longer, and I heard them leaving the room."

Mr. Pallaret: "Stop a moment or two, and get your breath."

Gracie: "Let me go on, please--I'm all right. How's poor father? Is he feeling any better?"

Mr. Pallaret: "Yes. With your permission, your worship."

A kind person had sent out for some hot coffee, a cup of which was given to Gracie, and another to Abel Death. Mrs. Death rose, and implored the magistrate to allow her to stand in the witness box with her child, and, permission being given, a score of willing hands were stretched forward to assist her. This was the commencement of an affecting scene. She had to pass her husband, and she stooped and kissed him, sobbing,

"Oh, Abel, my dear, dear Abel!"

No one in the court spoke, and presently he whispered,

"Go to Gracie. She has saved my life!"

In the witness box her maternal feelings were not to be restrained; she clasped Gracie in her arms, and wept over her, and kissed her again and again.

"You don't mind my running away, do you, mother?" asked Gracie, in a low tone. "If I hadn't, father might never have been found."

"My darling, my darling!" sobbed Mrs. Death. "It was I who was wrong--you were right all through."

"Never mind that now, mother," Gracie said. "Let me go on, or the gentlemen will be angry. Oh, but I am glad to be back!"

Many strange scenes have been witnessed in the Bishop Street Police Court, but none so strange and moving as this. Not one of the officials made any effort to stop its progress. The magistrate made a pretence of being busy with his papers; eyes were dimmed by tears; and even when Lady Wharton, in her hearty voice, said, "I should like to do something for that little heroine," the ushers forgot to cry, "Silence in the court!"

Gracie (turning to Mr. Pallaret, one hand hanging down in her mother's tender clasp): "May I go on, now, sir?"

Mr. Pallaret: "Yes, child. Your last words were, 'I heard them leaving the room.'"

Gracie: "I remember, sir. After they were gone I couldn't stay where I was, could I? I crept out of the pianner as quiet as a mouse, and through the door of the little room into the passage. They were downstairs by that time, and lucky for me had blown out the candle; so down I slipped after them. First I thought they were going out by the street door, and I hoped a policeman would be in the Square to catch 'em; but they didn't go that way; they went down to the kitchen. Then I thought they knew of the trap door, and how to get in the cellar of the next house. But I was wrong again. I heard Dr. Pye say, 'Give me the matches,' and a minute afterwards, 'You clumsy fool--you've spilt 'em!' I peeped through the keyhole of the kitchen door, and there they were picking up the matches. I guessed that, you know, because everything was dark, but when they began striking the matches I saw what they'd been at. There's a large dresser in the kitchen, and a shelf on the floor where people put saucepans and things; and if you'll believe it, at the back of this shelf there's a sliding panel in the wall, just the same as there is in the pianner upstairs. I saw the panel move, and saw Dr. Pye and Dr. Vinsen creep through the hole. Then the panel was shut, and everything was dark. I didn't lose a minute. I made up my mind to see where that hole led to if I died for it, so I went into the kitchen and crept under the dresser as they'd done, but it was so dark that I might have been there till now if they hadn't left some matches behind them on the floor. Then I soon got the panel to work. It opened on a flight of rickety stairs. Down I went, without caring what happened to me. I thought there might be a well of water at the bottom of the stairs, but there wasn't. It was solid ground, and I was in a sort of a tunnel that runs right under Catchpole Square from Mr. Boyd's house to Dr. Pye's house. When I got to the end of the tunnel I had only two matches left, but I made them do. There was another sliding panel in the wall, and I pushed that aside, and there I was in Dr. Pye's house, but without a light. I didn't know which way to turn, but I felt about with my hands, and my blood run cold when they touched a face, and I only kept from screaming out loud by the fear that if I did I should be murdered. At first I thought it was a dead face, but I remembered what I'd read, that if it was dead it would be stone cold. I felt again, and it was warm. Then I heard a voice say, 'Whose hand is that?' And, oh, sir, though he spoke almost in a whisper, I knew I had found my father. 'Father!' I said, and I put my face close to his. 'My God!' he answered. 'It's little Gracie!'"

Up to this point Gracie had told her thrilling story with extraordinary composure, and every one who heard it wondered at the lack of passion in her voice and gesture. But now she broke down. Her lips trembled, her eyes wandered around, and with a long shuddering sigh she sank fainting in her mother's arms. Many of the spectators gave utterance to cries of sympathy, and ready assistance was tendered by the officials, while a hurried consultation took place between the counsel for the defence and the prosecution, at the end of which Mr. Pallaret addressed the court:

"Your worship will perceive that the witness is not in a fit condition to conclude the story which must have inspired every person here with pity and horror--except, I am constrained to add, those who will soon be called upon to answer for their misdeeds. No words of mine can heighten the effect of a recital which has stirred every sympathetic heart. It is to me a marvel how this little heroine, as she has been properly called, could have sustained her courage through three long sleepless days and nights, with only cold water to drink, and a small loaf of bread to eat. The indomitable spirit which sustained her is indeed remarkable, and I venture to say that a tale more thrilling has never been heard in a court of justice, and that the heroism displayed by this devoted child is unparalleled in the annals of noble deeds. Neither is Mr. Abel Death in a fit condition to give evidence. Your worship will doubtless agree with me that what we have heard has established the innocence of Mr. Reginald Boyd and Mr. Richard Remington, and that we have sufficiently laid bare the particulars of one of the vilest conspiracies on record. But before asking for the discharge of these gentlemen, and in view of the proceedings to be taken against Dr. Pye, alias Louis Lorenz, and his confederate, Ezra Lynn, alias Dr. Vinsen, for whose arrest on the charge of murdering Mr. Samuel Boyd I shall apply for warrants, I propose, with the concurrence of my learned friend, the counsel for the crown, to call Detective Lambert, who will give information of the discoveries he has made in the house of Dr. Pye, and will narrate the circumstances under which he has been enabled to bring Gracie Death into court."

The Magistrate: "Let it be so. Detective Lambert can go into the witness box. In the meantime let Mr. and Mrs. Death and their child be taken into my room, and every attention paid to them."

When these three persons were conveyed to the small room at the rear of the courthouse, accompanied by a doctor who happened to be among the spectators, Lambert stepped into the witness box, and was sworn.

Mr. Pallaret: "We wish to hear from you an account of your proceedings this morning in connection with this case."

Detective Lambert: "From information received shortly after the case was opened I proceeded to the house of Dr. Pye in Shore Street, which has been for some time under the observation of the police. The man stationed there took me to Catchpole Square, where I saw Gracie Death, who told me hurriedly what she had just given in evidence. From the night of Friday, the 1st of March, when Mr. Abel Death went to Mr. Samuel Boyd's house to beg to be taken back into his service, he has been imprisoned in the cellar of Dr. Pye's house. Upon leaving his home to make his appeal he wandered about the streets for some time, and it was not until midnight that he went into Catchpole Square. An untimely hour, but he was in a distracted state, and was scarcely accountable for his actions. He informed me that when he knocked at the door of Mr. Samuel Boyd's house he was answered in a voice which he believed to be his late employer's; that the

door was suddenly opened, and he was dragged into the passage; that he saw the faces of two men whom he can identify; that one of the men struck him so violent a blow that he fell to the ground in a state of insensibility; that when he recovered he found himself in the cellar in which he was discovered by his little daughter; that he was tied to a bench fixed to the ground, and his arms fastened behind him, so that he could not release himself; that from time to time Dr. Pye visited him, and endeavoured to extract information as to where Mr. Samuel Boyd had concealed the jewels deposited with him by Lady Wharton, and as to other hiding places his late employer had for concealing treasure; that as he could not give the desired information he was threatened with death; that no person visited him except Dr. Pye; that insufficient food was given him; that he was regularly drugged into unconsciousness, and had passed nearly the whole of the time in a state of stupor; and that he was so weak and enfeebled by this treatment and from the effects of the violent blow he had received, that he could scarcely raise his voice. I now take up the story from the point at which Gracie Death left it.

"She remained with her father all night, being afraid to leave him because Dr. Pye, when he passed through the cellar shortly before she entered it, had threatened to come back and force him to take something which would send him into a sleep from which he would never wake. In daytime very little light can penetrate the cellar, and by this dim light Gracie Death saw the door which led to the upper parts of the house. She tried it, and found it was locked from the outside. She knew that Dr. Pye had to attend the police court to-day to give evidence in this case, and she thought it best to wait till he was gone, and then to get back to the house in Catchpole Square through the tunnel, and go for assistance to release her father. He was so securely tied, and the ropes that bound him were so thick, that she could not undo them, and there was nothing in the cellar with which she could cut them. No food was brought to Mr. Death this morning, which perhaps was fortunate, as it would have led to the discovery of Gracie. The little girl had to judge the time at which Dr. Pye was due in this court, and it happens that she did so very accurately, for the detective who was watching Dr. Pye's house informed me that it was a little after eleven o'clock when he saw her running up and down Shore Street in search of a policeman. He went up to her and told her who he was, and having heard her strange story, first sent me a note which was delivered to me in court shortly after I had given my evidence, and then endeavoured to obtain admission into Dr. Pye's house. To all appearance it was empty, for no one answered his knocks at the door, and matters were at a standstill until my arrival. As we could not break open the front door I obtained a ladder and set it against the back window that looks out on Catchpole Square, the window through which Dr. Pye said he threw the flashlight. There was a shutter to the window which I forced open; Gracie had followed me up the ladder, and I assisted her into the room, in which I observed two new travelling trunks. I did not stop to examine them, but ran down to the street door, and admitted two constables I had sent for. I may state here that there were no servants in the house. Then we hastened to the cellar, the door of which we forced, and found Mr. Abel Death, as his daughter has described. When we got him into one of the better rooms, and took the ropes off him, he was so weak that it was impossible to bring him to the court, and I despatched a line to the counsel for the defence giving him certain information, and saying I hoped to be in attendance with the two new witnesses in the course of an hour or two. While restoratives were being given to Mr. Death I searched the house, and found a mass of account books and documents which had belonged to Mr. Samuel Boyd. I found also some articles of clothing which I believe will be found to have been worn by him. There was one complete suit of gray, and an overcoat with a fur collar. Lady Wharton will perhaps be able to say whether the man who visited her in Bournemouth wore a suit of that colour and a coat of that description."

Lady Wharton (from the body of the court): "He did." Detective Lambert: "One of the trunks was packed and locked, and it appeared to me that preparations had been made for flight. The other trunk was only partly packed, and was not locked. This I opened and searched. At the top, in receptacles which must have been made expressly for them, were a number of works of art in bronze, ivory, and porcelain, which I should judge were very valuable. At the bottom of the trunk was a packet which I unfastened. It contained deeds and acceptances of various kinds, some signed by Lord Wharton and Lord Fairfax, also some jewels answering to the description of those which were obtained from Lady Wharton by fraud at Bournemouth. By the time I had made this cursory examination Mr. Death was sufficiently recovered to be brought to the court with his daughter Gracie. I left two constables in charge of the house, and hastened here at once." Mr. Pallaret (to the magistrates): "Upon the evidence presented to you I now apply for the discharge of Mr. Reginald Boyd and Mr. Richard Remington."

The Magistrate: "Has the counsel for the Crown anything to say?"

Mr. Marlow: "I offer no opposition. There were circumstances of grave suspicion against the accused which warranted their arrest, but the light thrown upon the case appears to leave no doubt of their innocence."

Mr. Pallaret: "I thank my learned friend."

The Magistrate: "The accused are discharged."

Florence and Aunt Rob rose from their seats in joyful agitation, the tears streaming from their eyes, and their arms stretched forth to embrace the young men, whose progress was impeded by the throng of sympathising spectators eager to shake hands with them. In the midst of the confusion the piercing voice of the French detective, Joseph Pitou, was heard, calling for a

doctor. A sudden hush fell upon the Court, and all eyes were turned upon the detective, who had resumed his place behind Dr. Pye. Upon leaving the witness box Detective Lambert had stepped to the side of Dr. Vinsen, and had laid his hand upon the miscreant's arm. Detected, and in the power of the law, the wretch now stood in an attitude of abject fear.

One of the spectators recalled that while Detective Lambert was giving his evidence he noticed that Dr. Pye gave a sudden start, and that a moment or two afterwards he shuddered and drooped his head. He ascribed this to the agitation caused by the revelations that were being made.

"A doctor--a doctor!" screamed Joseph Pitou.

The physician who had been attending Abel Death and Gracie pushed his way with difficulty to the French detective, and raised Dr. Pye's head. There was a faint smile on his lips, expressive both of triumph and contempt.

"Well? Well?" cried Joseph Pitou to the doctor.

The physician unclasped the silent man's fingers, and took from his hand a small bronze instrument in the shape of a ball. A pressure on one end of this ball released three needles, still slightly damp with the liquid which had flowed to the points. With a grave look the physician smelt the liquid, and, with his hand upraised for silence, placed his ear to the heart of the man. An examination of his wrist showed several minute punctures, caused by the needles. In this way the deadly poison had been injected into his veins.

"Well, well?" cried Joseph Pitou again.

"He is dead," the physician replied.

* * * * *

Despite this tragic incident there was a scene of unparallelled enthusiasm when the principal actors in the day's proceedings were leaving the Court. The news had spread with the rapidity of lightning, and crowds of people flocked to the spot; it was with difficulty the police kept the approaches from being congested. As regards Gracie the enthusiasm assumed the proportions of an ovation. Cheers were raised for her, men and women stood on tiptoe to obtain a glimpse of her. Lady Wharton stooped and kissed her, and pressed a bank note into her hand. Gracie lifted her eyes gratefully, and gave the note to her mother. Aunt Rob and Florence, the happy tears still in their eyes, with Uncle Rob and Reginald and Dick, fluttered about her.

"Will you come home with us, Gracie?" asked Aunt Rob, with a tender caress. "And you, Mr. and Mrs. Death?"

"No, thank you, ma'am," said Mrs. Death. "We must go to our little ones."

"They haven't seen father for ever so long, ma'am," added Gracie. "Did they ask for me, mother?"

"Yes, my darling, every day, over and over again. How glad they'll be! How happy and grateful I am!"

"I will take you home in my carriage," said Lady Wharton, and then energetically to her brother, "Fairfax, what *do* you think of her?"

"Little brick," said Lord Fairfax.

Lady Wharton turned to the men and women who were pressing round them. "Do keep off, good people, and let the child have air. You'll be the death of her with your kindness."

"Dick!" said Gracie, putting her hand in his.

"God bless you, Gracie!" he said, kissing her.

"You'll come and see us, Dick."

"I am coming to-night, Gracie."

With her arms round his neck he carried her to the carriage.

A beautiful light shone in her eyes.

CHAPTER LXV.

FROM "THE LITTLE BUSY BEE."

"The sensational incidents in the Bishop Street Police Court to-day, where two innocent men were charged with the murder of Samuel Boyd of Catchpole Square, were in keeping with the startling developments of this monstrous crime which we have recorded from day to day. A full report of the proceedings appears in our columns, and we challenge the masters of sensational fiction to produce a story so remarkable and extraordinary. Writing at high pressure, we have neither the time nor the space for a careful consideration of all the features of this Mystery-murder--no longer a mystery, thanks to the doings of the child-heroine, Gracie Death, and of Richard Remington, who, with the son of the murdered man, almost fell a victim to one of the vilest conspiracies in the history of crime. To-morrow we shall go fully into all the details; to-day we must content ourselves with supplementing the report of the police court proceedings and incidents by such further particulars as have come to our knowledge.

"Mr. Ezra Lynn is in custody, and will be brought before the magistrate on Monday. There are rumours that he intends to make confession, with the view of showing that he was not the actual perpetrator of the horrible crime. We make no comment upon this rumour, confident that justice will be done.

"Dr. Pye, otherwise Louis Lorenz, is dead. Upon his body were found the brands mentioned by Pitou, proving him to be the notorious criminal, Louis Lorenz. Of this monster's character it is difficult to speak; from the little that is known of it a strange study is presented to the psychologist. Undoubtedly a man of high attainments, it seems to be certain that he was an earnest student in the science of alchemy, which, vague and imaginative as it has been proved to be, is the parent of that higher and positive science of chemistry, to which mankind owes so much. The times are past when astrology, magic, and alchemy were seriously considered. Religion and philosophy once acknowledged them, but does so no longer. But there are still in the world dreamers with diseased imaginations, and one of these appears to have been Louis Lorenz, who, with his love for ancient art, regarded even the most horrible crimes as but a means to further his visionary ends. We shall at present say no more of him except that it is to be deplored that he has escaped justice, and does not live to expiate his crimes on the scaffold.

"What shall we say of little Gracie Death? History supplies no sweeter and more touching example of courage and devotion. In saying this we but echo the public voice, for so great was the enthusiasm when she issued from the police court that the people would have carried her through the streets on their shoulders. This was sensibly avoided, and she and her parents were taken to their humble home in Lady Wharton's carriage. All honour to this brave child, at whose feet we lay our tribute of admiration. Let some recognition of the noble qualities she displayed be made in our modern manner. Let us lift her family from poverty. We are already in the receipt of letters anticipating our wishes in this direction. The correspondence will appear in our to-morrow's issues, but we append a list of the donors, their contributions ranging from the modest sixpence to the regal sovereign. We esteem it a privilege to head the list with a contribution of five pounds."

CHAPTER LXVI.

JOY.

There was joy almost too great for utterance in two London homes that night. After partaking of a wonderful meal provided by Lady Wharton, Gracie's little brothers and sisters had the treat of sitting up late to look at father, who, weak as he was, would not go to bed, but reclined in an armchair lent by a sympathising neighbour--ah, how sweet and beautiful is the kindness of the poor to the poor!--and with Gracie's hand in his, gazed with gratitude upon the dear ones to whom he had been almost miraculously restored. It seemed as if the dark clouds which had hung for so many weary years over his life had vanished, and that there lay before him the sure promise of better times. Lady Wharton had asked him if he would not like to live in the country with his wife and children. There was, she said, a cottage large enough for them all, and a

garden, and she offered to find employment on her estate for the poor London clerk. A vision of paradise--fairy scenes, with good food, and decent clothes, and flowers, and grass, and trees, and heaven knows what wonders. In fancy they heard the birds singing, and saw the white lambs in the meadows. But nothing was settled, it was only talked about.

"And if you don't care to live in the country," said the kind-hearted lady before she left them, "we'll find something for you here in London."

Then, with a silver shilling to each of the children, she and her brother bade them a merry good night. The treasure was now hidden in six little hot palms, which every now and then were opened just wide enough for a peep--to make sure that it had not spread its wings and flown away.

* * * * *

There was a prayer in the hearts of Aunt Rob's family as they sat round the tea table, and joyful tears that would not be repressed. For here was Aunt Rob singing and crying at the same time, and breaking down, and kissing Florence and Reginald and Dick and Uncle Rob, and then singing again with a happy sob in her throat, and saying in the midst of it all.

"Oh, Dick, Dick, how shall we ever repay you!"

If Gracie was the heroine in her humble home, he was the hero in Aunt Rob's, but both of them were inclined to rebel against this hero-worship, and made little of what they had done.

Certain things had been discussed, and certain plans laid, by Aunt Rob's family, which needed to be carried out that night, and carried out they were. At eight o'clock they walked up the stairs in Draper's Mews, and being admitted were gladly welcomed by Mr. and Mrs. Death and the children. Not because of the store of food and wine and jellies they brought with them, but genuinely for their own sakes. Where they all found room to sit is one of those wonders which are never to be explained, but find room they did, and they talked and talked, and the children listened and listened, and Gracie sat by Dick's side on the poor bed, and wine was drunk by the elder people and tasted by the younger, and Abel Death's eyes brightened, and Dick, suddenly recollecting, pulled out a bag of brandyballs, which he gave to the youngsters. And then Reginald put a piece of paper into Gracie's hand.

"What is it?" she asked, and looking at it, trembled so that she had to hold Dick tight. "Mother--father--look!"

"It will be paid at the bank to-morrow," said Reginald. "Dick will go with you to get the money."

"Two--hundred--pounds!" gasped Gracie.

"For finding Mr. Abel Death," said Reginald. "And, oh, Gracie, how thankful I am to pay it!"

Gracie hid her face on Dick's breast. When she raised her head there were no tears in her eyes, but the same beautiful light in them that Dick had seen once before that day.

"You'll be all right now, father," she said, giving him the cheque.

"God is very good to us!" murmured Mrs. Death, and then all the foolish women in the room began to sob.

FOOTNOTE

Footnote 1: See pages 97, 98.--AUTHOR.

THE END.

* * * * * * * * * *

Printed by Hazell, Watson, & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury, England.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SAMUEL BOYD OF CATCHPOLE SQUARE: A MYSTERY ***

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.