

AN UNFORGETTABLE REAL-LIFE DRAMA

The **THRILLER** 2^p

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The **MARLOE** **MANSION MURDER**

By Adam Gordon Macleod

The Marloe Mansions

TENSE HUMAN
 DRAMA AND
 BRILLIANT
 DETECTIVE
 WORK IN AN
 UNFORGETTABLE
 STORY

By ADAM
 GORDON
 MACLEOD

Chapter I. THE STATUETTE.

THE girl crouched on the ottoman, a little crumpled heap of silver among its scuffed cushions, pathetic in the vacuous shadow of her poor, motionless, silent gaze for the fatal coin that ever and anon stirred to a tremor her slender body. For the first swift surge of horror that had flung her there had passed, leaving only a dull, hopeless ache—an ache of fear.

From the world without the fat, faintly leered sounds came to mingle with, and for a moment obscure, the thoughts that swirled her brain. Familiar, everyday sounds, the harsh murmur of traffic in the street below, the chiming of a distant clock, a boy whistling some dimly remembered tune. And, as they reached her, across the darkness of her thoughts swept a sudden ray of hope. Surely—surely it was only a dream—some awful nightmare from which she would presently awake? Surely—

Dignity surged over her again. She lifted her face to the cushion, stifling the sob she could not repress.

For a few moments Anthony Slynz continued to regard her through narrowed lids, then, with a shrug, he turned to a leisurely contemplation of the tall figure in evening dress facing him from the glass opposite.



The porter swung open the gate, then started back in alarm. Shuffled grotesquely inside the lift was the body of a dead man. Sir William drew in his breath sharply. "Heavens! It's Slynz!" he exclaimed.

No doubt about it—he was wearing well! Looked little more than half his age in that light! A self-satisfied smile creased his thin, evenly featured, and a gleam of eyes, white teeth were reflected back to him. Handsome, too!

He passed a hand slowly over his stock, black hair, and gazed round the room.

If so! He must choose another means for that panel between the two windows—that thing of Louisa's rather jerked. Somehow he had ceased to care for it. He had bought it after—who was it? It was so long ago he remembered only that she had red hair! None mind—to-morrow, or the next day, or the day after, he would replace it with another, a souvenir of a fresh

victory, one more in keeping with the rest of his gallery of memories.

Gallery of memories! By Jove, rather good, that! Pleasant memories—lucrative, too, some of them! The staid, soulless eyes closed for a moment on the recollection, opening to rest on a little marble statuette on a table by the couch—the nude figure of a girl, hands to chest, posed in an attitude of flight. He had added that after the little August girl; he remembered how the title had amused him at the time. L'Innocence. Distinctly amusing! She, too, had made a name at West, but in the end had pined.

He turned again to the figure on the couch, and a hand under curled round his

Murder



**In her agony the girl struck Gan-
thony Slyne down
and fled from the
death flat, leaving
behind her mys-
tery—taking with
her the menace of
the gallows!**

The tear-stained face upturned to his. Wonderful how a little caudon, real or dreamed, enhanced a woman's beauty! God, she was an entrancing little witch!

"My dear child," he said smoothly, "you do me an injustice. It matters not—so delicate it is not my habit to joke."

He crossed to her side, and held some papers so that the light of a tall standard lamp fell upon them.

"These are the letters. You recognize them, I think? Well, they are yours to purchase—at a price! Come, now," he coaxed, seating himself beside her. "Is it so hard a bargain? Am I so repellent? These letters—to burn or to keep, as you will. Tonight, to-morrow night—in this with you. But—make your choice!" He lay towards her.

His touch reacted on the girl like a blow. With a quick cry she sprang toward him. Next instant he was crumpling her to him, covering her face, her neck, her shoulders with kisses. Madly she fought with him, terror lending her strength. At last she succeeded in freeing herself, and staggered back against the table. Her hand, clutching at it for support, closed on the little statuette.

"Oh, you beast!" she sobbed hysterically. "You vile beast!"

Slyne put a hand to his face, and with the marks of her blows.

"God, you shall pay for this, you little witch!" he muttered, and, inflamed with passion, took one retreating step toward her.

She saw only a face—an evil face advancing through a haze. In a dream she whirled the statuette high in the air and brought it crashing down on the stout head.

With a choking cry Slyne lurched sideways, his hands clutching blindly before him, staggered past her, and slid to the floor by the window, carrying its curtain with him in his fall. Caught in the sweep of its folds, the tall lamp tottered perilously, then fell over with a crash, its light changing to sudden, unnatural brilliance that lit up like a searchlight the face beneath the curtain's edge. Next instant the room was plunged in darkness.

Trembling, suddenly sick at heart for one moment of spell-bound horror, she stood there, the white, distorted face seeming to stare at her from the shadows. A sob came from her lips. Oh, heaven, what had she done?

She swayed as if about to faint, then, with a low, shuddering cry, groped her way blindly towards the door.

She shivered and sat up, propping a hand to her brow. What was she doing in that

lips. She was taking it badly, this one. Or was she only shamming, playing a little comedy to save appearances?

God, she was a beauty! Carious, he had never realized before what a real tepper she was. His eyes travelled gleefully from her bobbed hair, which spread like a golden-brown fan on the black cushion, over the slim body, opposing the curves half-created by the clinging silver tulle of her dress. As though his glasses had been a touch, a shadow passed over the girl, and a sob escaped from her quivering lips.

Well, she could play her little comedy for a few minutes more; with such a picture to gaze upon he was in no immediate hurry. He pulled out a thin, gold case, and lit a cigarette.

Suddenly the girl thrust herself from the shelter of the cushions and turned. Her voice came in a sob-broken whisper.

"Oh, surely—surely you can't mean it? It's—it's only some joke, I don't understand!" She looked at him in entreaty, joining her hands unconsciously in the attitude of a child at prayer.

Slyne exhaled a puff of smoke, going at

dark, cupboard-like room? Where was she? How had she got there? Slowly the questions took shape in her still numbed brain.

Through the unlatched door a wedge of light shone, faintly illuminating the wall opposite. A row of garments hung upon it, coats and hats—a man's!

Recollection began to return to her. This was where he had put her cloak and hat. She remembered fumbling for them, putting them on. And then—she must have found. Oh, heaven, what if she had been found there? But then—who could have found her? They were alone, he had jested—alone in the bar!

She dragged herself to her feet and peered at a tiny, jewelled watch on her wrist. Had it stopped? Somewhere in the distance a clock slowly tolled the hour of evening. She gazed at the appearance of the watch struck her, something unfamiliar. She peered closer, holding it in the shaft of light, then left it fall. The glass had gone—and on its silvered, hour-glass-shaped dial her finger left a smudge of red!

She stared at it dully, then at her finger. Blood! It was bleeding! A wave of nausea swept over her. Trembling, she leaned against the wall.

Presently the waitresses passed. She moved to the door, opened it hesitantly and peered through the aperture, only to shrink back in sudden terror. From another door opposite a dimly seen figure eyed her.

She stared at it for what seemed an age before realising that the figure—her own—reflected in a wall-mirror! A sudden sob escaped her lips. She must get out of this place—now—at once—before her brain gave way. She gazed in the glass, mechanically adjusting her wraps, her hair, her cloak with shaking hands.

Suddenly there came to her eyes the suddenly-thrilled-of footstep in the passage outside. "The woman who sits at the bottom of an electric-bell wanted somewhere behind her." She turned, looking wildly for a hiding-place—when the door rattled and two letters slid in the mat below. The footstep receded into the distance and died away.

"Who she going mad? She found herself repeating the address which the two letters must bear—"Gardbury Sykes, 8, Marlow Mansions, London, S.W.7. . . . Gardbury Sykes, 8, Marlow Mansions—Oh, heaven, she had forgotten them—forgotten the other letters, lying somewhere within that room! She must get them!

"Must! Must! Must!" she whispered, striking herself to the ground. Then, at the thought of the darkness and the shape it hid, nausea swept over her again.

She strove to nerve herself. What if the letters were discovered there—in that room—with his body? She had only to go as far as the coach—she remembered them falling from his fingers as he clutched her, had a vague recollection of them lying at her feet as she struck the fatal blow. Only as far as the coach! Grappling with her fears, she pushed open the door and fell for the light switches.

One after another she clicked them on without result, then again. She found herself trying to recall the name of the thing that "went" when this sort of thing happened. A face, wasn't it? Yes, a face must have gone somewhere. With a shudder she plunged into the darkness, and groped her way towards the coach.

Here was the coach, and there the table; the letters ought to be about here. She felt along the thick carpet. Nothing! Nothing there! Nothing anywhere near!

Suddenly she was conscious of a strange flickering of the darkness, glimmering here, shadows rose and fell about her in a ghostly, swaying dance.

Was it some trick of her eyes? She glanced nervously at the windows. Through it, in the distance, she could see the flashing of some electric sign.

She resumed her search, feverishly now—grasping among the cushions of the coach, on the table, then on the floor again.

Beneath the coach her fingers encountered something hard. The statuette! With a shudder she watched her hand waver, and turned to the carpet once more—scanning it in the dim, flickering light, her gaze travelling father and father, but ever avoiding the grim shadow beneath the window.

What was that? She caught her breath, listening for a repetition of the sound that had lured her right—a faint scratching sound.

Had her own movements made it? No. It came again, drawing her gaze upwards to the uncurtained window, and her heart seemed suddenly to cease beating. Across the outside of the pane, silhouetted against the flicking light, a vague shadow was slowly moving to and fro, like the crawling of a snake about to strike.

Motionless, fascinated for one agonising moment, she stared at it. Was it a hand? Or—or—Oh, heaven! Four—more than four—clutched at her breast. With a choking cry she fled from the room, and from the house.

UNCLE BILL HINDS FOR THE LIFT.

"Pardon, please, cross me!" The domineering imperative from the driver of his cab, as he laid a hand sickle softly into his, imprisoning his fingers in a sticky clasp.

Robert Kerrill—Bobby to a multitude of friends—watched his gaze descend to the small face upturned to his.

"Certainly, please!" By all means! Doubtless, quite! . . . and he swung the pilot into the lane.

"Pardon, please, not to interrupt," he said. "As I'm late, I also answered several, here, as I had deposited her safely on the opposite pavement."

Bobby appeared to consider this. "Four! Goodness! Then you ought to have had a ticket!"

Gravely he handed her a wadded money on a pin, bowed an exaggerated goodbye, and showed his way back through the traffic to his former station.

This was his second adventure of the kind during the few minutes he had been standing there for Bobby was just like that! In the same period he had acquired two boxes of matches, two loose collar-studs, and the common number—the Bobby, was like that!

He glanced at his watch. Uncle Bill was late—very late for one of his personal habits. Chalkstone, too, standing about in a lathered shirt!

"Only a penny, go on!" Penny said: "Windy me, I gotta with me!" "Sorry, but I'm sorry, which had been almost made, his nose was suddenly withdrawn. "Sorry, sir! Didn't acknowledge you; didn't expect to find you just yet!"

"Don't apologise, old friend! Yes, you are still here . . . on the spot—waiting! Effect of Spring-time, you know, that jolly little season! Here we are, in November, with Spring hurrying towards us at the dreadful speed of three-hundred-and-sixty-five days a year! Spring, when a young man's fancy . . . but, of course, you read the poem?"

"It's a body, is it?" said the vendor of wadded money, with a hint of understanding. . . . "Bit of shirk!"

"Well, an appointment, anyway," was the non-committal reply. "A noncommittal, or, if you prefer it, a date—no those who circle in the best service would say! No, no, don't go yet! I'll have another of our union friends, the penny. I think we've had prettier! But, to an old customer, you will no doubt reduce the price to sixpence! . . . You will! Thanks! Don't mention it!"

A taxi veered suddenly in the kerb beside them, and its door swung open.

"Jump in Bobby!" boomed a voice from its interior.

"Good-bye, old friend!" said Bobby—and jumped.

"Marlow Mansions, East Place, driver," went on the voice. Then, to Bobby: "Waiting long?"

"Come, Uncle Bill—nothing to speak of. Why the strange waiting orders to our pilot? I thought the scheme was done somewhere, and then your show!"

"And still is, Bobby. This is merely a diversion—a wedge of platonic diversion!" "Who," he whispered Bobby. "Your companion? What's she in for this time?"

"Finds—perhaps in quantity! Goodness! I hope, singular in quantity!" chuckled Uncle Bill. "And, certainly enough, it touched some time by the street class. As you know, we are celebrating the Athletics just now, and the club's somewhat crowded in consequence. Last Wednesday I found myself sharing the same table with Wikes and a group of his, a man named Sykes—"

"Sykes?" interrupted Bobby. "Name of Anthony, by any chance? Magnificent, long-haired sort of chap—and more than a bit of a chapp!"

"Something of that sort, Bobby. Why, if you know him? Goodness, I thought Wikes said: but it may have been Anthony. . . ."

"Goodness, that's the liddle! No! I've only met him casually—briefly. But from others I've gathered that his reputation is none too meagre. If you're going to have any dealings with that fellow, take a word of advice from your wealthy-very-very—and gang waddy!"

"Thanks, Bobby, I'll make a note of it! Well, whatever his reputation, he is so tremendously well-informed, polished, and well-read in the way of things generally—so intelligent many times more important than my own. However, I don't his collection that interests me, so much as the fact that he has been able to pool a number of rare duplicates—of extremely attractive pieces. His collection, among others, since Paul V.R. . . . several Cape Widdowans, and also the P.R. . . . Potomac, and a pair of Arctic Health First-class!"

"And you propose to go a hunt on them to-night?"

"Possibly, Bobby. As a matter of fact, although you may not believe me, I'd forgotten all about the appointment until I met him again at lunch today and he reminded me of it. I tried to cry off, pleading a previous, and forgotten, engagement, but he wouldn't hear of it. Phoned him again from the club a few minutes ago, and had another ten—ten good minutes' talk. But he's below the ground to insist that I had to give in, and—"

"He looks off to about to the driver!"

"On the right, there. The door marked 'I to B'."

The taxi veered to the kerb, and pulled up.

While its occupants alight, let us take the opportunity afforded by the light streaming from the doorway to examine them: for in the next few pages we shall find ourselves frequently in their company.

The first to descend is he whom, so far, we have known as "Uncle Bill" and "a color"; now disclosed as a tall, bony figure in evening dress, wearing—the fact was no longer to be concealed—a beard! A full-headed beard such as one may observe in vast numbers around Mr. Rattle at in the Quarter Latin; a tawny chest-protecting mass of hair, born and nursed in captivity during the long watches of 1814—now within its waves was engaged in the privet lanes of mid-winter in the North Sea. And yet this advanced added no whit to his apparent age; he looked what he was, a man in the prime of life, and still not on the right side of fifty. Moreover, he had passed through and emerged from the great Beaver cross underpass! A courageous chap, Uncle Bill!

Further particulars of Sir William Underbridge Basset, 4th Bart., D.S.O., F.R.S., etc., may be gleaned from that postscript, should "What's What?" There you will learn, among other things, that he was an Old Comrade '96 to '98, gaining his blue for Baggot, and adding to the coveted distinction of Knight Companion that of Sergeant-Waagner, the

succeeded in the laboratory in 1912, that he has traveled extensively, and that he has written much, including a standard work on criminology, and three successful plays. Further, you will gather that if he is unmarried, belongs to several clubs, and often not in some residence at the family seat, Grosvenor Hall, Cumberland. Also that his hobbies are yachting, fishing, shooting, and, as you have already begun to suspect, stamp-collecting.

In the above brief record there is one gap which requires filling in—that lying between the years 1909 and 1911. Younger sons of wealthy men, with high expectations and few possessions, are naturally straggled in their choice of a career. Some remain at home to sell cars to their friends, some go to the Dominion, some to the States, some to the West.

Young Barrill, however, showed more originality in his choice. After two years spent in visiting the world as a stock-broker, one sea-going tramp after another, he had joined that magnificent body of men, the Metropolitan Police, and swapped his identity into that of Police-constable A.H. W. B. Barrill.

Like everything else he did, this action was inspired by a definite purpose. Crime detection is an extremely useful and interesting career—men, moreover, for which he felt he had some aptitude, and to him the nearest goal to the Criminal Investigation Department, the god he had set himself, seemed to be through an apprenticeship in the uniformed branch.

It did! His unexpected accession to the laboratory found him, after some twelve years' service, with the rank of detective-superintendent—and likely to go higher still. But, of course, you remember him now! The Inspector Barrill who came into prominence in the affair of the Marquis of Goodwin, and later, as chief inspector and superintendent successively, established and enhanced that reputation by his masterly handling of many of the most intricate cases of the first decade of this century.

And then, in the prime of his official career, that of it may be said, had come his inheritance—in the latter years of his life a not altogether welcome turn of fortune's wheel. Only after long debate with himself did he reluctantly decide to retire—to leave the field open to men who had not only their reputation to make but their livelihood to earn.

Yet his retirement from the Yard, say in the official sense, had never been quite complete. Many times in the ensuing years he had participated, unofficially and unobtrusively, in one or other of his investigations—his help freely given and as freely accepted by those who had known his colleagues in the old days.

So much, then, for ex-Detective-superintendent Sir William Randolph Barrill. Let us now turn to his nephew—at present following him across the pavement towards the steps of Nos. 1 to 12.

Fair, blue-eyed, and strikingly alike in build and carriage, the two might pass for father and son. But Bobby's manner, like that with his wide, good-natured mouth, is clean-shaven, and his right eye wears a patch of white—in memory of a very gallant performance some years ago by one Temporary Second-Lieutenant R. Barrill.

To this knowledge of Bobby we can add a little from the happily quoted above, for there we learn that the heir to the baronetcy is one Robert Barrill, b. 1895. His own brief paragraph is meagre by comparison, and tells us little more than that he was educated at Winchester, served in the Great War (1915-18), held Brevet, and that he is residing at 22, Southward Bridge Road, of which strange address more anon.

Of hobbies none is shown, and he would confess to none, though unwittingly he has some. Life is his chief aim, and next comes his work—for Bobby is reading for the Bar, actively and with purpose.

You will have read the tussle-down at the top of the steps, so we will omit with them.

The hall, a replica of five others in the present block forming Marino Mansions, with its thick carpeting, softly shaded lights, and profusion of wood-bowwork in the region of stairs and lift—reminded the vestibule of Parisian apartments rather than the

approach to London flats. Even the porter's lodge on the left of the entrance, with its ornamental grille, could have been duplicated in a hundred large dovecotes. Only the peering figure in skull cap and button apron was lacking to complete the illusion.

A message-board on the wall announced the fact that Mr. Gasplinsky Blyss was "in."

"I'll wait for you here, Uncle Bill!"

"As you like, Bobby. I don't keep you long."

Uncle Bill made for the lift, and pressed the ivory button by its gate.

A bell rang far up the shaft. Time followed the sound of a door being closed, and presently a short, thick-set man in uniform, carrying something wrapped loosely in a yellow cloth, came into view on the stairs. As he reached the bottom he turned to the baronet and saluted.

"Mr. Blyss?" said the latter, answering his lack of inquiry.

"Number eight—in the third floor, sir."



A slender, feminine figure, muffled in furs, sped past Bobby Barrill, and he caught a glimpse of tears on her cheeks.

Free number three button in the lift, an 'L' tale, go right, down."

"Thanks!"

Sir William turned again to the lift and the porter crouched to his ledge.

Bobby glanced sidelong at the parcel he was hugging to his side, then his eye rose to the ribbon-covered lid beside it. With 'D.C.M., M.R.M., 14 Star, and both South Africa! Good fellow! Excellent officer, too, judging from the M.R.M. Bobby suddenly felt conventionally satisfied.

But the look on the man's face did not invite conversation, and, with a grunt "Alvains", sir!" he passed on.

"Evening, sergeant-major!"

Bobby half turned, to do the best he could with this poor opening, when his gaze was caught and held by another figure descending the stairs—a slender, feminine figure, muffled in furs to the eyes—and eyes, tear-stained eyes, lightened eyes.

"Good for! The poor girl's in trouble!" he thought. And to be in trouble was to find your way straight to Bobby's heart.

The eyes raised themselves to his edge patch, then to his one eye, and a hand muffled furred across them—a glancing, trustful smile. Bobby suddenly discovered an absorbing interest in Marino Mansions!

"I say—porter!" Sir William's voice boomed from the lift gate, and the porter emerged from his lodge. "There seems to be

something wrong here! The cage has come down a bit and stuck fast!"

"The man hurried in his side.

"Let me have a try, son. Maybe this gate, or one of the others, isn't properly closed!" He opened and shut the gate, then pressed the button.

Obdurate to this interference, Bobby stared abstractedly before him. Another figure had appeared on the stairs. A man this time—hurrying down them, head bent, feet shadowed by the tussle-down brim of his hat.

As the newcomer swept past, Bobby had an impression of two staring eyes and a jet-black pointed beard. He turned, his gaze following him, cautiously to the floor.

"Queue now of blocks!" he thought; then, with a shrug of his broad shoulders, nodded over to join the two by the lift.

"She's coming down this time, sir!" the porter was saying as he reached them.

A whir of machinery became audible above, the cage swept into view, and with a long wail—ah came to rest.

The porter swung open the gate, then peered forward anxiously.

"Heaven! What's this?"

Blinded grotesquely against the seat, lay a man, blood oozing from his hair round a ghastly wound to his skull!

The baronet drew in his breath with a sharp gasp.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed.

"Blyss?"

MURDER!

Sir William was the first to recover himself. Stepping into the cage, he thrust a hand under the crumpled sheet—bun.

"Dead?" whispered Bobby anxiously.

The other man nodded, then, glancing at his watch, made a mental note of the time. He turned to the porter.

"Is there a doctor in the flat?"

But, with drooping jaw and staring eyes, the man continued to gaze at the life's gruesome burden. Only at a repetition of the question did he find his voice.

"A doctor, sir!" he echoed hoarsely.

"There's was just across the square. Shall I fetch him?"

"Please—as quickly as you can!" was the reply. Then, as the man turned to obey:

"One moment! Aspose in another eight—any arrears?"

"No, sir. There's only his man, but he's out for the afternoon this hour or more."

"Thank! I take it there's a telephone in your lodge?"

"On the wall by the telephone, sir."

"Good!" The baronet returned to his examination of Blyss's body.

He lay diagonally across the cage—half sitting, legs sprawled along the floor, head and shoulders leaning in the angle formed by the seat and one of the sides. He parted the matted hair over the right temple and examined the wound.

"His! Compound fracture of both frontal and parietal bones! An ugly smash—and one that would require considerable time to produce!"

The possibility of an accident, a fall down the shaft into the cage, caused him to glance upwards, but the solid parallel wall restrained the idea, and his gaze passed to the walls. No, it seemed equally impossible that a weapon swung in that cramped space would have produced such a wound. The fatal blow must have been administered elsewhere. He resumed his examination, seeking support for his conclusion.

And support there was—in the thick, red-brown streak running under the hair to the left temple—the track of the blood-stain that had welled from the wound. And where that stream had ended was a dark area, greyish by a great patch of dried blood on the left side, around and patch giving a definite indication of the position in which the body had lain for some time after the fatal blow—a position entirely at variance with that which it now occupied.

He turned his attention to the lower part of

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the body, then, after scrutiny of the seat and floor of the lift, came to his aid.

"A very nice, bold job," he said, shaking his head gravely. "So long that I'm going to short-cut the local station and get the Yard on to it right away. Keep an eye round here for a minute or two."

He crossed to the porter's room and spoke a number into the telephone.

"That New Scotland Yard?" he went on, when the connection had been established.

"Sir William Barrill speaking. Put me through to Superintendent Marston, please. This you, Marston? I should like to see if I've managed to catch you. I'm speaking from the porter's lodge of Numbers One to Ten, Marine Mansions, East Place. There's a case for you here—a had one—sorry appearance of murder? No, I haven't advised the local station yet—I think it's a job for headquarters. Can you send someone out—or, better still, come yourself?"

At the other end of the line Detective-inspector Marston pulled a note-pad towards him and pressed out a row of numbers on his disk.

"Sorry, I can't get away myself, Sir William, but I'll send you a good man. Elizabeth—you remember him as the Keebler case? Eben Pico, you said? He should be there within twenty minutes. No, don't trouble about the local station—he'll see to that on his way. I take it you will stand by until he arrives, of course? Excellent! Good-bye!"

The baronet hung up the receiver and returned to the hall, to find Bobby, his back planted against the swing doors, having the end of a string—a tail, this man, carrying a sack labelled suitcase.

Sir William's eyes travelled swiftly over Bobby—the crisp, crumpled bowler hat, the blue suit, shiny but well-worn, the checked but slightly polished shoes, the general air of shabby gentility—then back to the down-staircase lift, with its loose mouth and heavy profile.

"An' what if I refuse? What if you think you've got to do, sir?" the man was saying, and with the "oh," his jaw shut and his face back on an ugly look.

"There, sir," replied Bobby solemnly, "though I agree that such action might not be strictly legal, I've already my best persuade you to hurry with an' with our job old friends the men in blue arrives."

"Yes, we—we—tidily and collectively!" Bobby waved a hand in the direction of Uncle Bill.

"Lament!" The man's jaw dropped as he suddenly became aware of the bearded figure on his right. He hesitated, then thrust a hand into a breast-pocket and produced a tattered pocket-book, and from it a card.

"There—will that satisfy you?" he said meekly.

Bobby took the scrap of parchment and turned it held it to the light. Next instant an admit swing of the entrance swept his feet from under him. He crashed to the floor, and the man shot through the doorway into the night!

"Good heavens!" Bobby scrambled to his feet and stood after him, but the few seconds' start his quarry had secured had been sufficient—the darkness had swallowed him.

He turned to retrace the steps that would re-start an attempt to follow the entrance. Where was the man? They had left there? Had Uncle Bill dismissed him? No—he had never left the hall.

Someone must have taken it. Someone sufficiently pressed to assume responsibility for the dare already registered. One of the two who had first left the flats. Perhaps the girl. But—William! Surely she could have nothing to do with the affair! Breathing this disturbing possibility, he returned to the hall.

Sir William met his discomfited entry with an encouraging smile, and proceeded to shoulder his share of the blame for the catastrophe.

"Had luck, Bobby? My wife's let him slip. A lily customer."

Bobby produced the man's card.

"Mr. J. McElin, Twenty-three, Overland Road Highway," he read from it. "Dis-

tinctly lily. Uncle Bill—seen every point of view an explanation below? I was a lot to take my eye off the lighter!"

"Well, it can't be helped now!" said Uncle Bill philosophically, then turned to the swing doors parted—the solemn face of the porter appearing in the aperture.

"Dr. James 'd be here directly, son," he said, addressing the baronet. "I must go to the office myself now, to report to Mr. Calway what's happened."

"Calway? Calway?" repeated Bobby to himself, distant memories stirring in his brain. "Dr. Jones! Didn't Jerry Calway's father have a big property hereabouts—"

His thoughts were cut short by the invasion of a small, elderly man, who, after a quick glance from one to the other, introduced himself as Dr. James. The baronet conducted him to the lift.

"Here in your case, doctor—but he is far beyond your help?"

"Yes, yes. So I understand from the porter, Florida," rejoined the doctor, bending to examine the wound. "Yes—happens, quite happens!" he added almost immediately, pausing each word with a jerk of his head. "Five of the parietal bone has penetrated the brain. Two—three minutes—my life as a man—and his would be extinct!" He knelt beside the body and proceeded to a more lengthy examination.

Presently he rose, carefully dusted the knees of his trousers, glanced at his watch, and proceeded to make some entries in a notebook.

"You have informed the police, of course?" he asked, without looking up.

The baronet assured him that he had.

"A detective should be here at any moment now," he added. "I take it you will wait for him?"

The doctor nodded—and his eyes returned to the body. "He was still going at it when, a few moments later, a crack of the doors behind them announced the arrival of someone."

Three men entered, a police constable and two civilians, dressed in uniform, and came to the side of the body, and rather below middle height. The latter made straight for the little group by the lift, a smile lighting up his dusky eyes.

"Evening, Mr. William! Evening, Mr. Barrill!" he said, shaking hands. "Inspector Elizabeth—Mr. James!" The baronet introduced the newcomers, then waved a hand to the lift. "And this, inspector, is—"

The detective's eyes were already fixed on the form on the stage floor, staring at it for a few moments intently.

"Know who he is?" he asked; then, when the baronet had supplied the information, turned again to the doctor. "Made an examination yet?"

"Only so far as the visible injury is concerned," was the cautious reply, followed by a highly technical description of the fracture.

"The cause of the injury," he concluded, "is undoubtedly a blow, or blow, from some heavy object with one or two fairly sharp, probably rectangular, edges."

"A fall, doctor?"

"No, sir—but from some considerable height! And you're that our his presence here would have to be accounted for. From the instant he received this wound he would be incapable of motion!"

"Quite so, quite so!" said Elizabeth, who had been studying the case note while the other was speaking. "Now, as to the time of death? Formed any opinion?"

"Within comparatively wide limits, yes." The doctor consulted his notebook. "I made this note at twenty-three minutes past seven. He had then been dead not less than a quarter of an hour, and not more than forty-five minutes."

Elizabeth turned to the baronet. "And you first saw the body when, Sir William? I've no doubt you made a note of the time?"

"I did, it was exactly six minutes past seven."

"May I have a look at your watch? And yours, too, doctor?" Taking out his own,

Elizabeth compared the three. "Thank! There's enough difference at least. In fact, adding the possible few minutes that may have elapsed between receipt of the injury and death, the fatal blow must have been delivered some time after six thirty-three!"

"Precisely."

Elizabeth made an entry in his notebook. "Thank—if you will give me your card I needn't detain you any longer."

He waited until the doctor had bussed away, then made a sign to the sergeant, who disappeared through the door.

"Now, Sir William, unless you and Mr. Barrill are in a great hurry, I'd like to defer taking your statement until after I've made my own examination."

"No hurry at all now," the baronet assured him. "How about you, Bobby?"

"Of course!" was the emphatic response. Elizabeth smiled.

"To be candid, Sir William, I'm hoping you'd want to take a hand?" He turned to the sergeant, who had remained with two constables waiting a street-car. "Bring it here, sergeant," he said, then stepped on the case and knelt by Elyn's body.

"Hand's been moved at all?" he went on presently, after a first brief survey.

"Practically not," replied the baronet. "Both the doctor and I were careful to do it as little as possible."

Switching on a small torch, Elizabeth scrutinized first the body, then its surroundings, then the body again. Suddenly he rested the beam of light on the source of the white shirt-front, pocket flaps, and uncovered something from the single pocket stud fastening it. He turned and handed his find to the baronet—a ring, glittering thread of silk and silver.

Bobby glanced at it, and before him rose a picture of a silver ring peeping from the folds of a fur cloak. Good Lord, if coming it wouldn't be a good thing! He dismissed the thought contemptuously. "But another track to clear. Would other things up? Would Elizabeth?"

"Nothing," said the baronet, returning it, "and suggestive."

Elizabeth lifted his find in a dip of paper and laid it on the seat, then ran rapidly through the pockets, having before him, after another, a number of small articles—watch, cigarette-case, handkerchief, etc., but nothing likely to throw light on his owner's death. Again he went through them in the hope that he had overlooked a trinket-er, but without result; and, gathering the collection together, he stepped from the stage.

"You can carry on now, sergeant," he said. "I shall wait you again as soon as you've seen them off." He watched the two constables lift the body to the stretcher, then turned to Sir William.

"Keep anything of a porter since you arrived?"

The baronet explained the porter's absence.

"Oh! That's a nuisance!" Elizabeth looked after the little procession, to return presently to the office to get him and a key, if possible," he explained; then, with a hurried, "Back in a couple of minutes," made for the stairs. The sergeant in his absence had decided themselves before he descended, announcing the result of his hurried examination by a shake of the head.

"Either of you happen to know anything of Elyn's domestic arrangements? Whether he lived alone?"

"Only what we gathered from the porter," replied the baronet. "There's a footman of some kind, but apparently he is out for the evening."

Elizabeth stared thoughtfully at the floor for a few moments.

"We'll wait for the porter, then," he said at last, and glanced round the hall. "I'll take that story of your own, Sir William. Anywhere we can sit down to it?"

At the baronet's suggestion the three crossed to the porter's room, where, when each had found a seat, he looked round an account of his conversation with Elyn, his discovery of the body, and the subsequent state of events, at the lift, and the subsequent state of events.

"There is one point I should mention," he said in conclusion, "and which may prove of some importance. I actually spoke to Elyn on

the phone not two minutes before I started out to come here. The exact time of the call will be noted in the slab call-book, but certainly twenty-five minutes or less could have elapsed between it and my discovery of his dead body."

"Time narrowing the time of death is something within the twenty-five minutes," said the detective. "Then, after a pause: "You're sure it was Ryan?"

"Quite! One couldn't mistake his peculiar draw."

"If I! I must have a look at that call-book."

Ellierrshaw added the information to his notes, then glanced back over them. Presently he wrote:

"One of two points I must go over with you again, Mr. Willard; but, in the meantime," he turned to Bobby, "I'd like to hear whether Mr. Barrell can add anything to your descriptions of the three who passed out while you were in the hall—and especially the last of 'em."

"Just excuse me for a moment, then," interrupted the baronet. "I've just remembered we have a taxi waiting."

"Taxi!" exclaimed Ellierrshaw. "There was no taxi outside when I arrived!"

Embayed by some prompting he could not have explained, even to himself, Bobby came to a sudden decision.

"It's all right, Uncle Bill. I-I-I paid him off while you were telephoning."

"Oh!" The baronet gave him a puzzled look, then ruminated himself. "Excellent, Bobby; glad you thought of it!"

"About those descriptions, then, Mr. Barrell?" went on Ellierrshaw, who throughout the interchange had been impatiently tapping his pencil on his notepad.

"Yes, of course, the descriptions," stammered Bobby. "But I don't think I can add much to these—er, at any rate, to the first one. Tall, slender, and wearing dark hair, that was about all one could see."

"You didn't notice her dress, then?" Bobby shook his head; it was another matter than saying so.

"Her cloak partly well covered her up," he explained. "But I can add something to the description of the man who followed her. I had a glimpse of his face—sufficient to see that he had a mustache and pointed beard, both jet black. His eyes, too, gave me the impression of being unusually bright—pervasive, I suppose you'd call them."

He paused while Ellierrshaw made an addition to his notes, then produced the card surrendered by the man he had challenged.

"As for my friend with the mustache, I can give you this."

Taking the card, the detective examined its face, then applied the same scrutiny to the other side, apparently to glance up at Bobby with a very smile.

"Notice the back at all, Mr. Barrell? Wait a moment; here's a look at it with this." He handed it back, along with a small pocket lens, then turned to the baronet. "Have you seen it, Mr. Willard?"

The baronet shook his head and leaned across to examine the card for the first time.

"Well, spotted anything, Mr. Barrell?" went on Ellierrshaw to Bobby, who was still peering at the slip of pasteboard.

"Yes," was the repeated reply; "five small smudges—one in each corner and one in the centre. But they were meaningless to me."

"Oh, they've got a growing all right, Mr. Barrell!" replied the detective dryly. "I'm afraid they mean you're born bad. I'd lay a hundred pounds to a baronet that neither Mr. Mellish nor his address has any existence, in fact, and that this card came out of a book of card magicians' samples!"

"MR. MELLISH?"

"The Mighler?" exclaimed Bobby, with a scrutiny of the volume he thought had followed the giving of the card.

"Good lord, I was a fool to have worried about his name at all! Ought to have glanced his straight away and kept him until you came!"

"I don't know," rejoined the detective kindly, "you did very well to challenge him at all. As far as I can see, he gave you no reasons for suspicion until he reached you."

Philosophically he added: "One'll be helped, anyway. And we've got his description; we'll have to do the best we can with that."

Opening his notebook again he turned to the baronet.

"Before I cover these other points it might be as well if we compared conclusions, Mr. Willard; and these are mine, for a start. First, the murder—for murder it seems to be—was not committed in the lift; second, for some time after death the body lay on its left side, the head resting on the left arm; third, it was not carried, but dragged to where you found it—pointing to the job being a single-handed one; fourth, before the time he changed and your discovery of his body, Ryan—alive or dead—came in contact with some fabric containing threads like the one I have here; and, lastly, taken together, these conclusions point pretty definitely to murder—and murder in which a woman is involved." He paused and glanced up inquiringly. "Any gaps?"

"None that I can discover," replied the baronet after a brief silence. "The fact that the compressed stream of blood ran across the scalp from right to left—the natural course with the body in the position you mention, but an impossible one with it as we found it. Also from the existence of the large blood-patch, or clot, rather on the left elbow."



"Back! Keep back!" Ellierrshaw checked them, and left for his automatic. From within the flat had come a suspicious rustling movement.

"Yes; from that, and from another thing—the absence of any bloodstains in the lift itself."

The baronet shook his head. "No, Ellierrshaw; there I am not with you. Wherever the crime was committed I don't if any traces of the kind will be found, except at the minutest description."

"But a wound like that would bleed profusely."

"It would, as long as the heart's action continued. Nevertheless, I consider that the accumulation on the hair and sleeve would account for the rest total of the bleeding. And, by the way, one of that accumulation another point arises. Blood at body temperature would not evaporate under these conditions, and the process will be still further delayed by two things—decrease in temperature and the thickness of the mass. Taking these two factors into consideration, I am convinced that by at least four minutes after death the body must have lain undisturbed. It is only a small point—"

"But one which might prove important!" Ellierrshaw made a note of it. "Go ahead, then."

"Your third point," went on Mr. Willard, "is that the body was not carried and dragged to the lift. There I agree. On fact that the shoe was pulled over the head, and also the

left track leading from the entrance to the other end, point pretty conclusively to that. And in that connection, it occurred to me that similar tracks outside might tell us something."

"I occurred to me also, but I didn't find any," replied Ellierrshaw. "Still, they may be there—I only had a rough glance round each floor. But we'll clear up these other points now. Have you any idea where the lift stops when you first came for it?"

The baronet's answer came without hesitation:

"I can tell you that exactly—it was stationary at the second floor. A few seconds afterwards it moved up to the top floor, where it remained until I reached a second time. Then it descended in a rapid and jerky fashion between the third and second floors, and struck last there until the porter managed to bring it down."

The detective stared at him with wrinkled brows.

"I'm far from doubting what you say, Mr. Willard, but I'd like to hear just how you arrive at it, too, frankly, it leaves me guessing. The shaft gate was closed, I take it?"

"It was, until the porter opened it after the cage had started," smiled the baronet. "But it remained so open, pending my deduction, to arrive at its movements prior to that. When first I rang, although the cage itself was out of sight, its counterweights were not; they were above my head, level with the ball ceiling—that is to say, two floors above the lowest point of their travel. The cage, therefore, was then at the same distance below the highest point of its travel, the top floor, and a simple consideration of the arrangement of the ten flats in the section, two on each floor, showed that the floor at which it was halted was the second. Almost immediately after my ring the counterweights moved down into the basement, indicating that the cage had moved up to the top floor, I rang again. The counterweights emerged from the basement, but came to a standstill when above level with my eyes, thus showing that the cage had stopped between two floors, the third and the second."

"One up to you, Mr. Willard; your case don't miss much!" laughed the detective. He proceeded to add this fresh information to his notes, paused suddenly, and looked up with a frown. "Queue thing that morning-business. Looks as if the murderer was on board."

"It does," returned the baronet, and was about to continue when a knock drew their eyes to the door. His treated pane suddenly shattered by the occupant's form.

"Come in, Barker!" called Ellierrshaw. Then, when his call had been obeyed: "Well, got the porter?"

"He'll be here directly, sir. They're looking for the key."

"Thanks! Being this straight it when he comes. And you might get my case from the car, I may wait a." He waited until the door had closed, then turned again to Mr. Willard.

"Yes, that point about the lift requires consideration," he went on. "But there are other points I must get clear first. We'll start with the porter. I suppose you saw no reason to remove him with the affair?"

"No, I can't say I did. On the contrary, his surprise on finding Ryan's body seemed two years in to be eliminated—unless the man is a born seer. Also, if he had a hand in it, it seems hardly likely that he would have remained so the spot."

"His—perhaps?" rejoined Ellierrshaw dubiously. "Any idea what floor he comes from, then, he came down to you?"

"Not a very accurate one, I'm afraid. Judging by the time that elapsed between my ring and his appearance, I should say the first. But the noise I mentioned, as of a door being shut, seemed to come from the floor above, and he may have come out of a flat there."

"The floor above being the second—that at which the lift was stopped," rejoined the detective significantly. "Well, we shall hear what his line is on my behalf presently, about the others now! Any idea where they came from?"

"None. In fact, I was so intent on the lift's

popular behavior that I barely noticed them." The baronet turned to his nephew. "How about your man, Mr. Mellich?"

Bobby shook his head.

"To tell the honest truth, I can't say; he was in the hall before I noticed him. I have a vague impression, however, that he didn't come downstairs at all, but up, from the basement."

"From the basement?" asked Ellerton. "If he will have a look down there?" He had half risen from his chair, when the door was opened by the servant, to admit the porter, with him a tall, ill-looking young man, evidently the Mr. Calway of whom he had gone in search.

Bobby glanced at the newcomer, and his glasses clattered suddenly to a black stain. This wasn't the Calway he had known, and he felt sure he had met him before. But where, and when?

The newcomer was the first to speak. "Eggsy Jones, Bobby R-Barrell!" he exclaimed, flinging out a thin, nervous hand. Then, as Bobby continued to stare at him without recognition, "Don't you remember me? Calway—Jerry Calway?"

The former, otherwise Jerry, Calway of Bobby's war-time memories—Scatters they had nicknamed him on account of a tendency that way in moments of excitement—had been a big, shaggy youth, whose seemed to find life, and even war, a huge joke. But poison gas has been responsible for many strange metamorphoses. Few would have recognized that Calway in this shrunken figure and lined, nervous face.

For once Bobby found his favorite exclamation inadequate.

"Good lord—Scatters!" he gasped, and then the uncontrolled hand sagged helplessly. Turning, he introduced his new-found friend, "Jerry Calway—one of the very best!"

Calway bowed nervously.

"R-Rhordan has had word of his ghastly affair, and I came along to see if I can be of any use."

The detective gave him a look, appraising alone.

"Thanks, Mr. Calway; there are several points on which you may be able to help me later. For the moment I will content myself with one or two questions of immediate importance. First, can you identify the man described here?" He read from his notes the description of Mr. Mellich.

Calway shook his head.

"No, no, I can't say I recognize him. But possibly R-Rhordan may?" He turned to the porter.

"I might be able to help, sir, if the gentleman could just give me some little bit more information—the kind or to be would be after war?"

Bobby answered the question immediately.

"Good lord, I ought to have mentioned that! It was an R.A. one—Royal Artillery soldier."

"That's the man, sir?" exclaimed Ellerton. "I had quite then a notion it was him from the description, though I couldn't fit in with him having a bag—especially one he would use to be out of for the airfield while I'd be sitting here at my tea. But now you mention his 'sir', it's him, sir, no man else."

"And when's this, sir?" asked the detective, as the porter stopped, evidently under the impression that he had completed his information.

"Why, now, wasn't I after again? It's Booth—Mr. Slyn's new man."

FROM GOMALES, TEXAS.

EXCERPTS, who had been leaning back in his chair throughout the first part of the porter's account, bent forward suddenly.

"Slyn's man—you're sure of that?"

"As sure's if I saw the man myself, sir. It 'ud be a mighty queer thing if there was two at the same description about the flat!"

A few rapid questions extracted from the porter and Calway the little they knew about Booth. Apparently he had been with Slyn for only about three weeks, the work of the flat having been done previously by a woman who came in daily, and whose address Ellerton noted.

Where he had come from neither knew; in

their few short conversations over Rhordan's Irish capacity for absorbing personal information had failed to glean more than impressions. He had gathered an idea that he was not new to Slyn's service; also, that he had looked about the world considerably, and had served in the Artillery during the war, and that was it.

The porter had just been told about five o'clock, when Booth had informed him that he was on his way out for the evening. He was then dressed as Mr. Williams and Bobby had seen him after, but had no bag with him.

Yes, he had seen him go out, but hadn't seen him come in again. It was just possible he might have done so without being seen by him—about half-past five, when he had gone to the pillar-box at the corner. No, there were no dots in the basement, only ceiling, and he couldn't think of any reason for Booth being down there. You could get into the basement, of course, from the yard at the back, but the door would have to be unlocked from the inside first.

No, there was no way up to window sight from the back except by the landlady's lift, and he was certain that hadn't been used all the afternoon. After that he was certain of that! Why, because if "opened" as he had to suppose he had been hearing it.

"Do you know anything about the relations between Booth and his master?" asked the detective finally.

"Ye mean how they would be getting on together, sir?"

"Yes."

"Well, I didn't like to be saying 'anything' until ye asked me, sir; but now ye have asked me, I'd be saying they was some too tight."

"Oh! What makes you think that?"

"Well, sir, there 'ud only be the two or three in the flat—or a moment, anyway—twice I've heard them have words. The last time was only yesterday—about six o'clock, when I was taking the stairs by the third landing. There was a bit of high talking—two women were talking about a man, and as if he was some one, and I heard Rhordan say quite clear, 'This man, Mr. Slyn, said something I couldn't catch or the door closed again.'"

"What did you hear Booth say?"

"As soon's I can remember, sir, it was: 'Ye can put the screw on worse the often, and it'll be parallel as 'all feel the pinch here.'"

Ellerton exchanged glances with the baronet, then asked:

"You are prepared to swear to that?"

"Didn't I hear it with my own ears, sir?" was the very Irish response.

Ellerton made an entry in his notebook, then read out the description of the unknown girl.

"Do you recognize the lady, Mr. Calway?"

Calway shook his head.

"There's most needs to gaze upon, inspector. It might apply to a good many."

"Quite so; it isn't much of a description," said the detective. "Can you suggest anything?" he went on, turning to the porter.

"I know the young lady you mean, sir," said the latter promptly. "I saw her come in at six o'clock. But she isn't a resident, and I've never seen her before to-day. It 'ud be a little after six while she came in, about five minutes after, perhaps; but she didn't set for anywhere—just walked upstairs."

"How would you describe her?"

The porter turned his gaze to the ceiling as if seeking inspiration, then back to the detective.

"I'm no great hand at descriptions, sir; an' the way she was muffled up, ye couldn't see much. But she was tall, an' slim, an' young—about the age. Moreover, she was young—about twenty—was no more, I'd say—an' pretty, too; an' she was wearin' airmaid dress under her hat."

"How do you know? Did you see it?"

"Well, no, sir—couldn't see it. But she had airmaid's sort of dress on, no hat on her head. An' by the same token I remember her hair was an unusual colour—lightish brown, with a glint as green in it. Her dress I only got a peep at; but it wasn't the kind a lady would be after wearin', except in the airmaid's. This airmaid sort as I said it was."

Again baronet and detective exchanged

glances. Bobby closed his eyes. Damn the man! Why couldn't he have forgotten that point, anyway?

A few more questions nothing further to help in the identification of the mysterious girl. Ellerton went on to a description of the man with the pointed beard.

"That was Mr. Pharrar, sir," said Ellerton, almost before he had finished. "I saw him go out myself. He lives in the section. But Mr. Calway can tell ye more about him than me."

Calway made no sign to speak, but was suddenly overtaken by a fit of coughing—a fit so violent that, even after it had passed, he leaned against the mantelpiece, breathing and gasping for breath.

"Sorry! My eye, sir," he said at last, pressing a hand to it. "Mr. Pharrar is a member of the section, sir, on the second floor; but really I know very little about him, except that he gave complimentary references when he took it, about six months ago. He's only new to it when he is in town."

"Where does he live when out in London?"

"I don't say, but I expect we have his address in the office."

"It'll! You might look it up, then; I may want it, when his references. And, in addition, you might get together all the information you have about the dead man."

The detective bent to his notes again for a few moments, then swung round suddenly to the porter.

"Now, Rhordan, will you tell me exactly where you were, and what you were doing, when Mr. Williams rang for the lift?"

A startled look leapt into the porter's eyes, and they fell towards his questioner's steady gaze.

"Where was I, sir?" he repeated. "Why, just—the stairs' round on the stairs. Between the first an' second floor I'd be."

"Was?"

"Quite sure, sir." His eyes met the detective's steadily.

"And you didn't hear any unusual noise above, or even the sound of a door closing?"

"There may have bin, sir," was the reply after a pause. "But I didn't notice anything except the lift bell, an' I came down immediately I heard that."

"And you know nothing whatsoever about Slyn's death?"

"Not a word, sir; an' if the Heavly Mother herself asked me, I couldn't say different." The reply came clearly, without trace of hesitation.

The detective stared at him. Seemed to come to the top of his head, as if it had been elsewhere. Did he mean that he couldn't or wouldn't? He decided to postpone further questioning and have a discreet eye kept upon him meanwhile.

"Thanks, Rhordan," he said, as if amply satisfied, and turned to Calway. "Did you find a key for number eight?"

Calway shook his head.

"Now, we have one somewhere in the office, I-but I couldn't locate it."

"Then I'm afraid we may have to damage the door," said Ellerton, rising. To the porter he added: "You'd better come with us, I may want you."

"Ye won't require none, will you?" asked Calway.

Rhordan did not reply immediately.

"You can stand by in the hall for the moment," he said to the porter; then, when the door had closed behind him, turned once more to Calway. "What'd you know about that chap?"

Heard Calway told him. For over two years the very same Rhordan had been in his company.

"You wouldn't remember him, perhaps," he said, turning to Bobby. "He didn't get his sergeant's stripes until after you were cooked."

He knew nothing of his pre-war history, save that he had done previous service and was on the reserve when the war broke out. He had lost sight of him after demobilization, owing to his own wounds having removed him from the battalion, and had come across him again some six years afterwards—down and out, peddling lawn. Soon afterwards he had got him his present job, where his conduct had been

in every way satisfactory. Yes, he would turn him, anywhere.

"He strikes queer trails at times—an odd kind of a man's the trouble. What he's a top ping fellow at heart," Jerry Calway confided. Ellershaw picked up his own.

"How good? If you mean it affects him mentally?"

"Only in that slight way. Nothing more serious, that I know of."

"Ellershaw made a mental note to secure the man's history," history from Army records. He thanked Calway and made an appointment for the morning. "I'll let you off the rest of your impatience for the night," he smiled, bidding him good-night.

Bobby accompanied him to the door.

"No man's less right of such other again. Hark, old man!" he said in parting. "If you see up some crawling when you're free, and we'll light our battles again over dinner tomorrow!"

"Cheerio!"

He turned to join the others, already at the foot of the stairs, then halted abruptly, and peered from the floor a small oblong of paper, barely distinguishable from the patterned red of the carpet.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed staring at it.

Ellershaw and the baronet swung round in amazement, then crossed to his side.

"What have you got?" asked his uncle. Bobby held out the slip—their crimson label, bearing in three lines of bold lettering ornamented with scrolls and flourishes, the words, "Cushman and Lyle, Bookbinders and Printers, Greenway House."

"What is it?" and "Is it something important?" asked Bobby and Ellershaw simultaneously.

"It is!" said the baronet, gazing at the label. "Highly important in the present circumstances! It happens to be a stamp—a postage stamp—and an extremely valuable one!"

THE COPPER CYLINDER.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Bobby, at the significance of his find came home to him.

"Let's have a look at it!" said Ellershaw. Moving under one of the lamps, he scrutinized the label closely.

"You've got me guessing again, Sir William," he said at last. "Sure you haven't made a mistake? It's a bookbinder's label or I'm going blind!"

The baronet smiled gravely, and shook his head.

"No, Ellershaw, I've made no mistake. It is a bookbinder's label, but at the same time it is one of the rarest United States postage stamps, and worth something in the neighborhood of two hundred pounds!"

"And it fell out of Brock's pocket-book?" broke in Bobby.

"That is possible, Bobby, but by no means certain."

"Well, I'm convinced it did, anyhow! And where it came from that doesn't require much guessing! Good lord! I was a fool to let the fellow bluff me!"

"Wait a moment," interrupted Ellershaw. "You two are going too fast for me." He turned to Sir William. "Glad that it is a stamp, and assuming that it was dropped by Brock—what of it?"

The baronet looked at him in surprise.

"Simply I told you Brock was a collector, and that was the reason for my visit to-night."

"The detective's been cleared instantly. You did, Sir William, and, to be candid, it had slipped my memory. I made the mistake of considering the point unimportant—a word I should have cut out of my dictionary years ago!"

"Perhaps you weren't close in that?" smiled the baronet. "I'm afraid I didn't emphasize the point as much as I ought. I should have told you that, according to his own account, his collection is worth something over five figures!"



"Ellershaw!" gasped Bobby. Peering at them through the pane with nightless eyes headed the corpse of the missing detective.

"Ellershaw! Where did he keep it? At his bank?"

"No, here, I believe, in his hat. And that is why. The baronet left the entrance unwatched."

"Just so?" said Ellershaw, with a nod of understanding. "And the hat's our next objective." Taking up his bag again, he led the way upstairs.

A direct scrutiny of the carpets at the first three landings failed to disclose any trace of the hat, having been dragged over any of them, and such and such were on sight, to examine the remaining landing, Ellershaw remaining behind to operate on the lock of No. 4.

"He was busy using a skeleton key with a small file when he replaced him."

"And anything?" he asked, glancing up from his task.

"Nothing in the way of tracks," replied the baronet, "but something which seems to provide the means for the hat's sticking. The shaft gate up there is open."

"That's what I meant, sure, when I said it hadn't been stolen properly," roared the porter. "All the gates in safety windows, but the men up there sometimes gives a bit a trouble."

"It's that's interesting," said Sir William, and turned again to the detective. "Thank you! message it without leaving!"

Ellershaw was again busy with his task.

"Done!" he said, with a confident smile. "It's a fairly simple task. This time—at the next—should do it."

A few more strokes of the file, and he tried the key in the lock. It turned with a harsh click, and he swung the door inward.

The hat was in darkness; the light from the landing penetrating little further than the threshold, and serving only to intensify the obscurity beyond. Darkness and silence, save for the faint hum of a beating tap for water.

"Drop—drop—drop!"

"Like a ghostly bloom!" thought Bobby inconspicuously, and took a step forward.

"Back! Keep back!" Ellershaw's hand shot out and checked him. The other, trembling in a pocket for his work, glanced on the left at his unwatched master. From within the hat he came a faint rattle of movement.

Nerves suddenly tense, they stood for a moment motionless, listening and then—out of the shadows came a strange, breathing hiss!

"Lo!" whispered the porter hoarsely. The neck's boom cut through the darkness

and swept over the hall. No one there—nothing! Ellershaw crossed to a switch, and a light revealed every inch of light.

"It sounded like an air the room on the right, over?" and the porter cautiously.

But the words were unheeded; the detective was leaning against the wall, breathing heavily, the rays of the lamp overhead reflecting a deathly glare from his face.

The baronet spoke to his side.

"What's up? What's the matter?" he asked, filled with sudden concern.

Ellershaw moved him away, smiling weakly; his several wounds clapped before he spoke.

"Yes—I'm all right now," he said, at last, looking inward, and taking a deep breath. "Something seemed to take the strength out of me for a moment—maybe that dam' snake got on my nerves!"

He gave a forced laugh, and stooped to remove his trench from where it had fallen, then crossed to the door of the sitting-room, the baronet's eyes following him with a puzzled frown.

Reaching his torch through the doorway, he glanced rapidly round the room, then felt for the light switch.

"From guess," he said, and his voice had recovered its old note of decision. "Know where the distributor board is, over?"

Rockets scratched his head reflectively, then pointed to a corridor branching at right angles from the rear of the hall.

"It should be in the bathroom, over—down the passage there."

Ellershaw turned to Bobby.

"Will you go through the rest of the flat?"

Opening the door of the cloak-room opposite, he gave a swift glance over the inside, then crossed to the stairs adjoining the lighted sitting-room, switched on his lights and entered, followed by Sir William.

The room proved to be a sort of antechamber study, remarkably furnished, but with rather questionable taste. Less than a minute sufficed for a general examination, and the two men, with a nod to the porter, proceeded to the corridor—the dining-room, bed-room, kitchen, and so on. But, as in the case of the antechamber, a rapid but methodical examination of each disclosed nothing that could conceivably have any bearing on the crime, or on the strange noise which had greeted their entry. All windows were closed, and their catches securely fastened; everything was in order; no curtain had been overlooked that could conceal a human being.

Passing in the bathroom to replace the bathroom soap, the two returned to the hall. There Ellershaw deposited the porter and closed the entrance door, then he rejoined his companion.

"Well, if that noise was human, whoever made it must be in here!" he said in a low tone. "But—"

Without completing the sentence, he pushed open the door of the sitting-room, now flooded with light, and entered to gaze vent to a low window in his glance rested on the disorder by the unwatched window.

Crossing inward, he peered behind the notice and the remaining curtains, then tried the fastenings of both windows, moving one of them and glancing round the balcony outside. But the balcony, too, was empty of any sign of intruder, and, with a growing suspicion that they must seek some other explanation for the sound, he turned and gazed round the room, searching for some possible place of concealment he had overlooked.

At the other end of the room the baronet was examining through his eyes hopefully, the only remaining articles of furniture that could conceivably shelter a human being—two tall bookcases, standing a few feet apart against the wall facing the windows. But both cases and contents proved to be what they seemed, and not a camouflage of dummy shelves and book-binders, making some secret recess. When this had been established he moved from there to the detective, and each read the answer to his unspoken query in the other's glance.

"Well, that seems to settle the question of the noise," said Ellershaw. "Door fastened, every window closed, no one in the place! It can't have been made by a human being!"

THE ORANGE-COLOURED LABEL.

"So it would seem," rejoined the baronet gravely, and crossed toward the suspended curtain and overturned lamp, his eyes fastening in his walk.

"I say, Uncle Bill, do you think that this was where—?" Bobby left the question unfinished.

The baronet nodded, and for a few moments brooded thoughtfully at the disordered lamp, endeavoring to reconstruct from its state whether something of the drama the room had witnessed little more than an hour before. Hearing, however, he moved obliquely along the surface of the carpet.

"No—no sign of dragging them, Sir William—I've already looked for it," said Ellsworth, and, moving the curtains carefully to one side, back to examine the floor in its vicinity.

Touching on his torch, he examined closely the carpet's edge. Nothing there! He turned to the leader of the party, sweeping his torch slowly and methodically over its polished surface. To and fro it went, like a penumbra of light, then halted suddenly, its beam exploring three small spots, barely distinguishable from the grain of the wood—a triangle of red-brown stain.

He bent down, and Sir William knelt beside him.

"Almost certainly bloodstain," was the latter's verdict, after a brief scrutiny. "And, from the colour, comparatively fresh. But you'll have them tested, of course!"

Ellsworth nodded, and took out his knife, prying up with it a thin slice of the wood bearing the stains, and moving it in his own. Still kneeling, he eyed the standard lamp beside him, examining its possibilities as a weapon. Feasible, but impracticable. Seemed too unworkable. He lifted it—and the room was instantly plunged in darkness!

Through the doorway a wedge of light shone in from the hall.

"Same here again," said the baronet. "This lamp seems to be the trouble." He grasped along the fireplace to the wall plug, and disconnected it, the flame over a flame from another electric, he added, and, rising, made his way once more to the bathroom.

Standing on a chair, he effected the exchange of fuses and stepped down, resting his hand for a moment on a small copper cylinder over the bath.

"Hallo!" He stood at it for a moment with wrinkled brows, then stepped to the door and whistled sharply.

Bobby and the detective came down the corridor at a run.

"What's up?" asked Ellsworth breathlessly. The baronet nodded to the cylinder.

"The thing's warm!"

Ellsworth's eyes followed the acid, then returned to the speaker.

"Well, what about it?" he queried.

"I'll answer that presently," Sir William turned to his nephew. "See if you can find a couple of pale Bobby. Try the kitchen." He walked until Bobby had returned with two large white pails, then embarked upon a series of operations, watched by the two others with growing astonishment.

Taking the pails, he placed one in the bath, under the tap of the cylinder. Next he lifted a bath thermometer from its hook and ran a stream of water on it in from the cylinder tap, withdrawing it presently and noting its reading.

Allowing the tap to run until the pail was full, he shut it off momentarily and substituted the other pail, then, as it was approached fullness, held the thermometer once more in the steam and glanced at it again, giving an immediately to take further readings from the water in each pail and from the cold water tap in the bath.

Using his cuff as a notepad, he made a rapid calculation, stared intently at the result, checked it once, then turned to his two companions.

"By Jove! This is even queerer than I expected!" he said. "We shall have to revise our conclusions about that wire!"

"How—what do you mean?" asked Ellsworth. "I mean that less than three months ago—when you were busy with that book outside—some human being was in this flat!"

"Come land! Impossible!" gasped Bobby. "I may see it, Bobby, but it is an indisputable fact!"

Ellsworth remained silent for a while, then transferred a puzzled gaze from the cylinder to the baronet.

"Well, what more you've got me guessing, Sir William. Here you haven't slipped up somewhere!"

"Quite sure—there is no possible room for doubt," replied Sir William. "But a simple explanation will make it clear. When I saw that this cylinder was electrically heated, and that the contents of it was increased on it became apparent that something definite could be determined as to the time at which the wiring on took place. One had only to know three things—the power of the heating element, the capacity of the cylinder, and the number of degrees of temperature through which its contents had been raised.

"The first two are marked on the maker's name-plate—two thousand watts and five gallons. The thermometer showed me that the average temperature of the contents was seventy degrees, and that of water from the cold tap forty-seven degrees. Therefore, assuming they were cold to start with, the five gallons had been raised in temperature by twenty-three degrees. A simple formula—one which allows for all heat losses incidental to an installation of this kind—gives the time required for two thousand watts to do that as just under thirteen minutes—so the wire must have started with the water—was cold to start with," interrupted Ellsworth, only to add immediately: "No, of course, that would make the time required even less!"

"Frequently," rejoined the baronet. "And that is what fixes it as definitely. When I took the temperature I also took the time. It was six minutes to eight. Therefore the water which was turned on not earlier than twelve minutes to eight—and at a quarter to eight we entered this flat!"

"Speaking only five minutes during which it could have taken place!" Ellsworth turned to examine the switch itself, a large, electric white by the door, beside the light switch. "Un—" he began.

"Unless I switched it on in mistake for the light, when first we entered this room," smiled Sir William. "No! I made no such mistake. But someone did, and I have an idea we may gain something about that someone from the switch itself!"

The detective was already scrutinizing it with the aid of his lens. "You're right!" he exclaimed almost immediately. "Couldn't have worked for better ones if we'd taken them at the Yard!"

The polished black surface of the turn-button, a perfect mirror for the purpose, was dulled on each of its flat sides by a network of fine lines—the prints of the thumb and finger that had just switched it on!

"Excellent impressions!" agreed the baronet, after an examination. With a double he added: "And, by the way, the prints themselves are from my companion of the kitchen who lit the gas. The larger—the thumb-print, of course—is a perfect wheel, whereas both my thumb are imprints."

"Yes, but where in the kitchen that did switch it on?" interrupted Bobby, peering at the prints in his turn.

"I can't answer it yet, Mr. Davell," laughed Ellsworth, in high goodhumour at their discovery. "But I can tell you where he isn't—and that is in this flat! Having been in it, he must have got out again somewhere, and it seems we have overlooked that somewhere for our search!"

Carefully, using the tip of his glass as a rest, to avoid touching the prints, he turned the switch into its "off" position, then he crossed to the one small window of the room.

"Let's see now. It was you who examined this window, Sir William?"

"It was—and you can definitely make it out! Catch merely fastened, no sign of tampering, and done with all the others I examined."

"Just so," nodded the detective. "Well, we've got to go over them all again—this latest discovery leaves us no choice."

Kneeling on the vestibule, he scrutinized the window-locks and frames, to step down again, shaking his head. He half-turned, passing abruptly, and bent to the floor, picking from it a small free sponge, one of its sides covered with blood! Without a word he passed his foot to the baronet, then turned his attention to some board on a nail by the basin. One of him bore fainter but unmistakably similar stains!

"Interesting from a reconstructive point of view, but otherwise of little value!" was Sir William's comment.

"Just so." Ellsworth retraced his steps to their places, then, after a further glance round the room, made for the door. "I'm going to get one of our experts to photograph those prints in place!" he said. "You can start another half round, Sir William, while I get on the job done."

"There's one in the smoke-room," ventured Bobby.

"Yes! I'd already noticed it, Mr. Davell!" Ellsworth was already half-way along the corridor.

When he rejoined them the two were in a party attended to the kitchen, standing by a hatchway that filled the lower half of its one window.

"Well, any luck?" he asked.

The baronet shook his head.

"Nothing, so far, in any of the other rooms. There's something wrong here, though!"

"But what is it?" Ellsworth turned to his side, Bobby making room for him.

By William swung open the hatch, disclosing in the semi-darkness outside the rope and framework of the service lift. "You remember your question to the porter, and his answer—that this lift could not have been used without his bearing it repeating!" He pressed the highest of three buttons on the hallway frame. Without a sound the rope below began to move upward!

"By Jove! Good!"

"Just so, and very recently—if the porter's statement is correct!"

"And the hatch—"

"Was bolted on the inside. No, this isn't how our man escaped. But it adds another feature in what is rapidly becoming a very pretty problem!"

The detective stared at the slowly ascending rope, pondering the significance of this fresh discovery.

"Any idea of the rope's whereabouts when you first opened this thing?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes, down. At the end of its travel, in fact."

"Sure of that?"

"Quite sure," was the emphatic response. "I pressed the down switch at first by mistake and the rope didn't move. If additional proof of the rope's position had been needed, the counterweights supplied it—as they did in the case of the other lift. They and the rope supporting them were up above, right out of sight."

"But! We'll see if it can tell us anything when it comes up!" Ellsworth turned again to the hatch. "By the way, there's something will interest you in that smoke-room place, Sir William—something I chanced upon while I was waiting for—"

He broke off abruptly as the faint noise of the telephone bell sounded from the other end of the flat. "The Yard!" he said laconically and thrust his hand into the baronet's hands. There, over his shoulder as he sped to the door, "Carry, we said I come back!"

His footsteps died away down the corridor, and the two in the party resumed their watch on the slowly ascending rope.

Presently the rope, with the cage it supported appeared in the aperture, in came to rest at the pressure of the baronet's finger on one of the control buttons. Reaching on the floor, he shot it through the hatch, and one side (interior of the cage) in half its length suddenly on one of the sides, where a joint between two boards, protruded a slip of card!

"Hallo!" he muttered, carefully detaching his hand from its anchorage. "Not entirely empty after all!"

Stepping back into the light of the lamp, he stooped, he scooped out the slip—a bright

words. "Extremely possible, Bobby, and, in view of the peculiar circumstances of the case, highly respectable."

Listening Bobby to the depths where his reply had plunged him, he turned again to the detective.

"All the same, Brett, I am not inclined to agree with you off-hand as to this being the weapon that killed Ryan."

The curve of Bobby's spine rose to a peak. "We've begun our assignments early this time," smiled Brett good-naturedly. "Anywhere, let's leave it. What'd'you find to support that?"

"It is not what I find that supports it, but what I don't find. The lack of this thing leaves no trace of bloodstains."

"Well, sure! It?"

"The hardest gave him a pointed look, then lit his cigar lazily."

"Sorry; I'd quite forgotten that you haven't seen the body. When you have you will agree that neither this nor any other weapon could have produced the wound that killed Ryan and have escaped, not merely stain, but very considerable stains."

"Ho, that certainly clears matters!" Brett took the statistic and examined it again.

"Yes, it seems hardly likely that the stains

were wiped off the base and the evidence of the print left unattended. Unless," he paused, frowning suddenly—"unless it was done in the dark. Didn't the burglar that you mentioned belong to the room?"

Bobby's spine curved suddenly downward; he uttered a few words of that!

Uncle Sam hadn't; he was staring at the statistic in Brett's hand, reconsidering his opinion in the light of this new suggestion.

"Yes, I may be wrong," he admitted finally. "But a test will decide the matter."

"That's going to be done, Mr. William," rejoined the detective, and laid the statistic on the table beside him. "But it isn't Ryan's death that is our immediate concern—it's your beyond recall. Elsewhere, I hope and trust, hasn't."

He opened his notebook again. "It's his part of the problem that we've got to tackle first; and I don't begin to do that when I've had all the known facts before the beginning, and in the order in which you discovered them."

Even by then Mr. William recounted the events of the evening, the discoveries, and the opinion they had formed as to the significance of each; his recital punctuated by frequent interruptions, while Brett went back over some point or made slight shorthand notes.

"I'll have a quiet at that safe presently," he said when he happened had concluded. "But it's your friend who insisted that thing on through those who matters just now—of his means of exit and re-entry anyway. When we've found that we shall have gone a long way towards finding Elsewhere!"

He bent again to his notes, studying them for a brief while in silence, his alert brain searching for some definite starting point. As nothing as correct the statements recorded there, it was abundantly obvious that somewhere within the flat there remained to be discovered either a very thing—a secret hiding-place, or an unexplained means of exit. The question was, where? And, as a first step in the direction of an answer, he decided to go back to the entry of the first search party.

"That other you heard when you first entered?" he said. "You both say it seemed to come from one of the rooms on this side. You can't say more definitely than that, I suppose?" He turned to Bobby.

Bobby shook his head.

"I can't. It seemed to come either from the smoke-room or from here; but all I can say with certainty is that it came from this end of the flat."

The detective turned to Mr. William.

"My answer is the same, Brett. I find it impossible to locate the sound more definitely, coming as it did from the darkness of a place entirely strange to me. However, all four of us were agreed that it came from this end."

"Well, that's something; we'll see what we can make of it. This end of the flat consists of the room we see in, the smoke-room next door, the dining-room, the bath, and this cloak-room place. Now, between the time you heard the sound and the finishing one of the flat, was it possible for the intruder to have got out of any of these rooms and down the corridor to the other end of the flat?"

"Quite impossible, without being seen," replied the basement. "Elsewhere was thinking his teeth into the hall before the sound had ceased."

Brett stared at him.

"Before it had ceased! Did I last some time, then? I'd get the idea it was a short, sharp hiss—a sort of his warning."

"It had the character of just such a hiss—in fact, that was the impression it gave me at the time. It lasted a matter of three or four seconds, and, as near as I can reproduce it, sounded like this: *hiss-hiss-sharp, rattled, and slightly diminished.*"

"Erms, Uncle Sam! The fellow himself couldn't improve on that!" laughed Bobby, then, turning to the detective: "Joking apart, though, inspector, that is exactly how it sounded. Like the last breath of a punctured tyre—or a snake doing something enormous!"

"Just so, Mr. Merrill—like a tyre or a snake!" said Brett thoughtfully. "Well, suppose, since your story seems to have placed the intruder to the end of the flat, it's at this

end that his means of exit must lie—so our search is narrowed to four rooms." He paused.

"Consideration of what happened later will suggest it, still further!" interposed the detective.

"I can't see that, Mr. William, and I'm contradicting it," was the somewhat cool rejoinder.

"However, if you've worked out something already I'd like to hear it."

"Well, Brett, I've had every stone there you'd think it gave," the latter retorted him. Then, after a pause, he went on: "As I read it, this is an outline of what happened—namely of a fairly obvious. The intruder, surprised in the middle of his burglary, by our entry, escaped from the flat, leaving his coat, or some of it, behind."

"Later, he rode a return journey to the main—probably within the time of a man being with the service lift. Suspended by the telephone-bell and Elsewhere's approach, he hid, only to be discovered and pursued by Elsewhere, who tries to trip him, first with a stool, then with the great lamp. At the moment the pistol was shown the intruder would be undoubtedly making for his unknown means of exit. The point where it was found and the track made by the man's shoe that it was thrown from the rear of the hall, and in the direction of the passage—that is to say, away from the dining-room and smoke-room. Then at one sweep we can eliminate those two rooms from the problem, leaving only two—the bath and the cloak-room!"

But a further search, a search that encompassed a methodical, painstaking examination of the floor, ceiling, and walls of both rooms, a search that left nothing in chance—even to the turning out of the mattresses of beds in the two cases—discovered no hint of hidden trap or doorway, nor sign of secret entrance of any kind. It brought no light, no suggestion, no clue, no suggestion, to the floor of a rug in the dining-room, a few fragments of broken glass, which the detective swept into an envelope for examination later.

As the search drew to a close, and its fruitlessness became increasingly apparent, the detective's face assumed a look of pensive lock-down. At its end he passed the room for a while in silence, then crossed to scrutinize the two windows once more in a futile hope. He opened one of them, closed it again, then turned suddenly to the basement.

"Look here, Mr. William, these windows are filled with slant catches! Anyone could pass through and shut them from the other side!"

The basement betrayed not the slightest surprise at the announcement.

"I am aware of the fact, Brett—although I only discovered it after Elsewhere's appearance. I would have drawn your attention to it had I thought it would throw any light on the problem—but it doesn't. As you say, you can shut them from the outside, but you can't open them. And at no time did we have notice of them open!"

"Sure of that?"

"Quite!"

Brett stopped from the entrance and gave a short but the remark. "Nothing for it now but a top-to-the search!" he said.

"I say, couldn't this have something to do with it?" Bobby in Bobby from the unaccounted window, where he was passing an investigation on its own. "The hole?"

"Hole! Great Scott! What hole?" Brett literally leapt to his feet.

"This!" Bobby pointed to a tiny hole in the plate-glass door, close to the catch.

IN THE EMPTY FLAT.

THE two other men stared blankly at the hole, then their eyes met.

"Mr. Merrill was this round-by-a hole!" grinned the detective. "A best way through this would do the trick every time! With a sharp he added: "I looked for it, too—and missed it!"

Mr. William gave a great laugh.

"The premeditated idea, Brett—we were both under its spell! We looked only for what we expected to find: a big, round, diamond-shaped handle—not this!" He swung the window open, and was about to step on to the balcony.

"Keep on!" Brett placed a detaining hand on his arm. "We'll have a look round here



In a dream she whirled the statistic on high and brought it crashing down on the steel head. With a choking cry, Ryan staggered back and slid to the floor by the window, carrying its curtain with him to his fall.

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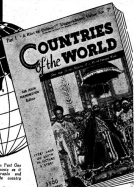
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and." He shook his teeth along the sill, then to the floor outside.

But the sill revealed no tracks of the two who must have passed that way; and it was at once apparent that none could be hoped for on the smooth, wax-washed floor forming the balcony floor.

A cough in the room behind them announced the waiting presence of the steward.

"You called me, sir?"

"Yes." Brett gave him some instructions, then turned to the window again and stepped outside. Uncle and Andrew followed.

The balcony embraced both windows of the sitting-room, projecting a few inches beyond each, but separated by a gap of some yards from that of the adjoining flat. Brett measured the gap with his eye, then stepped to the railings and peered over. Below, a succession of similar balconies marked each floor down to the street, but no projecting rail-pipes, nor any projections on the smooth surface of the brickwork, offered foot or handhold to a climber.

He looked out and turned his torch to the balcony above, sweeping its beam along it, to come suddenly to rest on a swaying fragment of copper—a fragment only a few inches long, dangling from the railings overhead! He started at it for an instant, then turned his gaze downward once more, straining his eye to perceive the line of blackness marking the area far below.

Impossible to see at that distance, he signalled with his torch to a figure in uniform on the pavement, one of a small knot of people gathered in the light of the entrance, their faces appeared to him where he stood; then, at an answering sign, sprang out on the stretch of his torch a message in Morse.

"Search-area—balcony—wand—report," read Bobby from the flickering light. "Good lord!" he whispered. "Does he think they've gone overboard?"

"Looks like it, Bobby," was the baronet's grim reply. "Both—our one!"

"Know anything about the piece above?" asked Brett, turning to him.

"Number ten? Yes—it's empty!" answered Bobby immediately.

"Got that from the paper?"

"No, I noticed it on the indicator board."

Brett glanced at the baronet.

"He's following in your footsteps, Sir William!" he smiled, and jerked a head to the balcony above. "Have a squint at what's on the railings up there."

Turning, he commenced to pace the floor, signing his torch over the tiled surface, now and then stopping to clear a crumple.

Profoundly he returned to the window, and motioned the two there to proceed line into the room.

"You haven't been smoking since we went out there, Sir William?" he asked, immediately they were inside again.

The baronet shook his head.

"And you haven't been out on the balcony looking for anything since our conversation?"

"Neither this nor any other evening! Why?" ignoring the "why," Brett went on to another question.

"Do you know what cigarette the dead man smoked?"

Bobby answered him.

"Smoked abominations—there's a box in his smokeroom. You noticed them, Uncle Bill?"

"I did, Bobby, and I remember now that he smoked something of the sort when I met him," Sir William turned to Brett. "But what of these questions?"

The detective held out his hand, palm upward, as to the half-smoked stump of a cigarette.

"There's the reason, Sir William—I picked it up in the bar corner out there. Have a look at it. Although there was a shadow about six, only one side—that which was touching the floor—is even damp. Also, it's a hand-made one—quite. I should say, from the same mill you smoke yourself."

"Ed!" The baronet's leave contracted in a sudden frown. Taking the stump, he glanced at it, then held it to his nose.

"By Jove! You're right, Brett!" he exclaimed, then stared at the detective, his cheeks reddening gaudily above the great beard. "By—good heavens! Surely you aren't begin-

ning in suspect me of having any hand in this affair!"

"Not yet, Sir William," laughed Brett, "although one might be accused for suspecting anyone in the queer tangle! Still, a taste for materialism is very common on this side of the channel, and it may prove a useful piece of evidence against someone!"

He took the stamp again and placed it in his cigarette-case, then turned to the window, striking his torch along the outside of the pane and peering obliquely at its surface.

His scrutiny was rewarded almost immediately; a few inches below the hole, finger-prints could clearly be discerned—from their position in relation to each other obviously the thumb, index and little finger of a left hand, from their size almost certainly a man's.

"Excellent! Two lots of first-class prints—left hand here, right hand in the left-room!" he chuckled, and stood aside so that the baronet could examine them.

"Touch of the beginner in the way he leaves them alone?" remarked the latter as he bent down.

"More than a touch, Sir William. But we've both known old leggy cardies in those nations—and it may be we've their counter-parts at headquarters. Anyhow, we'll leave 'em."

Bobby, too, had bent to look at the prints.

"I'd like to ask one question, Inspector," he said almost immediately.

"Fire away, Mr. Barrill!—I can't do anything new until Barker comes back."

"Well, then, I can see the prints here one from a left hand, but I can't see—"

"How I make those on the switch to be from a right?" smiled Brett. "Quite simply; if you have another look at it you'll spot it for yourself. The two prints show that the fingers gripping the prints were at a considerable angle to each other, with both tips pointing in a clockwise direction. Had it been done with the left hand their direction would be counter-clockwise. That's right—try it for yourself, and you'll see what I mean." He added, as Bobby commenced to make passes at an imaginary switch with right and left hands alternately.

"There's one important piece of information you've overlooked here," interrupted Sir William, looking up from a lengthy examination of the prints. "Not only were those made by a left hand, but by a mutilated one—both its middle fingers missing!"

"Oh!" Brett bent again to the prints, stared at them for a moment, then pressed the tips of his distinguished fingers against another portion of the pane.

The experiment left him in no doubt as to the correctness of the baronet's deduction. With one's left hand in the position indicated by the three prints it required a distinct and some-what awkward effort to prevent the tips of the two middle fingers from touching the glass, and to suppose that the intruder had thus intentionally withstood them was to suppose that the existing prints had been made intentionally, which was absurd.

"You're right, Sir William," he said, turning again. "And it's likely to be a useful clue. Will? Get 'em?"

This last was addressed to the sergeant, who had crept up in the doorway.

"I've got the two extra men, sir, but I couldn't find the party."

"Couldn't they see me? What if you mean?"

"Just what I mean, sir. He isn't downstairs, and Sergeant Hughes tells me he went out about ten minutes ago, saying he was going to the office, but I asked the office, when I glanced from his badge about the boys, and they've seen nothing of him there."

The incredulous look with which Brett had greeted the first part of the sergeant's statement changed to a pained frown. Then, side-tracking for future consideration the question of the party's strange conduct, he went on:

"There's no way brought the keys, then?"

"They're on their way from the office, sir—Hughes is carrying them up. I came on ahead with Sergeant Trill."

"Oh, he's arrived, has he? Excellent!" Brett turned to his two companions. "If you two will excuse me, I'll get him started on his job right away," he said, and hurried from the room.

"Who is Trill?" asked Bobby, when the door had closed behind the two police officers.

"Don't know, Bobby—the name is new to me, but I presume he is the finger-print expert who was being sent from headquarters. The baronet prodded himself on the arm of the couch, and proceeded to make a cigarette."

Bobby crossed toward the armchair, pressing the moment in time at the statements on the table beside it, then seated himself, frowning at the carpet as if a world of care lay upon his broad young shoulders.

His count glanced at him quickly.

"Well, Bobby, this is a queer evening's entertainment my hobby has let us in for!"

"Good lord! I should say it is!" was the response, accompanied by something respectably like a sigh. His eye roved once more toward the little figure on the table. "Say, Uncle Bill, do you—do you remember? Do you think they could trace anyone from this—this thing here?"

The baronet opened his lips to speak, when these flashed across his mental vision a reminiscence of the far-wrapped figure on the stairs, of the unaccounted abstraction that had descended suddenly upon his nephew within the past few hours, of his suspicion that the statements had been made in self-defence. "Oh, the way the wind blew! The answer, he had already framed underwent a swift revision."

"Most unlikely, Bobby—unless the print on it is already recorded at the Yard!"

"Which couldn't possibly be the case, of course, answered Bobby, steadily, allusion to the fact that the grounds upon which he based his assertion might, to a less prejudiced observer, seem far from conclusive.

The door opened—Brett appearing in the aperture, so announcing the arrival of the boys.

"Hughes brought 'em up himself," he went on, as they joined him. "They found the broken scope in the basement—but nothing else, thank heavens!"

Leaving one of the constables on guard in the flat, he led the way to the landing above, and crossed to number ten.

"Thought this was the top floor!" he said, peering to the east of turning the key to stand at a landing light of stairs on his left.

"It is," replied the baronet. "That light made of a door on the roof. We went up there earlier this evening."

"On the roof?"

"No, only as far as the door. It was behind."

"I see." Brett opened the door of number ten and shove his torch into the hall—a replica of the one they had just left, but empty of its occupant, then crossed to the light switch, only to stick it on without result. "Lead your torch to Sir William, sergeant, and stand by," he said over his shoulder, and made for the door of the room corresponding to the sitting-room beneath.

A gust of still air met them as they entered, coming from the open half of one of the French windows. In the room itself, everything—a lamp, dead supplies that could almost be felt. Brett crossed to the open window and shove his torch outside. Nothing there—were the rope-and-chain knotted to the railings. He turned, and crossed again to the door.

Fresh room to room the three watchers passed, in a stilted broken only by the whispering volume of their own footsteps, and at the end they had found no sign of those whom they sought, no single clue to the problem confronting them, nor hint of a clue. Not until they had finished their examination of the last room, the kitchen, did any of the three break the silence with a word. Then Brett spoke.

"Well, that seems to be that!" he said, with a poor pretence of dissatisfaction. "They must have gone through the door and up to

the roof. At any rate, the roof's our only hope now! No, Mr. Barrill," he called to Bobby, who, armed with Sir William's borrowed torch, had made his way into the pantry; "there's nothing doing there. That hatch was closed—locked!"

"No, I noticed," replied Bobby, who had opened the hatch and was shining his torch through it. "All the same, something queer has happened here!"

"What if you mean?" Brett was by his side in an instant, followed by the baronet.

Bobby flashed the light round the framework of the lift. "A few minutes ago we left the cage at this thing level with Ryan's flat. And now—'up'! Up above this!"

"Up!" repeated Brett mechanically, but the pleasure of the venture upon the one supporting the cage, had already demonstrated the truth of the statement. He pressed the "down" button on the frame. As he did so, suddenly through the still night air out the sound of a muffled cough!

A momentary silence, broken only by the rattle of the descending cage; then, with a

Thunderbolt, Bobby gazed after the speeding figure, for in that one brief glimpse he had recognized Brett—the dead man's valet.



muttered "Good lord!" Bobby thrust his hand to the opening.

"Look out!" He sprang a hand to the window to arrest the cage. Brett grasped him with the other and dragged him clear of the hatchway. "If you want to commit—" He stopped, and, impelled by the look of frozen horror on Bobby's face, swung his eyes and torch to the window above. "My heavens!" he muttered in a wild whisper.

Peering at them through the pane, huddled on the cage top, death written over the grotesquely postured limbs, in the upturned, staring eyes, crouched the corpse of the missing detective!

ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.

SEARCHED for a moment from his usual impetuosity, Superintendent Martin swung round in his chair and stared at his subordinates with a look of frank bewilderment.

"And you found nothing?"

Brett shook his head slowly.

"Nothing, sir," he repeated. "Neither the outline of the sound, nor any sign of his presence!" But," he added with a very smile, "that doesn't in any way prove that he hadn't been there. Don't forget we had to force the door leading to the roof—and that

at least five minutes elapsed between the sound and our search up there."

"Any indication of how he got away then?" queried the superintendent sharply.

"No direct indication, although there are some possibilities . . . But wait a moment, I'd better give you some idea of the lay of the land or there." Traversing a leaf from his notebook, Eben sketched out a diagram and laid it before the superintendent, then he went on:

"This is a rough plan of the whole block—approximately, five stories high, and separated from any other building by its divided into five sections of ten feet each, two is a four—every section self-contained and communicating with adjoining sections only by way of the street. . . ."

"No the roof?" suggested Murton.

"No; not by the roof," rejoined Britt. "You'll see why presently, sir; but I'll deal with the other parts first. The front of the block which has balconies such as I've already described on all its floors, is separated from the street by a narrow area as my two ends; while the back faces on a wide, modern yard, used by tradesmen and reached by two entrances from a narrow lane. Section A, containing the dead man's flat, is an end one, but, like the others, has two service lifts rising from the yard to the roof, and an iron escape passage, ranging from the roof downwards alongside the windows of the main staircase. This escape runs about fifteen feet or so from the ground, an iron ladder being hinged to it, to be dropped in case of emergency in the usual way."

"So much for front and back, then; now for the flat. The partition is whole length this is that, the furniture belonging to the different sections being separated by high railings. Dotted here and there along it are garden-seats and a number of shrubs and small trees in tubs, but there is nothing on it that could conceal a human being—even in the dark a few seconds was sufficient to establish that fact."

"What are those railings like?"

"About ten feet high, spiked on top, and projecting over both front and rear passages—I'd only mention to you that whenever a ladder . . . No, we can discuss any likelihood of his

having escaped to another part of the block. My own idea is that he made his way down the fire-escape. Neither the drop at the end of it, nor the wall between yard and lane, would prove much of an obstacle to a desperate man."

"And now—and we've all London to sort him out from now?" Murton pulled the telephone toward him. "That you, Drew?" he said into it. "See if you can hasten the report on those fingerprints. The Marlow-Mansions case." Replacing the receiver, he bent to a sheet of notes before him, and poring over them for some time in silence.

"Well, Drew," he went on presently, "since you brought me your first report on the 'Riviera Rabbit' as you called it, I don't think we've had quite such a chance game as this! And . . . on top of it . . . Eber-shaw?"

He paused, staring at the desk before him, and the thoughts of both went back to the tragic fate which had overtaken their colleagues.

The alarm was broken by a knock at the door, heralding the entry of an expectorating, young-old man bearing some papers.

"Well, Trull? Any luck?" inquired the superintendent.

"Yes, sir," answered Trull, "we've identified one lot! Those on the switch and window-pane—both made by the same man." He laid several photographs on the desk. "Here are my photographs of the prints, and those from our records. And this"—he laid an official form beside them—"is the chap's dossier."

Murton perused the document fast.

"Jim," he muttered, half to himself, "Jephthah Holt, also known as 'the King.' First sentenced in 1887, three months for assault. Again, the same year, twelve months for robbery with violence. Four subsequent sentences of varying terms for the same type of offences—in which he seems to have specialized. Then, in 1908, seven years' penal servitude. By Jove!" He turned to Britt. "I remember him well! He's the man who killed old Richards in Chequer Tavern, and secured a verdict of murder by the bite of his teeth!"

"Ph-e-w! The chap that did it 'Dicky

the Ponce." I remember the case. Was that his last name?"

"Yes; he seems to have run straight for a matter of ten years or, at any rate, kept out of our hands." Murton turned from the discussion to the photographs, then handed one of them to Britt, the portrait of a man of about thirty, square face, with an heavy lined, protruding forehead and somewhat stiffly eyes had crime stamped all over it. The huge head, the squat, stunted body, the great knotted hands dangling from arms as long as to be a deformity, all conveyed the impression of something inhuman, bestial, worse than animal.

"Nice, bright sort of fellow," said Britt, then glanced up at Trull. "I notice he had all his fingers when they were taken."

"He had, but there's no doubt he's the worst of the pair," replied the expert. "He must have had them stee. That is, if you're sure he has lost them."

"Dead sure," said Britt emphatically. "Even without the prints on the window, the marks on poor Ebershaw's throat leave no room for doubt on that point."

"The marks! I didn't know—" began Trull.

The superintendent cut him short.

"We needn't discuss that now, Trull. What about the print on the statistic?"

"Not a one, surely, sir. We have definitely established that."

"Just so; I wasn't very hopeful about it," Murton confessed, together the documents and returned them to the expert. "Get this chap's description circulated right away, with the addition of the two missing fingers, and have inquiries made of 'M' Division, where I am reported when an 'idiot' after his last term." He turned to Britt when the two were alone again. "You've seen to the porter and the other man—Bledd?"

"Yes; I've handed over to Pugh all the information I could gather about them, with Albertson to lead him a hand. For the moment I'm going to concentrate my own enquiries on the man in green—and Holt and the girl in particular."

Murton turned again to his desk.

"I'm not going to ask how you propose to set about it, Britt," he went on after a moment, "but, for my own information, I think we might profitably spend a few minutes in considering what we have learnt so far."

"Right you are, sir," answered Britt.

"Well," began with the desk man himself, "let's start on Murton, and taking about the papers before him, passed it for a brief space in silence."

"Got anything from the bank to pass as a reference?" he asked suddenly.

"Not yet, sir. They're sending along all the particulars they have of him, to-day. Also I'm hoping Mr. Williams may bring some more information presently."

"Seeing him this morning, are you?"

"Yes, he's coming along at eleven. He was going to see what information he could gather about Hynes from mutual acquaintances."

"Hope he's successful, then," rejoined the superintendent, glancing again at the sheet he held. "Show more knowledge of the dead man's antecedents might prove distinctly useful. So far, all we know of him is that he last went to reside at Marlow Mansions just over two years ago, giving as reference the London and Southern Bank. That he is believed to have had another residence somewhere in the country, and that he was usually absent from his flat from Fridays to Mondays, and sometimes for longer periods. That he was a member of the Athletic Club. That he collected stamps, and kept at his a valuable collection which is no longer there. That he spoke with Mr. William Russell on the telephone somewhere about six-thirty last night; and that, half an hour later, he was found by the same gentleman—dead, with every appearance of having been murdered—on the lift serving, among others, the flat in which he had lived."

"So much we know from witnesses' statements. In addition, we have the circumstantial evidence provided by the silver tray found in poor Ebershaw's pocket-book—the thread taken from the dead man's stud; by



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the broken watch-glass you found in his sitting-room; and lastly, by the print on the cigarette—all of which point fairly conclusively to his having sustained in his flat, just before his death, a woman—who may or may not have been concerned in this murder, but whose presence there certainly requires explanation.

"Now let us see what we know of this second person in the case," he went on, taking another sheet from the report on his desk. "Age about twenty-one, above average height, slender, hair reddish and, wearing common dress of silver-and-black material, stockings and shoes in leather, and heavy coat of brown fur. Height? Not a lot to go by, even when we add to it the finger-print and the fact that she wears, or wore, a watch with a glass of somewhat unusual knock shape."

"As you say, sir—not much," said Tim, far from being without hope," rejoined Brett. "For one thing, her appearance was sufficiently striking to impress itself on the porter, and there's always the likelihood of her having taken a taxi when she made her getaway. If that line fails, there's still the watch-glass. In fact, I've already made a start along both lines. An ad. asking for information from any taxi-driver or bus conductor who may have picked up a fare answering that description in the neighborhood of Essex Place, between seven and eight last night, went out about an hour ago—in time for most of the afternoon edition."

"The watch-glass I'm using this way. I've made a tracing of it, and copies, along with a request for information, are being circulated to the principal jewellery houses, wholesale and retail. Now, of course, that I'm using any of them will be able to trace the split of that particular watch simply from the shape of its glass; but if it goes anywhere to have a new one fitted—in it very likely will—I'd bank on the order for the glass finding its way to me or other of them."

Morton nodded approvingly. "You've got good nerves, both of them. They don't get nervous about a case. When they do we shall be within sight of a solution of what, so to, is the most puzzling feature of the whole affair—the extraordinary fact that the body was taken from a room where it might have lain undisturbed for hours, perhaps days, to a lift where certain discovery was only a matter of minutes."

"You're not alone in that, sir," rejoined his subordinates with a shrug. "It's the general policy in the force. And I've little hope of getting the answer until we've got the girl or Bobb—or both—on the other two men in the case?" added the superintendent, stretching a hand toward the file on his desk.

He passed suddenly in the net, stared before him for a moment, then gave his knee a resounding slap.

"By Jove, Brett!" he exclaimed, turning to a desk before him. "I've just run to earth something I seem to have been thinking of subconsciously ever since you made your report. Dick's job involves a resident of the flats of the name of Harvey?"

"I did," replied Brett. "Morris Phoenix—P-4-a-r-r-o—tenant of number six. But I'm not carrying much about him at present, although, of course, I'd like to have a chat with him."

"So, it seems, would someone else, and lastly, too," rejoined Morton, turning over the pages of a newspaper. "I read something here on my way to the office, before I knew anything about the chap mentioned, of course. There, read it, for yourself—middle of the Personal Column."

Turning the paper, Brett gazed with belated interest at the announcement indicated.

"4200 Howard will be paid for information as to the present whereabouts of Morris Phoenix, lately resident in Essex Place, S.W.2.—R. H. 3235." Daily Post, "E.C.A."

BOBBY TURNS DEUTER.

A visit to the Ripley House at the Zoo may be described as an interesting acquaintance; a meeting with one of its best-dressed residents in the business of its native jungle as a standing one; but when one



"Are you sure you killed Elyas?" asked Bobby. "Quite sure," she answered tiddly. "Whatever may have happened to his body afterwards, it was I who killed him!"

adequately describe the thrill registered by an executor with the same reptile on the staircase of a London flat?

Yet such an executor found Bobby entirely unimpressed. Bravering every sense of behaviour suited on the occasion, he passed without detached interest all the glances that descended the stairs at Marlowe Manmore, examining the spindled, opaline head, the gaping mouth with its needle-sharp fangs, the body, threatening eyes, driving idly into his slender stock of opaline here in a horrid effort to locate the particular specimen approaching him.

"Too big for an adder," he mused. "A rattlesnake, perhaps. He dismissed this in turn. Rattlesnake neither billed nor couched. "Must be one of those North American Jaguars. Ah—Ah—Ah something. He raised a hand to strike a pose, when a line of movement drew his glance to the landing glass. "Good lord!" A slender, feral-like figure stood there, gazing apocalyptically at him with transfixed eyes. "Good lord!" he whispered again, and took a step spontaneously to awake too late to a realization of his own deadly peril.

A him, and the flat, and head leapt toward him, the cruel jaws closing on his shoulder like a vice. With a sense of sudden, choking helplessness he felt the pangs of the piercing fangs. He fought for breath.

"Anananda!" he shouted. Then the reptile relaxed its grip. Through a mist he had a glimpse of its jaws—no longer wide, but narrowed to a deadly languid smile. And then—

"Well, you did give me a scare, sir. Thought you was never going to make up."

"It's!" Bobby's eyes blinked at the face above him. "Good lord, it's you! Bobb! What's up? Is the place on fire?"

"You'd 'd sleep through it if it had bin, sir!" shrieked John Bobbden, his beard to Captain Robert Barrell, now landlord and waler to that distinguished officer. "Wot's up, sir, is your head, then? You're looking—this hour or more! 'Sulter side o'clock!"

With another "Good lord!" Bobby threw back the clothes and leaped from bed.

An hour later, after a visit of excuse to the chambers in the Temple, where he was residing, he lay back in the corner of a bed, speeding worded along the Strand, wrapped in his thoughts—or, rather, in one thought, around which revolved like matter satellites a series of auxiliary ones.

For in a night our erstwhile sleeping Bobby had become changed to a man of one purpose, a purpose which explains his hasty journey, his lively heartbeat, his late awakening, and the restless night that had preceded it. And that purpose, plain—but you have already guessed it!—was—waited, awaiting hours now!

A block in the traffic ahead crossed him temporarily as the last grey level with Arundel Street. Traffic blocks must not be allowed to interfere with his purpose. He leaped from the window.

"Take the Embankment!" he shouted, then plunged into the current and his thoughts. Nor did he emerge from either until the fact—it was an ancient vehicle—clattered to a standstill at the door of the Purbeck Club.

The head porter glanced up from his desk as he entered the hall. "Sir William's job out, sir," he concluded, with the smile he reserved only for his special favorites.

"That's all right, Jerome. It's you I want to see."

"Me, sir?"

Bobby nodded and came straight to the point.

"I suppose, Jerome, you were on duty when my coach went out last night?"

The pointed look cleared suddenly from the porter's face, only to settle on Bobby's at his next words.

"I know what you want, sir. Sir William had it looked up this morning, and said I was to show it to anyone who might ask for it. Though I never thought he meant you, sir, at the time." He produced a slip of paper from a drawer and held it out.

Bobby glanced at the pencilled extract from the telephone call-book, smiled, and shook his head.

"No, Jerome; that's interesting, but it's not what I wanted to ask about. It's this: Can you help me trace the driver of the taxi you called for the William last night?"

The porter glanced at him curiously, then considered for a few moments.

"Well, sir," he said at last, "I didn't notice the number, and both drivers and cabs were new to me; but it may be able to help you all the same. I had a word or two with the driver while Sir William was 'flossing, and as near as I can describe him, he was a young chap, fresh-faced and clean-shaven, with a very Cockney accent. Also I have an idea that his cab—a dark green one—didn't belong in any of the big companies, and might have been his own. If you mentioned these points to Old Joe, over at the station there, he might be able to put you on to him. You could mention, too, that it would have been the Frog out on the rank about six-thirty, and perhaps for some time before that, as it's a shabby time for taxis about there."

Endowed with some of the other's habit in Old Joe as a potential source of information, Bobby thanked him and pressed something into his hand.

"There, Jerome; as you set a member you can take it without breaking any rules." Shaking his voice well further, he added: "You may possibly be asked the same question by my wife, or even the police. If you are, of course you'll tell them just what you've told me. But unless you are definitely questioned on the point, I'd like you not to mention my own inquiries." As the porter resumed his lazing, he added hurriedly: "I can't give you any reasons, but I can't answer you that there's nothing understood about them."

Jerome raised a deprecating hand—the other was busy lurching the crisp note, already in his pocket. "I don't need your word as to that, sir," he smiled. "I'll see to it; and I hope you have some luck with Old Joe."

Old Joe, a wiry little man, whose appearance still retained something of the heavy jawline of his hansom-rick days, was alone in the green shelter opposite the club where Bobby, after some hesitation, knocked at its open door. He gazed at his visitor for a moment, then the wrinkles of a smile added themselves to the network already forming his face.

"Come right in, sir," he said. "You're wrong, though my ain't ain't certain you see this side o' midnight. An' no't kin I do for you!" he added, when his invitation had been obeyed.

Hastily, for fear of interruption, and in a few rapidly returned sentences, Bobby explained his mission.

"I know the chap you mean, sir, though I can't add anything to your description of 'em—'s' your son to this rank," concluded Old Joe. "But you've got a message, sir. There's one. Write on the rank card, an' I'll make a delivery, with her 'possession' wad, 's' I might know a bit more."

He looked from the shelter, leaving Bobby in sole possession. In less than the promised minute the old man returned, bearing with satisfaction in an extent which rendered the network on his face more complicated than ever.

"Struck it lucky, sir," he said breathlessly. "Jew's not the Arty before, on other days. In that sense is 'Arty, an' the make o' it is in a beardless. 'Til perhaps it somewhere up Gullford Street way, an' 's' you mean 'em pull up for 'em over as twice at a coffee-shop in Gipsy's Inn Road, just opposite the 'umpin'."

Thanking him with the aid of another note, Bobby pledged the old man in silence as to his inquiries and left the shelter.

A quiet mental intention to take the first cab on the rank for the next stage of his journey was abandoned long before he had reached it, a rapid developing dawn having warned him that the sun had identified himself with that rank the better for his purpose.

Instead, with a stolidly unobtrusive air, he strolled as far as the Inn before halting a taxi. Reassured within it, he reviewed his investigation as far as it had gone, wondering of the success which had attended it, until the fare that it was too good to last began to distress him. He turned his thoughts to the next stage.

He had given the driver Gipsy's Inn as his destination, meaning to alight at the Thimble's Road entrance, and from there continue his quest on East. North of the inn, and extending to Gullford Street, he remembered the existence of a maze, a veritable labyrinth of streets and lanes. There he would commence his inquiries, and he decided that the most direct method would be to inquire about the taxi first, before proceeding to ask about its driver.

But an odd number, enjoying a few minutes of well-earned leisure at the entrance to the maze, met his question with a shake of the head.

"No taxi?" that he made here, sir," he said, adding, after a few moment's consideration, that the man Bobby was looking for might be a neighbouring one, the location of which he indicated with much minute detail.

That at this second maze Bobby drew another blank, and again gave evidence to which he had no wish to attend. At the end of some ten hours he had pursued his investigation into every maze that could reasonably be held to be "up Gullford Street way," together with several that could not, and the feeling of hopeless confidence with which he had embarked on that portion of his quest had almost entirely evaporated. He decided to try his second and last clue—the clue of the "coffee shop."

And at first this seemed to promise no better result than the other. "Opposite the 'umpin'" he found not one, but two coffee-shops, each promising in large cursive letters that it was a "Good Pull-up for Curren."

For a while he strolled neither, but observed between the two—halting for a space at the windows of each and endeavoring to peer through their steamy panes on the pretext of examining the unappetizing display of the mornin's joints plastered against them.

As was inevitable, the strange spectacle of a "peer" thus occupied, presently attracted in his wake a small train of itching curiosity of the neighboring alleys, drawn from their games on the broad pavement that was this hazyland—and only—pavement.

Their presence spared him no action. He

thrust open the door of one of the shops, entered, and, under a barrage of stares from its close-packed diners, stammeringly explained his mission.

In thirty seconds he was in the street again, without the information he sought, and with no desire to repeat the experience at the second shop—at least until the local dance-hall had been left safely behind.

In the meantime, lunch for himself seemed to be indicated, although the progress of his investigation—on last of it, rather—left him little appetite. He turned in the direction of Hillbottom, and had reached the second coffee-shop before realising that his retinue of glib youngsters still followed him. He waved to an approaching taxi, and it swung promptly towards him. As it came to a standstill, he grasped the handle of its door.

"Excuse, sir?" he asked. "Can't you see my dog's name?" protested its driver. "I've pulled up for a bit o' dinner."

"It's!" Bobby took another look at the vehicle. A doghouse! He turned his eye to the driver, and their glances met in a drawing of mutual recognition.

"Good lord!" he exclaimed. "The driver was more inquisitive."

"Lumme, sir?" Didn't I 'ave yer for a fare last night?"

"You did. And that's what I wanted to see you about. I—" Bobby stopped, and indicated a sign of tapping fingers. "I see, your name's 'Trevor a'well' with you somewhere away from this end?"

"Not yer want to see me about?" repeated the man, crying Bobby emphatically. After a moment's hesitation he reached a hand to his breast. "Jump in—'Til done per to a quiet spot be'ind 'em."

A minute later he halted his machine in the quiet backwater of a Backwater square, jumped down, and opened the door.

"Nah, then, give 'em, you've got me guessin'. I ain't imaginin' you've got to the 'middle o' 'em'—an' me up 'em for the fare I didn't get last night. An' yer don't look like a liar. So spill it."

Bobby spilled it.

"You—I did pick up a lady there. In a 'rty she was, too," said the man when he had finished. "But before I saw anything else I wants to ask a question, too! When I asked him later on, there was a bit of a crack about. 'Askin' 'Bobby 'began there?"

Bobby decided that frankness would be his best course. The news of what had happened might attract the public property—or would be in a few hours.

"Yes," he said, "a murder."

"A murder!" The man's eyes widened and his jaw dropped. "Gaw bless! No you are a liar, about all!"

Bobby shook his head.

"Not if I'm right in supposing you mean a detective." Taking a card from his case, he held it out to the man. "There's my name, and the address of a detective. And me. 'The information I'm asking for has no connection with the murder—no direct connection, anyway. If the police ask you, you must, of course, give it to them, but if you volunteer it of your own bat, I'm certain you will be helping to their surprise on an innocent person!"

Glaring at Bobby through half-closed lids, the driver concluded this.

"Well, sir?" he said at last, with the air of one who has made up his mind. "The lady didn't look like one as 'ud 'ave a 'and in that sort o' thing—write the didn't! An' you don't seem to 'ave anything o' the wrong—an' shabbe you, yourself. An'—'Til do the 'Til, sir," said the police man. "I'll keep me mouth shut—for a bit, anyway." Gruffly waving short Bobby's thanks, he slammed the door and mounted to his seat.

After threading it way through a maze of narrow streets, some of which Bobby recognized, and crossing some larger ones more familiar to him, the taxi emerged into the Eyewater Road. It sped along that wide thoroughfare, through and beyond Newing Hill Gate, towards Clapham's Bush, turning

at last into a long, straight street that seemed to stretch interminably into the distance. Tall, grey houses, both high sides of the street—houses which had taken from their own-time estate of self-containment, as was amply evidenced by the variety of cupolas, gables, the windows of a few, some distance down it, at a point where another interested it, the driver pulled up and descended to the door.

"The 'ouse you want is number ninety-nine, sir?" Bobby said. "No way to stop a bit short—'em 'ere things are!"

"A good idea," agreed Bobby, alighting. He thrust a white handkerchief into the man's hand. "For the two fares and the information you've given me," he said.

"Bless! A free!" The man spat on the note for luck. "Ain't you worry, sir?—if the busier gets ain't questions I'll let you know hat, 'ave I said anything?"

Bobby smiled another word of thanks and turned in the direction of No. 99.

Two problems still confronted him. One had only just presented itself, the other he had already considered and shelved several times during the past few hours. How, in those days, was he going to locate a girl whose name he did not know, and whose appearance he could only vary inadequately describe?

That difficulty amounted, how and with what amount of success was he going to approach her? Both problems were still unsolved when he reached the steps of No. 99. Trusting to luck or inspiration, he took his key in both hands and mounted to the door.

In his own, disclosing a wide hall, a staircase flanked by two doors along the background. An "In and Out" board hung on the wall, the number of its divisions indicating that the house, single dwelling had been converted into flats.

Hopefully he approached it. Apparently, the only conversion of the ground floor was the last. Those flats considered their tenancy sufficiently permanent to justify the use of the conventional gill lettering. Their names he read first—Mrs. Allport, Miss Noble—and dismissed the possibility of either belonging to his unknown victim.

His glance travelled to a card placed in the space above—Mr. Lamont Smythe—then to the next and last. Two cards occupied it, Miss Vain, Miss Sheelagh Vain, he read, and knew instantly that the owner of one was the person of his quest.

Nothing might now of how he was to introduce himself or explain his mission, he considered. He staid down as a time-past stroke of Miss Noble's name that of Mr. Lamont Smythe—in had suddenly at the end of the last flight, as the stick of an opening door came from above. He caught his breath and waited expectantly.

But the footsteps which followed were those of a man, who swung into view round the angle of the stairs, thrust straight past him, and descended downward in the direction of the ground.

"My goodness!" Thunderstruck, suddenly sick at heart, Bobby gazed after him, then hurried himself downward in pursuit. For, in that one glimpse, he had recognized the dead man's wife—Bess!

MURTON BEGINS TO SUSPECT.

"There is a queer do, sir," said Brett, after another puzzled perusal of the advertisement. "Queer enough if it were only a coincidence. And queer still the more one considers it!"

"If you are reading into it some direct bearing on the market, that seems far from likely," rejoined his chief. "Apart from other considerations, announcements for that column have to be made the paper of the day preceding insertion—no't had a space to the effect at the top. This would therefore have reached the 'Daily Post' office at or before noon yesterday—seven hours before the murder was committed!"

"So it would seem—at first sight," returned Brett dubiously. "But, if so, there's one queer point about it worth explanation. Assuming it was sent in before noon yesterday, why does

"It would, sir. But I don't quite see what you're driving at."

Again Martin was silent for a space. When at last he appeared he spoke slowly and deliberately, with the air of one facing a difficult task.

"What I'm driving at, Brett, is this. We have confined to ourselves one factor in the case—Sir William's counsel."

"You mean—" began Brett, and stopped. The superintendent nodded gravely.

"I mean that, however complicated it may be, we have got to get down before friendship and consider every possibility—including Sir William. Not for a very substantial amount of the evidence we have seen only upon his or his nephew's word. As yet we have no independent evidence of the movements of either prior to the discovery of the body. The chief man was a collector of stamps, with a very valuable collection. Stamp-collecting is the William's chief hobby, and we already know cases where such a hobby has resulted in crime. Again, there is that half-smoked cigarette you found—hand-rolled, and of the unusual tobacco he favors. Heaven knows, Brett, I'm not trying to manufacture a case against him, but—"

"I know that, sir. You're quite right. We've got to consider it," said Brett. "Well, there's one statement of his will which the chief sees and for all that it seems not to be correct. That 'please call for me in Elysée, I was going to look into it at his club to-day, but we'll call you up right now.'"

He reached for the telephone. But the instrument itself interrupted his intention with the shrill note of its bell. The superintendent took up the receiver.

"Yes! Good-morning, Hewitt! Well, what's the answer? Yes? Eh? What's that? His house contracted suddenly. Yes, I'm making a statement to the Press this afternoon. Yes, that's all right. He doesn't do the reverse as to his book and travel. You may make something of this, Brett—I can't. That advertisement was drafted by—"

"Good-morning, gentlemen!"
The two swung round to the door. Framed in its aperture was the bony figure of Sir William Barrill.

BOBBY ASKS A QUESTION.

Long before Bobby reached the foot of the stairs he heard the slam of the front door, and then he saw a man in a conventional livery wheel several parcels to his quarry's start.

When he reached the pavement Booth was nowhere to be seen. Some hundred yards away a taxi was speaking in the direction of Shepherd's Bush; on his left another was just disappearing into a side-street. Either might hold the fugitive. He gave it up, and returned the hall.

All was quiet within the building—the sudden, noisy confusion seeming to have left its occupants undisturbed. No inquiring face appeared at the door of Mrs. Albright; not, as he remembered the state, at that of Miss Nobbs or Mr. Lambeck Smythe.

At the foot of the last flight he passed one more—this time to collect his scattered thoughts and to regain a composure badly shaken by the encounter with Booth. His coat of dreams still bothered seriously near a fall, that it had not been released earlier must be his best hope in human nature, and the mysterious power of a pair of brows, opening eyes.

He mounted the stairs.
The door of the last lay open, as Booth must have left it. Flushing to find he knocked—gravelly at last, then louder.

No one appeared, nor was there any kind of life within; but as the witness of his knock died away, a low whisper of sound seemed to follow upon the air. He held his breath, listening—and in his own case the faint rise and fall of a woman's sobs. Good lord! Strayed by a sudden, unerring impulse, he slipped into the flat.

As though his entrance had been heard, the sobs ceased for a moment—only to begin again with redoubled intensity. He peered into the room whence it came. Within, on a low couch, knelt a girl.

For what seemed an age he stood there,

heart suddenly dry, heart thumping. Then, mingled with the sobs, he caught the faintly whispered words, "Heaven help me!"

Indulgence fell from his lips a clock. Creeping to her side, he laid a hand gently on her shoulder, as one would soothe a stricken child. At his touch the girl caught her breath.

"Leave me—leave me!" she moaned. "Oh, heaven! Why don't you go, before I—"

With a sudden movement she wrenched herself to her feet and rushed blindly to a door on the other side of the room.

Bobby had a glimpse of the furnishings of a bedroom, then the door slammed and he had checked into place. Revisited by the perusal of his well-intentioned art, he gazed after her.

"I—I say—" he stammered, then stopped, unpleased.

Contrasted by such a situation, even of their own making, many men might have considered—and adopted—a policy of retreat. Not so Bobby. Schooled in the stern sternness of war, he had acquired a hobby of seeing things through. And now this through he must, for his girl's sake. Delay might mean, at the best, her liberty; at the worst—Refusing to complete the thought, he crossed to the door.

The sound of sobs still came faintly from behind it.

"Miss Vale," he said, at first in a whisper, then louder. "Miss Vale, I want you to listen to me for a moment, just to get things clear. I've come here for one thing only, and with only one thought—in help you. I want to help you, please believe that, if you will let me."

The sobs ceased for a moment.

"To—to help me?" repeated a voice incredulously, and Bobby's heartless quailed at the sound. "Who—who are you?"

Faced with the problem of explaining himself, Bobby hesitated, thinking softly.

"My name won't worry anything to you," he said at last. "But you may remember a man who sat at last in the hall of Major Marston last night when you came down the stairs? A chap with only—with a patch over his eye?"

A long silence from the other side of the door, broken at last by the whispered words:

"I remember. Yes, I remember. And you say you want to help me? Surely you know what—that happened there?"

"I do," answered Bobby, "and that's why I want to help you—because I know you had nothing to do with it."

The girl laughed harshly.
"You know that, do you? And supposing—supposing I had?"

"It would be all the same. I don't care two hoots either way," asserted Bobby stoutly. "Good lord! I don't call it murder to kill a man like Sir George—whatever the law may say! But, I say, can't you trust me enough to come out here, so that we can talk things over properly?"

From the other side came no answer save a sob, resting, followed by a succession of unbroken sobs and rattles. Debiting that sobs to two tear-stained cheeks were in progress, Bobby returned to the centre of the room—there to wait hopefully, his mind lured with the promise of how to persuade the girl to the extreme he had devised for her safety.

Presently the click of the lock drew his glance again to the door. Framed in it stood the girl, looking him gravely with a look of mingled doubt and inquiry. Then, though no word had been spoken, over her face there swept the looker glances of a smile.

She advanced toward him.

"I trust you," she said simply, and held out her hand.

Bobby took it in his, passing it perhaps faster than he thought, and certainly holding it longer than was strictly necessary.

"Thank you," he said. "It's—it's topping of you to say that. I—I—" He stopped, suddenly at a loss for words.

The girl released him from his embarrassment. Gladly releasing her hand, she waved it toward a chair.

"We may as well sit down while you explain things," she said, and, sitting herself

on the couch, waited expectantly for him to begin.

But Bobby found a beginning even more difficult than he had anticipated. He drew the chair forward to the couch and sat down, gazing in his mind the while. At last he took the plunge.

"Despite what you said just now, Miss Vale," he began, "I refuse to believe that you had any hand in Sir George's death, not, anywhere, it would make no difference if I believed otherwise. What matters to that the police respect you, or, rather, they suspect the girl who was in Sir George's flat last night, although, so far, they don't know who that girl is. He passed, then, asked indignantly: 'I hope I'm making myself clear?'"

"No—no, not very," replied the girl, the shadow in her eyes brightened for a moment by a fleeting smile. "It's—the police— Oh, I can't here to talk about it. I can't! I can't!" she sobbed, suddenly burying her face in her hands.

For some seconds Bobby stared at her helplessly. He leaned forward and grasped her by the shoulders.

"But we've got to talk about it," he said, almost roughly. "We must—before I can help you."

His words and action had the desired effect. The burst of sobbing lessened, then gradually ceased. She withdrew her hands from her face.

"I—I'm sorry," she smiled through her teeth. "I—I don't often lose my head like this, but—not, things have answered me a bit, I suppose."

"It's my fault; I oughtn't to have spoken about the beastly thing," returned Bobby soothingly, only to add in the same breath: "But, good lord, when I do, I don't see how so much I'm going to explain things!"

Again the girl smiled, less sadly this time.

"Please don't worry about that. I'll not give you any more. It was well-pig, not really. I can't explain why, but I don't feel me wrong of remorse at having killed that man, and I don't believe I'd feel any more if I'd killed him purposely! But I suppose you think me at least to talk like this!"

"I don't," Bobby hastened to assure her. "I've already told you how I regard the removal of a man like Sir George. But let's leave that and get back to practicalities. What I was trying to explain is that the police believe Sir George's death to have been—"

"Yes, I understood that part," interrupted the girl. "What I don't understand is how you have managed to find me, while they haven't?"

Rapidly Bobby explained the case which had led him to her, and the mischance on his part which had prevented, or at least delayed, the police from following the same track. For a long time after he had finished the girl remained silent, her gaze averted, her lips compressed.

At last she turned, and the brown eyes regarded him gravely, inquiringly, from under their long lashes.

"You have done all this for me?" she said slowly. "Does it despite what you might have thought—must have thought of times?" Her lips quivered for a moment, then in a lower voice she added as if to herself: "Why?"

The question found Bobby quite unprepared.

"I—I—" he stammered; then his natural candour forced him something as near the truth as he dared to admit. "I am doing it, Miss Vale," he said earnestly, "because I believe in you, and—and because I—I love you!"

The brown eyes continued to regard him—though less gravely now, and with a hint of smiling rapture in their depths.

"Do make very slight ground as our encounter last night. Mr.—Mr.—"

"Good lord! Of course, I haven't told you my name. It's Barrill—Robert Barrill, Bobby for short—and very much at your service."

"Very much so, Mr. Barrill," smiled the girl. "And before our acquaintance could have been termed even a budding one." In a softer tone she went on: "I can't tell you

how much I—I appreciate what you have said. That you should believe in me after what you must have learnt last night, and before you know the true reason for my visit to that man's flat, is a very, very great compliment, the greatest I am ever likely to be given. And for that, and for your coming, I—I thank you." She the second time she held out her hand to Bobby.

For a second all-by-herself moment Bobby felt the soft pressure of her fingers on his. Moved by the words and action, he was searching for some reply, when the girl gave a sudden, unpressed cry. He glanced up, to find her staring wide more than her open.

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

"The letter! I had forgotten the letter!"

"Letter?" repeated Bobby, completely at a loss. "I don't understand."

"The letter I left in the flat—between with this address: Surely the police must have found that!"

Bobby nudged his brain, but at first could recall no discovery of that nature, save two circular found by the front door during the first search. Couldn't he trace the matter, of course. How was he suddenly so concerned to see a letter in the safe? Should he tell her? No, it might send her all at pieces again. And besides, Uncle Bill had never given it to Brett.

He met her look of inquiry with a shake of his head.

"The police found no letters; I can speak positively as to that."

The girl gave a little gasp.

"There—be me telling the truth after all!"

"Dyce means Dyer?" asked Bobby, with sudden inspiration.

"I don't know his name. An odd man who said he had some letters."

"Just now?" queried Bobby; then, at the girl's affirmative, went on: "It was Booth, then—Sigm's valet. So he was trying to black-mail you, the same?"

"He—he said he would go to the police."

"He did, did he? He's got some nerve. Don't let that worry you; but won't dare to carry out his threat. He's too much scared by the police himself."

The girl shook her head slowly.

"I didn't believe him—didn't believe even that he had the letters. Even now I can't see how he got them from that room. They were there, somewhere inside—inside the body. The only place I dared not look!"

"In the room? Inside the body?" repeated Bobby, wondering if he had heard aright.

"But—was finding his body in the lift!"

"In the lift—? The girl gave a hysterical laugh and pressed a hand to her forehead.

"Are we playing some ghastly game of cross-purposes? Or is my brain giving way?"

But the words were understood for a moment. Into Bobby's brain had leapt a notion, starting possibility, and the whole force of his mind were concentrated on moulding it into some definite shape.

"Miss Vale," he said at last, "if women we have been playing at cross-purposes. And that very fact has given me an idea that may prove of tremendous importance to yourself. Before I can tell you what it is, I want to ask you one or two questions; not very nice ones, but I want you to—to keep your head and answer them." He glanced interrogatively at her, then went on: "You say you killed Sigm, but were you sure?"

Slowly, sadly, the girl shook her head.

"Quite, quite sure," she said. "Whatever may have happened to his body afterwards, it was I who killed him!"

UNCLE BILL HAS A HUNCH.

"GOD-SPEEDER, professor," boomed the baronet, advancing into the room. Then, with a shrug, when his guest had been returned: "No need to ask what you two are conspiring about."

"No, no need, Sir William," replied the apartment-keeper curtly, placing a chair for him.

The baronet divined himself of his cost, lunged it over the back of the chair and sat down.

"Well, how are the deliberations progressing?" he asked, and his eyes travelled from one to the other detective, to come to rest suddenly on the newspaper lying on the desk between them. "Hello!" he went on, without waiting for a reply. "So you've spotted the 'personal' about our friend Pharrax?"

Morton nodded.

"You've seen it, too, then, Sir William?" queried Brett.

"In print, no, Brett. In manuscript, yes," said the baronet. "I wrote it myself, after leaving you last night."

"You did!" exclaimed Brett, and turned to Marston with eyebrows raised.

"I had just learnt that as you came in, Sir William," said the apartment-keeper, "over the 'phone, from Hewitt. May I ask what it is the idea behind it?"

"That's a difficult question to answer, Marston," was the reply, after a brief pause.

"There is not just one idea, but several, all more or less rational. The main one may best be described by the American term 'hunch.' I have a hunch that Mr. Horace Pharrax would be an interesting person to meet in the flesh—hence the advertisement. As to the reward—well, in addition to stamps, I collect acquaintance. On occasion I have paid one hundred pounds for a stamp, and if I can collect Mr. Pharrax's acquaintance for that sum, I shall count the money well spent."

Morton gazed at him for a moment through narrowed lids.

"It'll," he said doubtfully, although, with the baronet's presence, the suspicions that had begun to bulk so large in his mind a few minutes before had almost disappeared. "I, too, have a hunch, Sir William—a hunch that there's some behind your advertisement that should, in other words, that you've touched some very fresh information about the case."

Sir William considered the suggestion with a smile and a shake of his head.

"No, nothing beyond what we already know. But when I have examined my hunch into something more resembling fact, you can trust me to produce it in my own justification."

Turning to his overcoat, he took from a pocket the two stamp catalogues and some papers, one of which he passed across to the inspector.

"There you are, Brett; the names and addresses of the only men I could get in touch with who knew anything about Sigm. Three of them, and none of them knew very much. In fact, there's only one man worth mentioning. All three are agreed that, for some time past, Sigm had been in very low water financially, through heavy speculation and gambling, they thought. To two of them he owed considerable sums; the other, he myself, I lent in stamps, he had been entering lately to buy some of his more valuable duplicates, as he did in my own case."

"It's difficult to see what bearing that can have on the crime," said Brett.

"Just so; I merely give it as an item of information about the dead man," rejoined Sir William, and passed across the remaining sheets. "This may prove more helpful. It is the list you wanted; I have some hours of midnight oil in making the selection. Every specimen of a rarity likely to attract attention if it comes into the market is included. It ought to bring results—if and when any of them is offered to a dealer of repute."

"Thank, Sir William," Brett glanced over the document. "I'll get this put in hand right away, sir," he said to the superintendent, and, rising, left the room.

Morton turned to the baronet.

"I take it you'd like to keep in touch with the case, Sir William?"

"Not decidedly, just as long as I have your permission."

"Oh, you have that all right!" rejoined Marston, dismissed now of the last recipe of suspicion by the other's personality. With a sigh he said: "If you don't share your hunches, you do share their results."

"And I'll do that with the present one—if it ever gets beyond the hunch stage," laughed

the baronet. Then, after a pause: "Anything to show as a result of this morning's deliberations?"

"A little." Briefly Marston went over the ground he had already traversed with Brett.

"Innocent anything to the Firm?" asked Sir William when he had finished.

"Not you. I'm letting them have a statement to-day; just the bare fact that two men would have occurred. They'll get little more out of the evidence at Monday's proceedings, or what it puts me back. In the meantime—"

"The police have the matter in hand," smiled Sir William. "And a very wise course in the circumstances. Marston. Although I've no doubt they'll make good copy out of what you give them." He turned to the inspector, who had retreated while he was speaking. "Well, Brett—no," he began, then stopped, staring at something in the detective's hand—something wrapped in a solid yellow cloth.

"This anything like what Rieder was carrying?" asked Brett, holding it out.

"It is—very much so," was the instant reply. "Where did it come from?"

"From his lodge," replied Brett, unwrapping the cloth. "Pugh's just brought it in—found it tucked behind the fire-good thing; almost as damning a bit of circumstantial evidence as I've ever seen across." He laid on the desk a square, tapestry-looking patch, the inside end of it being swollen into a cylinder some three inches long.

"By Jove! A Luger automatic!" exclaimed Sir William immediately to see it.

"Just so; complete with shells. And if this thing it was wrapped in hasn't been used to wrap blood of something, my name's not Brett."

Baronet and superintendent turned to examine the yellow cluster. On its inner surface were a number of smears of reddish-brown.

"As you say, Brett, two valuable pieces of evidence," remarked Marston after a brief silence, then bent again to the parcel.

"There's no mark on it but the maker's number, and Pugh has already started to do what he can with that," said his subordinate, during the purpose of his scrutiny.

"No print?"

"None," replied Brett, then added interrogatively: "You'll take charge of 'em, sir, and see to the stain being tested?" At his chief's affirmative he turned to the baronet. "Then I'm ready, Sir William, if you are!"

Little more than an hour later, fortified by an early lunch at the baronet's club, the two protagonists set in a start making its way toward "B" Division Police Station—the first stage on their journey to Room Three—such busy with his own thoughts. Sir William was the first to break silence.

"Reverting to that man Pharrax," he said suddenly, "are you making any inquiries at all about him?"

"Still on that tack?" laughed the detective. "Yes; we're making some. I've got a man looking into the reference he gave Calway."

"You haven't thought of examining his list?"

Brett shook his head.

"Can't be delving the ground we have at present, anyway. No magistrate would grant the necessary warrant."

"Yes, perhaps you're right," admitted Sir William after a short silence.

"I know I am; at any rate, it regards the

(Continued next page.)

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 WRITE TO DAD: to the Editor, Illustrated Daily Express, 40, Abchurch Lane, London, E.C. 4.
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The THRILLER GUIDE to the FOOTBALL POOLS

FIXTURE LIST AND FORECASTS

FOR NEXT SATURDAY'S

MATCHES

with the Results of Corresponding Matches for the Past Two Seasons.

The teams which are **boxed** are in **wide** and in **black** type. **Wides** both teams are in the same type a **draw** is predicted.

MARCH 14

FOOTBALL LEAGUE

DIVISION I.	1935-4	1934-5
Arden V. Liverpool	4-1	4-2
Edwin v. Stoke	---	---
Woolford v. Birmingham	---	---
Hull v. Arsenal	2-4	3-5
Everton v. Manchester C.	0-5	1-0
Huddersfield v. Blackburn	0-5	5-0
Middlesbrough v. Chelsea	0-2	1-1
Portsmouth v. West Ham	0-2	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Sunderland	0-2	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Leeds	0-2	1-1
Wolves v. Grimsby	---	---

DIVISION II.	1935-4	1934-5
Barnley v. Notts F.	---	1-1
Bradford C. v. Doncaster	---	---
Donnerly v. Sheffield U.	---	0-0
Sheff. W. v. Southamptn	---	---
Sheff. W. v. Bradford	0-2	2-2
Hull v. Norwich	---	1-1
Manchester U. v. Swans	1-1	1-1
Newcastle v. Burn	---	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Blackpool	0-3	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Leicester	---	---
Sheff. W. v. Hull	---	---

DIVISION III (South).	1935-4	1934-5
Doncaster v. Q.P.R.	0-2	1-1
Grimsby v. Millon	0-1	1-0
Sheff. W. v. Burnley	0-1	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Torquay	0-1	1-1
C. Palace v. Coventry	0-1	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Brighton	0-1	1-1
Leam v. Watford	0-1	1-1
Northampton v. Swindon	0-1	1-1
Notts C. v. Bristol C.	0-0	1-1
Reading v. Newport	0-0	1-1
Southend v. Aldershot	0-0	1-1

DIVISION III (North).	1935-4	1934-5
Aberdeen v. Tottenham	---	1-1
Barnes v. Wycombe	---	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Exeter	---	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Halifax	---	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Gillingham	---	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Hartlepool	---	1-1
N. Brighton v. Sheff. W.	---	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Mansfield	---	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Walsall	---	1-1
Sheff. W. v. Darlington	---	1-1
York v. Rotherham	---	1-1

SCOTTISH LEAGUE

Aberdeen v. Kilmarnock	3-0	1-0
Aberdeen v. Hearts	---	---
Ayr v. Dundee	3-1	1-0
Celtic v. Motherwell	3-0	1-0
Dunfermline v. Arbroath	0-0	---
Hibernian v. Queen of the South	0-0	1-1
Hibernian v. Partick	0-0	2-0
Hibernian v. Clyde	0-0	2-0
St. Johnstone v. Queen's P.	1-0	0-0
Third Lanark v. Arbroath	0-0	---

SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR COUPONS

MORE activity may be expected behind the scenes of football during the next few days. For the big clubs of England now have approaches. According to reliable players who are not signed on by the majority of clubs are not allowed to play in any vital game—that is, in any match which may affect championship, promotion or relegation. Hence those clubs with lapses or losses are making desperate efforts just now, and spending much money, on strengthening their teams. The probability is that a certain number of newly transferred players may be in various sides this week-end, and results affected here and there. This is a point worth watching.

SIX DRAWS.

In every League there are matches on the programme this week-end of vital importance to the clubs concerned, and some terrific struggles may be anticipated. The greater the importance of the points at stake, the more likely are drawn games to result. This is a useful general summary to be remembered, and, for my part, I can remember quite a number of the games of this week-end finishing with the teams on a level footing. Here are half a dozen which seem to me to come under that heading:

- Everton v. Manchester City.
- Bolton Wanderers v. Stoke.
- Sheff. W. v. West Ham.
- Crystal Palace v. Coventry.
- Aberdeen v. Tottenham.
- Acc United v. Dundee.

In some these half-draws do not satisfy you, I will add these more games which appear to me so likely draws—Dunfermline v. Arbroath, Wolves v. Grimsby, and Southampton v. Queen's Park Rangers.

TEN HOME WINNERS.

Most of the games in the First Division are fairly open, and for the certain home winners I am more inclined to turn to other sections of the League—the Southern Third, for example. Here is my list of the best ten home winners:

- Huddersfield Town.
- Charlton.
- Sheff. W.
- Sheff. W.
- Leam.
- Northampton.
- Swindon.
- Sheff. W.
- Sheff. W.
- Sheff. W.

To that list I am prepared to add, with a fair amount of confidence, such teams as Bradford, Fulham, Reading, Darlington and Third Lanark.

AWAY WINNERS.

PREVIOUS NORTH EAST are among the many clubs with a strong record this season, and they will make a really big effort, but they are not likely to get any change out of Sunderland, and I put the First Division leaders among the likely away winners of the day. Others which seem to stand out clearest in the same connection are:

- Sheffield United.
- Leicester City.
- Gillingham Athletic.
- Partick Thistle.
- Walsall.

There is a possibility of Wrexham City leaving Hull City, even though the game is played in Yorkshire, and Rotherham may win at York, but after careful consideration I am more inclined to put those games down among the draws.

"The MARLOE MANSIONS MURDER."

(Continued from previous page.)

chance of getting a warrant," retorted Brett. "We're nothing whatsoever to connect the man with the murder—or even with the murder's man."

The baronet was silent. "I told it to you, Sir William," went on Brett. "We already have four people more or less incriminated by strong evidence of their own making—Robb, the woman, Booth, and the porter. We've got to deal with them before we look further afield. And I don't think we shall need to do that—the last two may have been only accessories, but there seems no room for doubt that the first two had a direct hand in Myra's death, and no doubt whatsoever that one of them—Robb—murdered poor Ellsworth." He broke off as the taxi drove up before the grey stone headquarters of "D" Division. "Shan't keep you long," he said, and, descending, made his way into the building.

He returned presently, and, after directing the driver about, took his seat.

"I'll have to revise something of what I said just now, Sir William," he said immediately. "It seems your idea was only by accident reasonable. I look for more Myra's death. I've just heard the result of the post-mortem."

"Heart failure, accelerated by shock?" suggested Sir William.

Brett glanced at him sharply. "How did you know?"

"I had an idea last night that it might be so, but, as the point was bound to be cleared up by a post-mortem, didn't think it worth mentioning."

"Well, your idea proves correct," went on Brett. "Although heart weakness is the last thing I'd have expected. The man, I suppose, he had malaria badly out East, poor devil!"

He fell silent again until the cab came to a standstill at their journey's end.

A new porter related them as they entered, but the hall itself bore no indication of the events of which it had been the scene not twenty hours before. According to No. 8, they were immediately admitted by the constable on duty there, who, in answer to a question from Brett, reported all correct.

"Though there was one queer thing happened, sir," he went on. "Just fifteen twelve, it was. The door bell rang. Key on ringing for half a minute or so, in fact, it was still ringing when I opened the door—as 'ere there was no one there?"

Brett stood for a moment in puzzled thought, then stepped outside again and pressed the bell. It rang. He released it. It stopped.

"Well, same," he said. "I don't suppose it was a ghost. I expect some defect in the wiring is responsible. What do you say, Sir William?"

The baronet was staring abstractedly through the door.

"Oh, Oh, yes; quite possibly, Brett," he said. "Then, after a game?" "I say, I'd like to have another look round up above. Any objection?"

"None whatsoever," acquiesced Brett readily, then proceeded to the task he had mapped out for himself—a methodical re-examination of the white list.

He had finished most of the rooms, and was busy in the smoke-room when the baronet rejoined him.

"Well, found any further trace of our friend the 'thing'?" he inquired pointedly, turning from a contemplation of the list to the man, the man, the man.

Sir William smiled and shook his head.

"No, I hardly think what I have found has anything to do with that gentleman."

"Oh? Then you have found something?"

"I have," was the reply. "If you come upstairs you can see it for yourself. It is a footprint of oil, made, I believe, by the person who shot the 'thing'."

Brett stared at him, half-amused.

"How 'fired' you, is it?"

"I mean just that. It has been made by someone stepping first in a pool of oil, then on the wet tiles. The patch of oil is still there, also the footprints. These are several, but only one fairly complete, that of a crime rubber sole."

"Cripes—rubber?"

Drew lifted his brows—for an instant, his disconcerted brows the reminder—to return a few moments later, a pair of brown leather shoes in his hand. Without a word he held them out to the lawyer. In the furrowed creases of their rubber soles were unmistakable traces of recent contact with oil.

"Shooped? You mean few minutes ago in a bathroom down here, of course, didn't look for the oil on them," he said, and moved towards the door.

"Wait a moment!" interposed the lawyer. Going to the bureau in the anteroom, he returned with a sheet of white paper, and the two made their way upstairs to the roof.

Arrived there, Mr. Williams crossed to where the framework of one of the service lifts ran along the parapet.

"There—point!" he said, pointing to the canvas of a small pad of oil on the floor there—near it the well-defined print of a crime sole. Kneeling down, he placed the sheet of paper beside it, took the left shoe from the detective, pressed it only on the patch of oil, then on the paper, and, withdrawing it, studied the print.

"No room for doubt there!" he said almost immediately.

"No possible room for doubt," agreed Drew with a note of satisfaction. "Not as to the owner of these shoes being responsible for detaching this lift!"

Mr. Williams was examining the interior of the shoe he held.

"No, Drew, I'm not inclined to agree with you entirely," he said. "At least, until we have established their ownership. Hand made, almost new, and bearing the name of those excellent and expensive makers, Tredell's of Broad Street. They are hardly the kind of shoes to be owned by an individual whom I conceive to have tampered with this lift. Whom did you find them?"

"In the rack in one of the bed-rooms—the first on the left along the corridor."

"Just so. The principal bedrooms—Styne's, judging from its contents. And I think we may safely take it that these shoes belonged to him. So if you are correct in assuming that their owner was responsible for detaching the lift, then that somewhat sinister feature in the circumstances surrounding Myne's murder must have been accomplished by—the murderer was his—?"

THE SILENT WITNESS.

"SILENT, quite silent," the girl repeated in a whisper, as if to herself.

She shuddered and closed her eyes, lying very quiet those ghastly moments in the flat, seeing the murderer, scarlet-throated figure by the window, the white, dense fog, all eyes in death.

Bobby stared at her, dumbly incredulous, groping for the answer to the problem, the

answer he felt must lie somewhere—if only he could find it.

"I'm sure you've got it wrong somewhere, Miss Vale," he said at last. "Jack! Love, couldn't you—couldn't you just tell me what did happen? If I know that I might be better able to help."

A long silence, during which he waited hopefully, and at last the girl moved forward.

"I'll try," she said, and presently, in a voice that glowed in firelight as her rosy cheeks warmed, she said:

"I think it will be best to go back to the very beginning of the whole ghastly affair—in the time when Gabrielle Myne first came into our lives. I saw 'our lives' because there are two of us in the story; my sister Sheregh and myself."

She paused, breathing awkwardly, then continued herself.

"No, I shall have to go back even further, so that you may know a few essential facts about us both. You see, we have not been in London very long—only about two years. Before that we lived in Dorset, where my father had a small property. However, when he died, things turned out to be—in rather a muddy, and, as a result, we both—"

Again she stopped.

"I'm afraid I'm telling it rather badly," she went on after a moment, shaking her head with a sad smile. "I should have explained that my mother died many years ago, and that there are only the two of us left. Her will, however, had to find some way of taking out the big money that was left between us, luckily, through the kindness of friends, we were able to secure some—Sheregh as a manageress at a place in Moulton Street, run by the mother of a school friend—myself as a saleswoman with a Regent Street firm of jewellers. Our friends have also been kind to us in another way—by refusing to drop us. And that is how Sheregh came to the city."

"About a year ago, while at supper at the Dorset with some friends, he was casually introduced to us. I disliked the man almost at sight, but with my sister it was otherwise. He seems to have possessed some sort of fascination over her. I know nothing about it at the time. Not until months afterwards did I learn that their acquaintance had been extended beyond that first evening—and then only from my sister herself, when her eyes had been opened to something of the man's character."

On her side, I am sure, there was something in it beyond a silly, girlish infatuation, but she had not written him some foolish letters which he was holding over her—trying to use them for his own vile ends. When she told me everything, I advised her not to worry, but simply to drop the man, which she did. And for months afterwards neither she nor I heard of any further of him. In the meantime, Sheregh had become engaged to a childhood friend, an old neighbour in Dorset, with whom people she is staying at present."

"We now come to the part where I enter the heavily business. About a month ago, Myne, with a woman friend, came into the shop where I am employed to buy some jewellery. He was not enough to ignore me then, but the same evening, when I left business, I found him in my shop. I got rid of him very quickly, but have a deep sense of fear that without some further attempts to force his attention on me."

"Then last week I had a letter from him; he knew our address, of course. It began with a few words of flattery on Sheregh's engagement—something he had heard of it, and also that she was visiting her father's people at Highbury. It then went on to mention that he had some letters of hers—could I send them to him at his flat, or should he send them to Sheregh? Presumably just an ordinary, friendly letter; but to anyone who knew the man, it veiled threat and suggestion were plain."

"I wrote the reply, of course, and then—at the thought that I might be writing the death-warrant of my sister's happiness—took it up. For days, by rights, the question haunted me. Was it to be Sheregh or myself? And always something seemed to whisper that her happiness must come first."

"And so we come to my visit to Myne last night."

"Yesterday afternoon, sitting on a sudden impulse, I telephoned him, saying I would call on his flat shortly after six. Why, I can't explain. It was going off duty early, and had arranged to spend the evening with some friends near Essex Place. That may have put the idea into my head, I don't know. I had no definite plan—nothing such a vague hope that, somehow, I might be able to trick the letters from him. I do know that, at the last moment, my little store of courage almost failed me, and I walked round Essex Place again and again before I could bring myself to face the ordeal."

"Myne himself opened the door for me—sitting, I remember thinking, as if he had been waiting behind it. Evidently, that his name was not for the evening. He showed me into a sort of sitting-room and to a chair, then began to apologise for his previous activities, and to talk about my sister's engagement. But of the time I seemed to be listening and answering in a dream—my mind filled with one thought, the letters—my mind searching the

(Continued on next page)

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