



THE
LONDON
MYSTERY
MAGAZINE



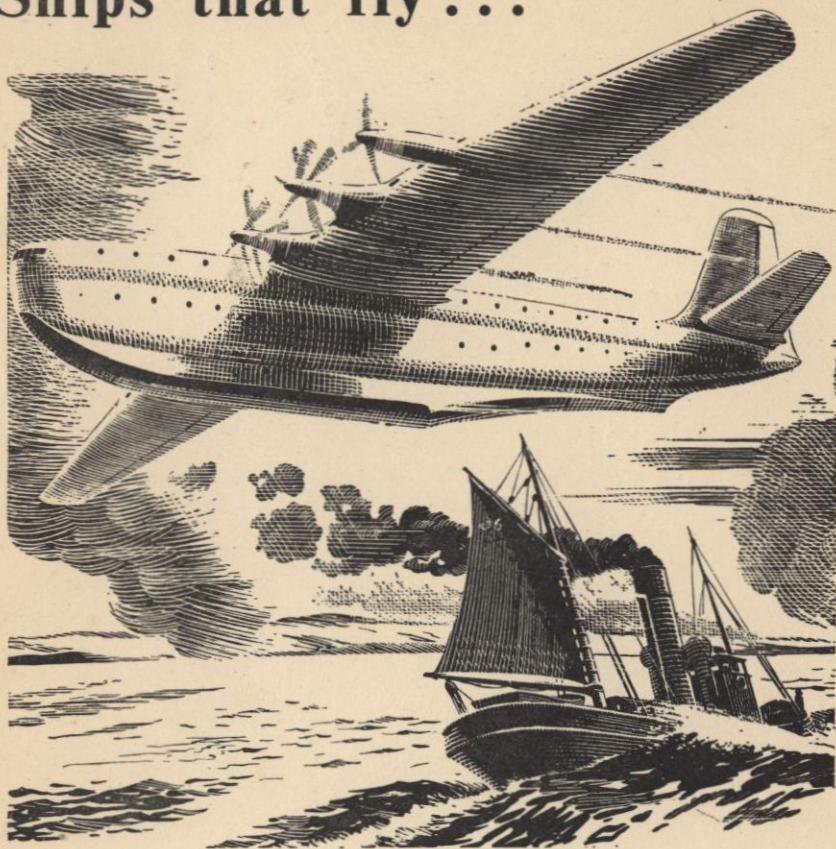
FRANCIS BOYD
LILIANE CLOPET
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NEGLEY FARSON
WALLACE NICHOLS

MENDOZA
CLORINDA
MARY FITT
SAGITTARIUS
KENNETH WALKER

2/6

April 1950 May

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THE LONDON MYSTERY MAGAZINE

April 1950 May

Vol. I. No. 3.

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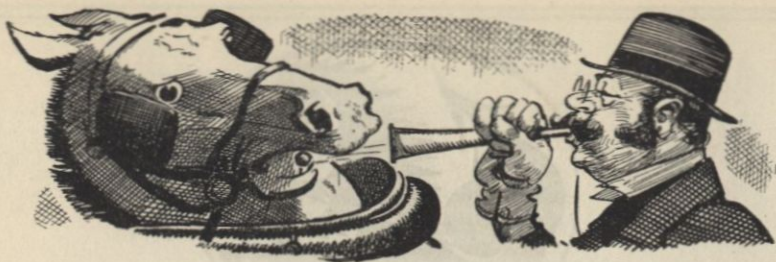
April, 1950

DEAR READER,

With this number the LONDON MYSTERY MAGAZINE starts regular publication and it will appear every other month. When the first number was put out in June last year, and the second in December, the old war-time controls over magazine paper still operated and the regular publication of new magazines in commercial quantities was forbidden. Now the Order has been abolished and we can print when and how we like.

The founding of the LONDON MYSTERY MAGAZINE under these difficult circumstances was an act requiring some faith. Quite apart from the paper and production difficulties, would there be a readership for a detection and mystery magazine at the literary and artistic level proposed? The response to our first two numbers has answered this question—it has been enthusiastic and, literally, world wide. Already we have readers in virtually every civilized country, and letters we have received tell us that a fellowship and bond of interest is rapidly growing through the presentation made by the LONDON MYSTERY MAGAZINE of the “mystery of things”. We look forward to the growth of this international fellowship.

THE EDITOR.



DOCTOR...?

Holmes left one unsolved mystery,
The case of the strange M.D.;
Was he ever qualified? Had he anything to hide?
And why was he always free?
Facts of his previous history
Researchers fail to trace,
But there's something queer in his medical career,
For he never had a single case.

Nobody called Dr. Watson
For medical advice;
If Sherlock in a hurry asked his company in Surrey,
Watson would be ready in a trice.
No one ever seemed to worry
When he drove to Charing Cross,
Which strengthens the suspicion that as surgeon or physician
Watson was a total loss.

Was he sometimes slightly nettled
That he never had a call?
What he did upon his "round" is a mystery profound,
Perhaps the deepest mystery of all.
Another question is not settled—
What secret linked the ill-assorted pair?
A tangle too involved to be completely solved
Surrounds the Watson-Holmes affair.





No one sent for Dr. Watson,
So doubts as to his competence persist;
Could he recognize narcosis, or neurosis or dipsosis,
Or was he a chiropodist ?
Did Sherlock ever ask his diagnosis ?
Could he undertake a simple case of flu ?
If his knowledge of pathology was like his criminology
He never had the faintest clue.

Was he a public danger
Holmes wanted to restrain ?
When they took a little stroll was he under close control
To keep him from the bed of pain ?
Was he to the coroner no stranger ?
Or with ugly customers in league ?
And how did Holmes deduce he would be the slightest use
In tracing the most trifling intrigue ?

Nobody called Dr. Watson,
Nobody but Holmes took up his time;
And what was the objective of that singular detective
In putting Dr. Watson on to crime ?
Was he really mentally defective ?
Why did patients never ring his bell ?
The Doctor's obfuscations have baffled generations—
Did Watson baffle Sherlock Holmes as well ?

SAGITTARIUS





THE CASE OF THE RETIRED PRINTER

MARY FITT

Illustrations by Eric Fraser

Mr. Pott's last case before he retired from his solicitor's office happened to be Georgina's first. She was then a very young Siamese kitten, but she was already much too observant for the peace of mind of wrongdoers.

“**Q**UITE,” said Mr. Pitt, drawing off his gold-rimmed spectacles and closing his leather-bound volume of Müller's *Oratores Attici*. “I must confess I was happy to retire from the active practice of the law. There's a good deal of dull routine-work in a solicitor's office, and I was glad to escape from that. But occasionally one comes across something which one would have been sorry to miss.”

He laid a thin hand on Georgina,

his Siamese cat, who, as soon as he had closed the book, had jumped up on to the arm of his chair.

“Strange,” he said, “that my last important case before my retirement should also have been Georgina's first.”

“I didn't realize you had Georgina before you came here,” said Dr. Manners, scenting a story. “She must have been quite young then.”

“Oh, yes,” said Mr. Pitt; “just a blooming young thing of six months.” He got up and walked to the French window, where he stood gazing out across the sunny garden and beyond it to where the sky met the cliffs

above the sea. "It was then that I got into the habit of taking her about with me. She had been given me by a client; but my family didn't like cats, and Siamese cats especially filled them with horror. So not being satisfied with the way Georgina was treated in my absence, I bought a basket and took her with me to the office every day." He came back into the room. "She is much happier here than in a town—and so am I."

Dr. Manners laughed: "I can't imagine anyone being unkind to Georgina. But tell me about her first case."

Mr. Pitt resettled himself into his armchair, while Georgina, hearing her name mentioned, pricked up her chocolate-coloured ears and bent her slightly squinting blue eyes expectantly on her master.

"It happened," began Mr. Pitt, "as I have said, in my very last year in Broxeter. One day there called at my office a certain Mr. George Pape, an old client of mine. . . ."

2

This Mr. Pape (Mr. Pitt continued) was a retired printer and stationer. He had had quite a profitable little business in his time, one of those unambitious small presses of which a big city like Broxeter has a dozen or more. They confine themselves to printing bill-heads and grocers' catalogues and the like; nothing that one could call a book ever comes their way.

Pape, however, had a few hobbies. Like many half-educated, modestly prosperous tradesmen, he had cherished in his youth the wish to become a doctor; and since that wish could not be fulfilled, he still took an

interest in everything connected with medicine and surgery. He made friends with the doctors who came to him for their printed stationery; and it was his proudest boast that he had once been commissioned by an elderly professor of anatomy at the university to print a treatise on *Some Occasional Bony Abnormalities*, for private distribution. Furthermore, Pape had a shop where he sold not only the usual stationery, but also certain special lines such as paper-backed novels, fishing-tackle, old coins and foreign stamps.

His profits had enabled him to buy one of those gloomy old houses in a quiet street in Broxeter, so many of which were built during the latter half of the nineteenth century; and in due course he paid off the mortgage which had been negotiated by our firm. But soon afterwards, when he was in the early fifties, he lost his wife; and after that, his interest in business declined. He engaged a housekeeper to look after him, and gave her and her son the ground-floor as their province, while he himself withdrew to the top floor with all his hobbies.

A couple of years later, not unexpectedly, he retired from business altogether. We negotiated the sale of the shop and the printing-works for him, and saw to it that his money was safely invested. I remember asking him if he thought it wise to give up active life at such a comparatively early age; but he told me he had no longer any interest in making money now that his wife was gone; he had enough to live on, and enough hobbies to keep him interested for the remainder of his days. He had kept back a hand printing-press from the sale; and also he proposed to go on

dealing in foreign stamps. He had a small clientele with whom he would negotiate by post. But above all, he wanted to go on studying anatomy.

His attitude seemed reasonable, so I said no more. I did, however, ask him if he had made a will, and he said no, not yet: he would come back and do that later.

"One thing at a time," he said. "Now that Annie's gone, I've nobody left in the world except my brother Edwin in Australia, and he's probably quite well off, anyway. He has a tannery in Perth. I haven't seen him for many years, or heard from him either. Maybe I'll take a trip out there one day and look him up."

We left it at that. He never came back to ask me to draw up the will, and I assumed that like many people who have no near relations, he could not make up his mind to bequeath his property to someone he didn't really care about.

Years passed, and I forgot about him. Then one day, on the morning I speak of, he came to see me by appointment, dressed in the ancient but little-worn black suit which he kept for these occasions, and sitting down on the chair in front of me, informed me with a sort of nervous determination that he was going to marry his housekeeper, Mrs. Tilbury, and that he wished to make a new will in her favour.

"So there is an existing will?" I asked him.

"Yes," he said rather sheepishly. "I just got one of those Will Forms that I'd brought from the shop, and said I gave and bequeathed all my property to my brother Edwin, tanner and dealer in leather goods, of Perth, Australia. I didn't see the point of

spending a guinea just to give my hard-earned savings to Edwin. We never got on very well. He was a bully, twice my size, and he used to thrash me when we were boys. I couldn't think of anything else to do; but I didn't much care whether he got it or not, so I just wrote down what I told you, and got two workmen who were papering the sitting-room to sign it."

"Probably it's quite valid," I said.

"I don't care whether it is or not," said Pape, "especially now that I've decided to marry again."

"All the same, I should destroy the existing will if I were you," I said. "That is, if you're quite sure about your present intentions."

I said this because I thought I detected a note of hesitation in his voice, in spite of his determined manner; and I must confess I always feel a twinge of doubt when a man tells me he intends to marry his housekeeper. The motive is obvious: desire for a comfortable home, for the continuance of the familiar, and the fear of losing it for something strange. I knew Pape's housekeeper, Mrs. Tilbury. I had seen her once or twice when I had called at the house during the sale of his business. She struck me as unprepossessing—a dour, rather grim woman, as unlike his previous wife as possible; and it was not likely that she would have improved with the passing of the years. Moreover, she had a son. Tom Tilbury had been a rough overgrown youth of eighteen when first his mother went to look after Mr. Pape; and now that he was approaching thirty, he must, I thought, be an awkward housemate, if he were still there. I knew him by sight. He drove a long-distance van for a firm of carriers,

and his huge bulk and flaming red hair made him conspicuous.

"Is Tom Tilbury still living with you?" I asked.

"Oh yes," said Pape, frowning a little.

"Not married yet?"

"No."

"Rather a big stepson for you to acquire."

"Oh, he won't be there much longer. He's courting. And besides, he's away most of the time on these long-distance journeys. I hardly ever see him these days."

"You get on well with him, I suppose?"

Pape looked evasive; but as I waited for an answer, he said grudgingly:

"Well, yes, all right, I daresay. But we've nothing in common. At one time I tried to interest the lad in something better than lorry-driving and the dogs. I wanted to apprentice him to the printing-trade, and take him into the business, as I'd no son of my own. But he's the sort of chap who'll only learn what he wants to, if you know what I mean. He won't stick at the thing and learn the whole of it. So in the end I gave it up—told his mother I could do nothing with him. She was upset. He's the apple of her eye."

I thought: "Not a very good prospect, then, for her second husband," but I said no more. I was there to take my client's instructions, not to instruct him on his choice of a wife.

As I proceeded to take notes of Pape's assets and wishes, Georgina sat beside me on the desk and studied him with the careful attention she always gives to a newcomer. At six months, she was very playful—she

can play still when she has a mind to, as you've noticed—and at one point in the conversation, she surprised me by suddenly leaping across on to his knee and beginning to play with the gold seal which hung from his watch-chain.

I apologized. Most people would have started, and many would have been furious; but Georgina evidently knew her man. Mr. Pape did not rebuff her; he went on talking while Georgina patted the seal and made it swing to and fro on the end of the heavy chain; and from time to time he ran a horny hand, stained with printer's ink, gently down her spine.

When I had taken the necessary data, I asked him to return in a week's time, when the draft would be ready for his signature if he approved of it. He thanked me without enthusiasm, and went away.

3

I drew the will according to Pape's instructions; but when the day came for him to come and hear it read, he didn't turn up.

I wrote to him, but received no answer; so as the dreary street in which he lived happened to be on my way home, I took a taxi there from the office, thinking he might have fallen ill, perhaps, or else, as he was now something of a recluse, have forgotten the date of the second appointment.

After I had tried an ancient iron bell-pull, and two supposedly electric bell-pushes, I waited for some time on the top of the stone steps without result. Next I tried the rusty iron knocker, which had come off and been reattached with wire. I was just

about to give up the attempt when an upper window opened and an irritable voice called out:

"Who's there?"

I stepped back and looked up. It was Mrs. Tilbury, looking as if she'd have liked to empty a bucket of water on my head. When I declared myself, however, she said more amiably:

"Wait a minute. I'll come down."

I waited, considerably longer than a minute. When at last she opened the heavy door and let me in, her face wore the mask of an extremely bad-tempered and disobliging woman trying to be polite to someone who may, she thinks, be of use to her, or who had better be propitiated.

"Come in, sir," she said, "I'm sorry to keep you waiting, but I've been *that* worried——"

"What's the matter?" I said. "I hope Mr. Pape isn't ill."

"He's more than ill, sir," she said. "He's disappeared—gone away."

"Did he leave an address?"

"No, sir—that's the funny thing!"

"When did he go?"

By now we were installed in the front parlour among the aspidistras and the smell of dust. Mrs. Tilbury settled down on the red-plush sofa and offered me a red-plush arm-chair.

"It was last Thursday," she said, "two days after he visited you." A gleam of interest animated her rather lack-lustre black eyes as she added: "On some matter of business, I presume?"

I was not to be drawn. I had no reason to suppose that Pape had confided his testamentary intentions to his future bride. I said curtly:

"Have you any idea where he may have gone to?"

"None at all—unless it was to see his brother in Australia."

"Australia! But surely he wouldn't do that without making some preparations?"

"Well, sir, he was a very close sort of man—kept himself right apart, up in that old attic of his. But I did notice he was very busy up there all the previous day, burning papers and so on; and when I came in from shopping in the afternoon, he told me he'd put some old junk in the cellar; but I haven't been down to see. He has so much rubbish up there, I should think he could hardly move; but he wouldn't let me put foot over the threshold: tells me to leave things alone, and he keeps it locked and carries the key. I've been here now for nearly eleven years, and to this day I've never caught a peep into it. He does all his own cleaning, and always has."

I rose.

"If he doesn't turn up soon, you ought to notify the police."

To my surprise—for most people automatically resist the idea—she agreed readily.

"It's what I mean to do, if he's not back in a few days and doesn't send word. What can I do, with this great house on my hands and no money to pay the rates? What's more, when my son comes home at the week-end, I shall get him to break that door down."

"Yes, do," I said, "but remember not to touch anything, in case there has to be an enquiry."

She gave me a "What-do-you-take-me-for?" look, which I sustained quite easily, and showed me to the door. I left, carrying the useless draft of Pape's will, and wondering if he had really run away rather than im-

plement his promise to marry Mrs. Tilbury. I thought it very likely.

4

After this, for another week or so, other business engrossed me, and I forgot about Pape. Then one morning I saw a notice in the paper about his disappearance. The police were making enquiries: could he have wandered off, losing his memory? Anyone who saw a man answering to his description — clean-shaven, medium height, stooping, rather sallow, and so on—was asked to communicate with the Chief Constable of Broxeter.

A few days later I managed to run into Superintendent Mallett in the street.

"Hullo!" he said. "I was just coming round to see you. I'm making enquiries about a client of yours, George Pape."

"Oh yes, of course," I said. "Any news of him? How comes it you're dealing with the case?"

"They called me in to help," said Mallett, not without complacency. "They always do when they have anything out of the ordinary. This afternoon I'm going to see the house-keeper and take a look round. It was she who notified us. She seems to think he's run away."

"Really?" I said. "From what?"

Mallett grinned. "Herself, I should think. It appears he had promised to marry her just before he disappeared, and he was going to make a will in her favour. But he disappeared before he signed it. I thought perhaps you could tell me the details, as he was a client of yours."

I told Mallett how Pape had come to me and given instructions for the

drawing of a new will, and how he had told me there was an existing will leaving everything to his brother in Australia.

"Yes," said Mallett, "that's quite correct. Mrs. Tilbury found that will among the papers in the desk in his bedroom. It's written on an ordinary Will Form, and seems quite valid. But she can't get into the attic where he worked, because he went off with the key, and she doesn't like to get anyone to break the door down without authority. So I'm going there again at half-past two to look over the premises. Would you care to be present? You might be able to help us, as you handled all his business."

I went. I took Georgina with me. I was already beginning to value her remarkable powers, and to value her collaboration. Mrs. Tilbury, though her manner was never very agreeable, seemed pleased to see us. Her son, she said, was away on a job in Scotland, and wouldn't be back for a week or so; it put a lot of responsibility on her shoulders, and she'd be glad if something could be done about it, especially as Mr. Pape had left no money to meet current expenses and no instructions. She repeated that she thought he had been seized with a sudden impulse to visit his brother in Australia. Then she left us, saying she hoped we'd find something which would enable her to get in touch with him as soon as possible.

I took Georgina out of her basket and put her on the lead; and together with Mallett we went all over the house. First we went to the top floor, where Mallett with a couple of pushes with his shoulder broke the door in; and a most extraordinary collection of junk was revealed: a printing-



press and type, masses of paper and printer's ink, shelves on which medical books and pamphlets jostled stamp catalogues and albums, and a great many other things too many to be examined in detail at the time. Then we went to his bedroom, where we found nothing enlightening; and so on without result until we came to the basement. This was a flagged cellar running underneath the house from front to back, and containing coal and firewood, a few sacks of potatoes, and other stores.

Mallett explored the grimy walls and floor with his torch; but it was Georgina who first discovered that several flagstones in the centre had been recently displaced. She left us suddenly, pulling the lead out of my hand, and began scraping; and when Mallett turned his torch that way, it was clear that the earth had been disturbed.

Mallett sent for a couple of men to dig; and soon, surely enough, about a foot below the surface, they came upon some remains—human bones, buried in lime. While they were digging, Georgina looked on casually; she seemed only mildly interested. But when they had finished, she went down into the hole as if to make her own private investigations. Cats are proverbially curious. I lifted her out and took her away.

A few days later, I learnt the sequel.

The bones had been sent to the laboratory for examination. They turned out to be part of a skeleton at least a hundred years old. Moreover, they had belonged to a young female!

5

When Mallett called at my office

with the report on the bones, he was decidedly annoyed.

"Not only were they a century old," he said disgustedly. "They were attached in places with bits of rusty wire. Of course I didn't stop to examine them myself; I just collected them into a box and bunged them in to the research lab. at Broxeter. They laughed a lot. They think it's very funny."

"How did they know they were a century old?" I asked him, while Georgina looked on benevolently from her place on my desk.

Mallett grunted. "They were part of a medical student's specimen skeleton. There was a metal tab on the fifth rib giving dates."

"Where had they come from?"

"I questioned Mrs. Tilbury closely about that," said Mallett. "She said she believed Pape had some old bones up there in his attic among all the other junk. He was rather keen on anatomy."

"But how did they get into the cellar?"

"Mrs. T. thinks Pape buried them there himself the day before he left, as a sort of joke, or to give the impression he'd been murdered."

"Why should he do that?"

"Oh, just to annoy her, she thought. She said he'd been going queer in the head for some time past, and she'd had serious thoughts of leaving, and had said so to him, but he begged her not to go, and in the end he proposed marriage to her and offered to leave her his money; so she accepted, as he seemed so anxious she should stay and look after him. Nothing would have induced her to, she says, if she'd known."

I reflected.

"Well," I said, "she can hardly

have wanted to get rid of him herself, at any rate before the will was signed." An idea struck me. "Look here," I said, "you don't think he wanted to stage this disappearance so as to get out of marrying her and be able to keep his own property without any fuss?"

"How do you mean?" said Mallett.

"Well, suppose she's been badgering him to marry her for years—you know what some women are like—and he can't get out of it: can't get rid of her, and yet can't escape from her importunities without leaving. He's a quiet sort of fellow with set ways. He likes his house and his hobbies. He doesn't want to move, and she won't go and leave him in peace. So he devises a scheme by which he can achieve his purpose by cunning, since he's not strong enough to do so by force. Besides, remember, she has a son, a big bully of a fellow, who'd intimidate a man like Pape quite easily."

"Go on," said Mallett.

"Suppose he makes a will in favour of a mythical brother in Australia. Then he goes into hiding for a time—grows a beard, practises an Australian accent, learns something about the tanning business, and so on. Any documents he needed he could forge on his own printing-press. Then, when all's ready, he turns up one day, masquerading as his brother, and inherits his own property! Mrs. Tilbury has to leave. Pape settles down comfortably as before. Nobody's any the worse, and he has attained his object."

Mallett slapped his knees.

"By Gad!" he said, "if that's his idea, let me catch him, that's all! He'll find himself in gaol for perjury."

"Of course. But he mightn't know that. He might think he wasn't committing a serious offence in inheriting from himself. However, my guess may be quite wrong."

"Still"—Mallett stroked his chin—"it's something to bear in mind." His *gaffe* about the bones had shaken him, and he was more open to suggestions than usual. "What do you suggest would be the proper course?"

"Advertise in *The Times* for Edwin Pape, tanner, of Perth, Australia, and say 'Australian papers please copy.'"

"I'll do it," said Mallett. "It can't do any harm." He rose. "The only thing that bothers me is, why should he have troubled to bury the skeleton in the cellar?"

"Oh, a practical joke, perhaps. Or perhaps he was fond of the lady and didn't want anyone else to have her!"

We left it at that. Mallett went off, somewhat mollified.

6

A month or so went by, and nothing further happened. George Pape didn't turn up. The advertisements brought no result, and enquiries directed to the police at Perth, Australia, elicited the reply that an Edwin Pape, tanner and dealer in leather goods, had lived there until 1931, but had then left, and his destination was unknown. It was thought possible that he had changed his name, since he had left a considerable number of debts behind him. An effort to find him by advertisement would be made.

"It is possible, you know," I said to Mallett, "that Edwin Pape does exist, and that George has gone out to join him, as Mrs. Tilbury says."

"It looks like it," said Mallett. He

had now reverted to the view that my theory was a fantasy; but I knew he would pretend he had believed it all along if it turned out to be true. Then one morning I received a telephone call from Mrs. Tilbury asking if she could come to the office and see me. She didn't want to say more over the 'phone.

She came.

Georgina was not in the office with me that day, as it was a raw morning in November and she had a cold. Mrs. Tilbury, pinched and red-nosed, wearing black like a widow and clasping a small muff smelling of moth-balls, was not a prepossessing sight, and once again I sympathized with George Pape in his desire to get away from her.

"Well, what can I do for you, Mrs. Tilbury?" I said.

She produced from her muff a letter addressed to herself, bearing an Australian stamp. I looked at the post-mark: it was clearly "Perth," and the date was some three weeks earlier. At her request I took the letter out and read it. It bore the printed heading:

"EDWIN PAPE
TANNER AND SADDLER
STOCKIST OF EVERY VARIETY OF
LEATHER GOODS
Own Skins Treated"

The contents, typed, were as follows:

DEAR MADAM,

"I regret to inform you that my brother George, who reached here a month ago in very poor health, died on Thursday last at my house of double pneumonia. He asked me to let you know that

he was very sorry for all the trouble he had caused you, and hoped you could find it in your heart to forgive him, especially after all you did for him over so many years.

"George informed me also that he had left a will bequeathing all his property and money to me. I shall therefore hope to present myself shortly in the Old Country to wind up my brother's affairs. You may expect my arrival soon after the receipt of this letter.

"I shall of course take steps to see that your services are suitably recompensed, and remain, dear Madam,

"Your obedient servant,
"EDWIN PAPE."

The signature, unlike that of George Pape, who prided himself on a "copper-plate" hand, was simple and uneducated, the work of a man not accustomed to wielding a pen.

"Well, Mrs. Tilbury," I said, handing back the letter, "the mystery is now solved. Let me know, won't you, as soon as your visitor appears? I shall be interested to meet him; and tell him I shall be glad to do all I can to help him in settling his brother's estate."

She promised to do so.

As soon as she had gone, I passed on the information to Mallett by 'phone.

"And as the police say there's no Edwin Pape in Perth, and this letter has the Perth postmark," I concluded, "it looks as if my surmise about the visitor may be correct."

"How?"

"George Pape, having 'died' out there, may turn up as Edwin to claim his inheritance."

"Aha!" said Mallett, "God help him if he does!"

Thinking even more of Mrs. Tilbury than of Mallett, I fervently agreed.

7

A few more weeks went by. Then came the expected 'phone-call from Mrs. Tilbury: the visitor had arrived!

He had called, she said, late the previous evening, but had refused to come in. He said he didn't wish to give trouble, merely to announce his arrival, and he would go to an hotel for the night.

"What was he like?" I asked her.

She said she could not see him very well in the dark porch with the dim hall light behind her, but he was a much bigger man than George, and had a beard. His voice was different, too: he had what she supposed was an Australian accent, like Cockney. He seemed quite nice, but rather reserved. He had said he would call back that morning at eleven. Could I possibly be there? Her son was still away in Scotland, and she was a bit afraid to be left alone with this stranger from the other ends of the earth, in the old house with its thick, sound-proof walls.

I said, "Don't be alarmed. Of course I'll come," and after communicating with Mallett, I went, taking Georgina with me in her basket.

8

Mrs. Tilbury showed me into the front parlour, and after a few words of greeting she left me.

The room was rather dark, as in all these houses. The windows were large enough, but there was a great

monkey-puzzle tree outside, which cut off much of the daylight; and the lace curtains that screened the windows, together with the heavy half-drawn velour curtains at the sides, produced a dim twilight in which the dark wallpaper and overpoweringly large pieces of furniture seemed to close in upon one and bear one down. I took a seat with my back to the windows, and Georgina, released from her basket, perched on the arm of my chair.

We waited.

Which would it be? Edwin, or George, or neither?

A sense of something sinister impending caused my skin to prickle and the hair to rise on the back of my neck. Georgina was feeling the same: her whiskers were twitching and the bent tip of her tail was jerking as she stared at the door in the way that only an intelligent cat can manage to do, suggesting that he or she hears sounds and sees sights imperceptible to the rest of us. When I laid my hand on her spine, she started.

I was glad when at last I heard heavy footsteps coming up the path and climbing the five stone steps to the porch. My heart was beating loudly, but it was good to know that the tension would soon end. I heard the bell ring and Mrs. Tilbury approach along the passage from the kitchen. The front door opened. A man's voice, deep and gruff, greeted her. In a moment the visitor stood before me.

"This is Mr. Edwin Pape," she said. "Mr. Pape, this is George's solicitor, Mr. Pitt."

The claimant nodded without speaking.

I looked him up and down. Well,

one thing was clear: he wasn't George Pape. He was a huge fellow with a big black beard, black hair, bronzed face, and large hands stained brown, perhaps with his trade. He glanced suspiciously at me, and still more suspiciously at Georgina. Mrs. Tilbury hurried away, murmuring something about coffee.

The visitor, after taking stock of the room, managed to insert himself between the wall and the table, and sat down, pulling out a large wallet.

"I suppose you'll want proof of my identity?" he said.

"The Probate authorities certainly will," I said, "and also of course the proof of your brother's death."

"I have it all here," he said, handing me a death certificate and a number of other papers. I glanced through them and returned them.

"I hope," he went on, "this business can be settled quickly. I want to get back to Australia and attend to my own affairs."

"Naturally," I said. "By the way, are you still in business in Perth?"

He looked up quickly. "Perth? We don't touch as far north as Perth." And then, with a change of tone: "Oh, Perth! I thought you said——"

He got no farther. At that moment Georgina, who had been staring at him intently—staring at his brown-stained hands as they played with the seal hanging from his heavy watch-chain—Georgina took a flying leap on to the table from the arm of my chair, and landed in front of him with her back arched, her tail perpendicular and bristling, and her blue eyes flashing with the fiery-red reflex. Her claws, fully unsheathed, gripped the pile of the green merino tablecloth, and she emitted a series of sounds such as I had never heard her utter

before, among which one could distinguish spits, hisses and whines.

The stranger, half-rising, lifted his arm as if to ward off an attack; but before either he or Georgina could act further, I jumped up and seized her hurriedly. No matter how angry she was, Georgina would never turn on me. I bundled her into her basket, shut the lid and said:

"Well, good day, Mr. Pape. I'll see you later."

Then I hastily left the room and the house, as if the devil's own flying squad were after me.

9

Mallett was waiting with a couple of men in his car round the corner. They went back without me; and a few minutes later they emerged with the handcuffed murderer of George Pape. He was shouting and struggling, and Mrs. Tilbury followed behind screaming, so that soon the whole neighbourhood of what had looked like a street of the dead was alive with faces at every window and every door. Georgina and I slipped away by a side street, and waited until Mallett had time to bring us the news.

The stranger from Australia was of course Tom Tilbury. I took no part in the police investigations which followed, when Pape's house was searched from floor to ceiling and this time pulled to pieces; but Mallett kept me informed, and by the time the trial came on at Broxeter Assizes, the police had built up the whole story.

First, in the cellar where they had found the previous skeleton, but six feet deeper, they unearthed the body of George Pape, with a crack in the

top of its skull. It was a cunning idea on Tilbury's part to bury the ancient bones just below the surface above the real victim; he knew that a disturbed flagstone in a cellar is bound to be detected, and so he thought he would arrange for a discovery that would explain the disturbance and put an end to further investigations. I remembered how Georgina had wanted to go on looking, and I wondered if she knew even then that all was not well below.

Next they subjected all the documents which were in Tilbury's possession to expert examination. Needless to say, they were forged. Tilbury might not have come up to George Pape's expectations as a printer's apprentice, but he had learnt enough of the printing processes to print letter-heads and even to copy a death-certificate. The stamp on the letter that purported to be from Perth, Australia, was taken from George Pape's collection, and the postmark "Perth" supplemented with a forged date.

Tom had of course never left the house. He had spent the interval in George Pape's attic working at the necessary documents, and in growing a beard, which he dyed black as well as his hair. He took the key of the door from George Pape's corpse, and it was a pretence that the attic could not be entered without breaking down the door. He also took from George Pape, among other things, his gold watch-chain and seal, which he had the effrontery to wear, thinking it could be explained as a dying gift from his "brother." Georgina recognized the seal, but she knew that the man who wore it was not the one she had liked when he came to my office, the one who had gently stroked her

back when she played with his seal.

The best touch of all, though, was the burying of the old skeleton on top of the newly murdered corpse.

The motive?

Neither Tilbury nor his mother ever confessed; but there was no doubt about it really, as surmised by the prosecution. George Pape had been intimidated into agreeing to marry Mrs. Tilbury and leave her his property; but at the last moment he changed his mind and arranged to leave the country. The precious pair discovered this; and realizing that he was escaping them, they hit upon the plan of murdering him and getting Tom to impersonate the brother. So Tom grew a beard and dyed it, and stained his hands brown to conceal the red hairs on them and to cover up any traces of printer's ink, and practised a Cockney accent; and so he and his mother set the stage for their own downfall.

The curious thing was that they twice slipped up over the name "Perth": first when they assumed, as George had done, that Edwin was still living there as his last letter had shown; and secondly, when Tom mistook my reference to the West Australian town, and assumed I meant the Scottish one, which he knew. There were other mistakes as well; and of course they hadn't a chance. But they were both too stupid to realize that. Cunning and stupidity often go together, especially when they're motivated by greed.

10

"H'm," said Dr. Manners. "Yes, I remember the case now: a particularly coldblooded crime. They got

what they deserved. But what about Edwin? Did he ever return to claim his inheritance?"

Mr. Pitt shook his head.

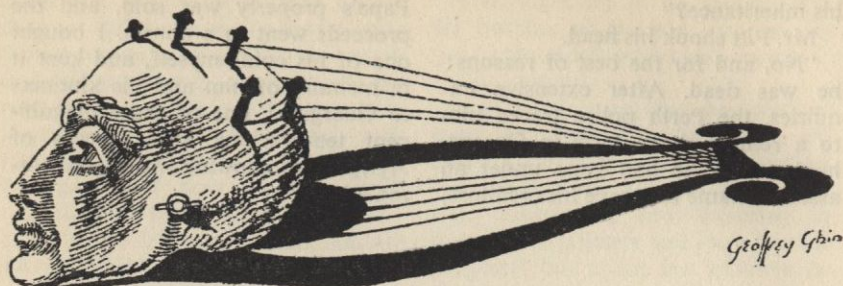
"No, and for the best of reasons: he was dead. After extensive enquiries, the Perth police traced him to a remote sheep farm in Queensland, where he had gone under an assumed name to escape his creditors;

and it was found he had died a couple of years before. So George Pape's property was sold, and the proceeds went to a cousin. I bought one of his coins myself, and kept it in memory of him and his kindness to Georgina: one of those magnificent ten-drachma silver pieces of Agrigentum, showing two eagles tearing a hare."



When you consider with how little mental power and corporeal labour a printer can get a guinea a week, it is a very desirable occupation.

SAMUEL JOHNSON (Boswell's 'Life,' March 27, 1775).



MIND TO MIND

KENNETH WALKER

Illustrations by Geoffrey Ghin

Kenneth Macfarlane Walker is not only a well-known surgeon, but also a student of occidental and oriental philosophy. His first article, which appeared in our second number, discussed the mystery of the unconscious mind and modern theories about it. We looked forward, as we hope our readers did, to the second of his promised series of articles dealing with the greatest mystery of all—Man. The pleasure will be enhanced by the visual interpretation of his ideas by Geoffrey Ghin who, at twenty-three, is an established stage designer; but we are the first to tempt him to try his hand at illustration.

WHEN a professional colleague of mine was asked whether he believed in telepathy, he replied: "Yes, but for heaven's sake keep that strictly to yourself." He was wise to be so cautious. In a religious age medi-

cal men carefully hid any doubts they may have harboured on the subject of the doctrines of the Church, for to gain the reputation of being heterodox was damaging to their practices. In a scientific age they must be equally cautious not to offend the canons of scientific orthodoxy, and telepathy is an idea that cannot be fitted into the accepted scientific creed. It is a form of extra-

sensory perception that a scientist is unable to recognize unless he is prepared to change a great deal else in his general scheme of thought, so that the doctor who confesses that he believes in it is in danger of being called a crank. He will be accused of being the kind of man who attends spiritualistic séances, and who is as heterodox in his practice as he is in his private life. A doctor is wise therefore to keep his interest in strange and inexplicable psychic phenomena to himself.

The word "telepathy" was invented by the Victorian psychologist, F. W. H. Myers, to denote the transmission of an impression from one mind to another without the intervention of the recognized senses. Myers did not attempt to give any explanation of how this was brought about, but it was assumed by many people that it was by means of "vibrations of thought" transmitted through space. We know now that this is extremely unlikely to be the case, and in order to avoid the implications and associations that have become attached to the word telepathy, two new terms have been introduced—"extra-sensory perception" (E.S.P.) and the "Psi" faculty. As will be seen later, telepathy is closely allied to the other, at present inexplicable phenomena of precognition, clairvoyance and psychometry, all of which can be conveniently grouped under these two new terms. The first question that has to be asked is, "Do these strange faculties actually exist, or are they merely imaginary?" The second, "If they exist, how are they to be explained?"

Fifty years ago there were scientists who protested that it was an outrage that such questions as these should

even be asked. In June 1881 the members of a learned committee published a report of their investigations of certain "thought reading" claims made by a Mr. Bishop, in the well-known scientific journal *Nature*. They prefaced their report with the cautionary words: "From these experiments it is needless to say we did not expect any result." This should have safeguarded their scientific reputations, but one of the committee, Professor Ray Lankester, made doubly sure of his scientific integrity by protesting that it was a mistake even to investigate "so puerile a hypothesis" as the transmission of thought. Fortunately, there were other men of the opinion that the advancement of knowledge was of greater importance than the safeguarding of established beliefs, and who were prepared to accept new ideas, even if acceptance of them were to necessitate rearrangement of their previous thoughts. In spite of the danger of being called charlatans, such men as these began working on psychic problems on their own. Professor and Mrs. Henry Sidgwick of Cambridge made a number of experiments to see whether they could transmit thought to each other while sitting in separate rooms. One of them selected at random a two-digit number and visualized it, whilst the other wrote down the number that came into his mind. Then they calculated how much of the successful results could be accounted for by the laws of chance. The successes proved greater than could be ascribed to accident, and the Sidgwicks accepted this as valid evidence in support of telepathy. As the years passed, more and more reputable people became interested in the subject, amongst

others Arthur Balfour, Henri Bergson, William James, Lord Rayleigh, Professor Broad, Cammille Flammarion and Professor J. J. Thomson. Even the doctors were now taking an interest in telepathy. The French physician, Dr. E. Azam, discovered that a female patient, whom he had hypnotized, was responding to his unspoken thoughts. He decided to test whether she would be equally sensitive to the sensations that he experienced and, going behind her back, he put into his mouth some table salt. She volunteered the statement that she tasted salt. Janet, the well-known French psychiatrist, even went so far as to claim that he was able to induce hypnotic trances in subjects at a distance sufficiently great to exclude the possibility of sensory communication. At a later date Jung also supported the idea that "telepathy" might occur.

In 1882 the Society for Psychical Research was founded, and the many stories of spontaneous telepathy that they invited and received were submitted to a careful and critical scrutiny. Those who carried out this work came to the conclusion that when all doubtful cases had been eliminated there remained behind a residue that lent strong support to the view that there was a mysterious faculty of the human mind of which orthodox science could give no adequate account. Sometimes the message was received by the mind in the ordinary waking state and in other cases in a state of sleep. Two examples will be given from a volume published by the Society under the title, *Phantasms of the Living*. In the first of these cases the percipient was a child of about ten who was walking along a country road reading a book

on geometry. She had no cause for anxiety concerning her mother's health, but she suddenly had a vision of her lying upon the floor of her bedroom at home. So convinced was she of the reality of her vision that she went straight to fetch a doctor, with whom she returned home. Here her mother was found lying on the floor suffering from a heart attack and in urgent need of medical attention. In the second case the receiver of the message was, at the time of its reception, asleep. His description is as follows:

"My brother and father were on a journey. . . . I dreamt . . . I saw father driving in a sledge, followed in another by my brother. They had to pass a crossroad on which another traveller was driving very fast, also in a sledge with one horse. Father seemed to drive on without observing the other fellow, who would . . . have driven over Father if he had not made his horse rear, so that I saw Father drive under the hooves of the horse. Every moment I expected the horse to fall down and crush him. I called out: 'Father, Father . . .' and awoke in a great fright." The incident occurred as the percipient dreamed it, except for one small item. (This is quoted by Rosalind Heywood, in *Telepathy and Allied Phenomena*, Society for Psychical Research.)

* * *

Striking although such stories of extra-sensory perception may be, they cannot be accepted as being scientific evidence in favour of telepathy. Science demands that its experiments

should be carried out under strictly controlled conditions, and that when repeated they give the same results. In order to satisfy these needs, J. B. Rhine, professor of psychology at Duke University, U.S.A., embarked on a number of controlled experiments in 1930. He did not seek so much for evidence in favour of the existence of telepathy as for information on the kindred subject of extrasensory perception, or clairvoyance. For this purpose he prepared a number of Zener cards. The pack was composed of twenty-five cards marked with the following five symbols: star, rectangle, cross, circle, and wavy lines. After the subject to be experimented upon had been shown the cards, and the test had been explained to him, the pack was shuffled, cut, and placed face downwards on the table at which he was seated. He was then asked to name the symbol marked on the top card. His answer was recorded and the card was removed, but not exposed to the guesser. This procedure was repeated until the whole of the pack had been named. The pack was then reshuffled and the whole experiment repeated. Afterwards the results were scrutinized. Rhine's comments are as follows:

"From chance alone the average score expected was 5.25 cards. If a subject scored above 5 on the average, the deviation, the total number of hits above chance expectancy, was measured by means of a mathematical yardstick called the 'standard deviation.' This measure, which has long been in use in the various sciences, tells what the odds are that chance alone did not produce the result

obtained. If, for example, a subject were given a test with four runs through the pack and scored 7.5 hits per run, the odds would be about 150 to 1 against the total score of 30 hits, or a deviation of 10 above expectation, being produced by pure luck or chance. . . . Let us turn to the actual scores. The best individual performer went through the deck of E.S.P. cards well over 700 times during the first three years of work covered by my first report, *Extra-Sensory Perception*, published in 1934. This man averaged about 8 hits per run of 25 trials, better than 3 hits above expectation for each pack. Now the odds are 100 to 1 that no one will average 8 or better for three runs in succession by chance alone. To express the odds against averaging a score of 8 or better by chance alone for more than 700 runs would require a paragraph of figures. This performance of one individual is so significant, and rules out chance so completely, that it does not matter what any of the other subjects did. No matter what their scores, they could not nullify the striking extra-chance character of this one man's performance!" (*The Reach of the Mind*, J. B. Rhine.)

In 1934 Dr. Soal, a mathematician of London University, repeated Rhine's experiments, but under even stricter conditions. An independent and critical observer was always present, and Dr. Soal was meticulously careful to eliminate every conceivable sensory clue that might pass from the agent to the percipient. He worked for five years, tested 160 subjects, and recorded 128,350 guesses, but with-

out being able to report any successes that could not be accounted for by chance. It was a dismal conclusion to five years' painstaking work, and then one of those happy accidents occurred that are so common in scientific research. In talking over his disappointing results with Whealey Carrington, who had himself been experimenting on telepathy, the latter happened to use the word "displacement." In his own experiments he had discovered that his percipients did not necessarily score on the target of the moment but sometimes on the one that preceded, or that followed it. In other words there was a displacement of time in his experiments. Encouraged by this, Soal went all through his results again and discovered that two of his subjects had scored in both directions well above what chance could account for. He got into touch with these promising percipients again, and started on a new series of experiments with them. His precautions against chance hints passing from the agent to the percipient were even stricter than before. They were seated in adjoining rooms, but the intercommunicating door was left slightly ajar so that the "ready" signal could be heard. The cards were marked with the five coloured pictures of a lion, elephant, zebra, giraffe and pelican, and were shuffled and placed in a box, the open side of which faced the agent. The outer doors of the rooms were kept locked throughout the experiments and each experiment was recorded on a separate printed scoring sheet. No sensory hint could possibly have passed from the one room to the other. The results of this experiment were of the very greatest interest and importance. *By far the highest scores*

were obtained for the card at which the agent was going to look on the next occasion ahead! When the rate of the whole procedure was made twice as quick, it was the card *two* trials ahead that the percipient guessed. To the one mystery of telepathy had been added yet a more startling one, that of precognition. The Psi faculty was playing havoc, not only with the experimenter's previous notions of space, but also of time. It was not obeying the laws that the scientists had established to account for everything in the universe, including the behaviour of the human mind. Here was something of which no account could be given and which, if it were to be accepted, would necessitate a revolution in scientific thought and a fresh beginning to psychology.

* * *

I have no personal experience of any of the more elaborate experiments in E.S.P., but I have been present at tests of a much simpler nature. The subject of the experiments was a Czech, well-known in London as a clairvoyant, and the tests to which he was submitted were of a very elementary kind. Five cards were chosen by one of us from an ordinary pack, sealed in thick envelopes and placed on the table. The Czech was then admitted to the room and asked to state the colours of the suit in each envelope. He walked to the table, stretched a hand over each envelope in turn, jerked it about as though he were receiving some impressions from the envelope and muttered rather spasmodically, "red—red—black—red—black." The tests were repeated, and on several occasions he



obtained full marks. His ability to guess correctly varied on different evenings, but his total score was well above that for which accident could account.

In the clairvoyant's perception some operation takes place between his mind and the hidden object he perceives. It is reasonable to assume that his mind does "something" to the object and that the object does "something" to his mind. If therefore there is such a thing as extra-sensory perception, why should there not be such a thing as extra-motor response, that is to say, an action of the mind on a material object, or what the parapsychologist calls psychokinesis or PK? The idea that the mind may exert an action on matter is an old one, and if the dualists are right, it is happening every moment of our lives. The notion comes into my mind that I will stretch out my hand, and immediately my brain, nerves and muscles humour my mind's wish. By some means or another the gap between what is assumed to be an immaterial mind and the matter of the brain is bridged.

There are also well-attested accounts of what are called "poltergeist phenomena." All that can be said about these strange events is that they are usually associated with the presence of an adolescent boy or girl. In *The Personality of Man*, G. N. M. Tyrrell describes such happenings in a blacksmith's shop in Vienna in 1906. These were investigated and reported upon by Mr. W., a member of the Austrian Society for Psychical Research. The blacksmith complained that his tools and odd bits of iron were flung about the place, and because he had already been hit on the head by one of these, he wore a

stiff hat for his own protection. On his second visit Mr. W. found that the smith now kept his tools in wooden boxes outside the smithy because one of his heavier hammers had recently whizzed past him. At the third visit Mr. W. met the unfortunate blacksmith outside his own shop. Two oil lamps had tumbled down and broken during the night and he was now too frightened to enter his own workshop. Mr. W. stated in his report that whilst he was actually present certain objects dropped quite close to him and three actually struck him on the head. It is to be noted that a young apprentice, aged fifteen, was working in the blacksmith's shop.

Claims have also been made of strange physical happenings in the presence of certain mediums: stationary objects suddenly tumble, a table rises towards the ceiling and some object falls on to the floor. But the mediums insist that they can only work under favourable psychic conditions, and unfortunately the conditions they select for their work are just those that are capable of veiling fraud. However convincing the accounts of séances in darkened rooms and of poltergeist phenomena may appear, they cannot be accepted by any critical mind. Here also experiments under controlled conditions were required, and having concluded his experiments in E.S.P., Professor Rhine started on experiments with psychokinesis, or P.K.

The test he selected to ascertain whether the mind could influence the movement of material objects was a very simple one. The subject was given a pair of dice and a cup from which to throw them. A target was

then set the thrower, say, to obtain a run of sevens. He was to "will" to throw as high a score of sevens as possible. Later, refinements were introduced, such as mechanical throwers, and in order to overcome the difficulty of faulty dice, the target was changed, say, from throwing high scores to low scores, and then back again to high scores with the same dice. It would seem to be a naïve and rather foolish experiment, this, in which men and women sat down solemnly in a laboratory to throw dice and "will" that they should fall in a certain way, an experiment from which nothing much might be expected. Yet strange to say, when the calculus of probability was applied to the recorded results, it was found that scoring above chance had been obtained.

There was another point of interest to be noted in the results, namely, that as the tests proceeded, the successes steadily dropped. Scoring tended to fall off in the later runs, and if it was to be kept above the "chance average," frequent changes in the procedure had to be made. It was as though the subject got bored or fatigued. In the high-dice tests, nearly all the hits above chance occurred at the beginning of the test. For example, there were 134 hits above chance in the first 123 runs, only 19 in the second 123 runs, and only 4 in the third 75 runs. What was the cause of this falling off in positive runs? Was it the mind of the subject exerting some "force" on the dice that began to tire? Did attention flag so that he was no longer able to keep his mind on the target that had been set him? The first of these alternatives, namely, that a *physical* force was being exerted on the dice and

that this force rapidly flagged was extremely unlikely, for if the mind had been exerting a physical force, its action ought to have been greater when it was concentrated on a single dice. Yet it was found that scoring was as good, if not better, when as many as 96 dice were thrown at a time. It seemed clear that the ordinary laws of dynamics were not determining the success or the comparative failure of the experiment. What seemed to be of far greater importance than the number or size of the dice or the material of which they were made was the interest displayed by the subject in the experiment. Results always improved when he had a strong preference for certain numbers and embarked on the experiment with enthusiasm. And there for the moment this problem of how the mind can possibly affect the falling of dice must be left.

* * *

What is to be made of all the strange results that have been reported from the laboratories of Duke University and also from parapsychologists working elsewhere? We can adopt the attitude of the late Professor Ray Lancaster and protest that the whole business is based on fraud and that the experimenters deliberately cooked their results. But surely this is a thesis that it is very difficult to support. Those responsible for the planning and carrying out of these experiments are men well known in the academic world, men of established reputation who would not lend themselves to fraud. It should also be noted that after five years of painstaking, laborious work, Professor Soal reported only negative results,

and it was only when he went through all his files again that the new evidence in favour of precognition was found. No, the idea that the experimenters were untrustworthy can be dismissed. But perhaps they themselves were deceived and failed to take sufficiently into account the vagaries of chance. This also is so unlikely that it need not be considered. Dr. Soal is a professor of mathematics of London University, and he approached his experiments from the standpoint of the mathematician. He was well aware of the possibility that positive results might be due to coincidence and indeed reported that in the case of his own experiments on telepathy, this accounted for what had happened. So also were Professor Rhine's results submitted to the scrutiny of a mathematician, who reported that whatever the explanation of the positive results might be, it was certainly not that they were due to chance.

It is impossible to explain the results that have been obtained in the laboratories of parapsychology by the hypothesis of chance unless we regard chance as being something of a quite different nature in these experiments than in other experiments. It is, of course, right that a very high standard of deviation from what is to be expected should be enforced when phenomena of this mysterious nature are being investigated. The more unlikely we consider anything to be, the greater the amount of evidence needed to establish its existence, and in the great majority of these experiments the mathematical evidence against positive results being due to chance is overwhelming. But surely there is some weak place in these investigations through which the factor

of human error has been able to exert its action?

To this statement it is impossible to return a "No," but it can be confidently said that had all the precautions against error that were adopted in these experiments been adopted in an ordinary scientific experiment, the results would never have been questioned. It is only because the acceptance of telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and psychokinesis would play such havoc with our accepted views of the nature of man that we struggle to find some reason for rejecting them. The scientists cannot afford to accept extrasensory perception and psychokinesis, for in accepting them they would also have to recognize the existence of non-physical mental action. Their universe would have to be divided up again into the physical and the mental, and they would have to return to the Cartesian dualism from which they have only recently escaped. It is small wonder that the results of the carefully controlled experiments carried out by the parapsychologists have not yet been generally accepted.

When the word "telepathy" was first coined as a substitute for the older term "thought transference," it was assumed, as was stated earlier in this article, that if it occurred it was brought about by some sort of vibrations travelling through space. It was supposed that the physico-chemical changes occurring in the brain of the sender of the message set up certain vibrations that, impinging on the brain of the recipient, evoked in his mind a similar idea. It was the simplest form of explanation that could be given and therefore the most acceptable. But there are very grave

objections to it. In the first place, we know from our experience of radio that a very powerful apparatus is needed to act as a transmitter, far more powerful than we would expect to find within the confines of the human skull. Secondly, all known forms of radiations obey the inverse square law that connects intensity with distance. If therefore physical energy is being transmitted through space in cases of telepathy, we would find a rapid falling off in it as the distance between the sender and the receiver of the message increased. All of those who have experimented with telepathy deny that this is the case. They claim that it is just as difficult, or as easy, to transmit a message across an ocean as through a wall separating two rooms. The third objection to the "vibration" theory of telepathy is even more weighty. The transmission of a message by a physical means entails the use of some agreed-upon code. Unless somebody is present at the two ends of the transmission to codify and decodify the message, nothing can be sent. Language is a code, but it is not words that are transmitted, but ideas, and often ideas in the form of symbols. There are frequent instances of telepathic dreams, and the symbol is of course the language of dreams. The dreamer is warned that something terrible has happened, but the disaster portrayed in the dream may not be the disaster that has actually occurred. At other times the message is accompanied by hallucination, especially when the phenomenon of precognition is associated with that of telepathy. The argument that can be brought against the idea that telepathic messages are transmitted from one brain to another by some physi-

cal means are too many and too weighty to be readily refuted.

* * *

What generalizations can be made on the subject of telepathy? Professor Rhine states that subjects which were tested at Duke University for clairvoyance (the guessing of cards) gave good results, and were equally good when they were tested for telepathy. "Eight of the nine principal Duke subjects who took part in the comparison of the P.T. and the P.C. gave quite similar scoring rates in the two types of test. The ninth, however, strongly and consistently favoured telepathy, giving as her explanation a preference for working with a person instead of cards, which she said she thoroughly disliked." From this Rhine deduces that telepathy and clairvoyance are "essentially the same ability" (J. B. Rhine, *The Reach of the Mind*, 1948). There is another generalization that Rhine is prepared to make: that they are not abnormalities and have nothing to do with mental illness. There is to be found what may be called a pseudo-telepathic syndrome in mental hospitals. Patients with persecution illusions believe that they are receiving hostile messages from their imaginary enemies, but this has no bearing on the subject of telepathy. It would appear indeed that the lower the intelligence of the subject, the less likely are his extra-sensory perception tests to yield positive results.

The next question of interest is whether E.S.P. is widely distributed in the community, or whether it is possessed only by exceptional individuals. Those who are best qualified to give an answer to this question say

that although different individuals vary greatly in their capacity, most people possess parapsychical ability in some degree. But this statement needs qualification. In the ordinary man clairvoyance and telepathy work erratically, and are not under his direct control; but in the developed man—and by developed man I take as an example the yogi—they are disciplined functions to be used when he wills. E.S.P. in ordinary people resembles such higher functions of the mind as the creative faculty, in that it is uncertain in character and only works under favourable conditions. Like these functions, it is also affected by the taking of drugs; under the influence of narcotics it disappears, and with the help of stimulants it may be revived. It is to be noted also that if satisfactory results are to be obtained, E.S.P. tests must be carried out at the subject's own natural tempo. The subjects in one series of experiments were asked to keep time with the ticking of a metronome, and the rate of this was altered in different runs. When the rate was speeded up beyond the subject's natural tempo, the results of the test always deteriorated. So also did E.S.P. decline when the subject became bored with what he had undertaken to do, or when he approached his tests in a negative attitude of mind.

* * *

It is obvious that all of these mysterious activities of the "Psi" factor are of a very elusive nature. Even the personality of the man who organizes the laboratory experiments to be carried out on them seems to influence the results that are obtained. A minority of experimenters

obtain consistently negative results, and some subjects who did well with one experimenter failed completely with another. There is also a tendency for the performance of a given subject to deteriorate as the test proceeds. We hear of people who were formerly star performers giving results very little above the chance-level after they had suffered from an emotional crisis, a nervous breakdown, or even after they had married.

Now, if there is one assertion that can be made with confidence about all these mysterious faculties—telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and psychokinesis—it is that they work unconsciously. The subject is completely unaware of what is happening, and he has no idea whether he is getting good results or bad, for it is not his conscious, but his unconscious, mind that is responsible for them. It can also be said that whatever the faculty may be that is at work, it is of an emotional nature. When the intellect intervenes, when, in other words, the subject begins to think too much, his performance is likely to fall off. There is another reason for stating that E.S.P. is more allied to "feeling" or "intuition" than to thinking. Telepathic messages, either associated or not with precognition, are sometimes received when the subject is asleep.

Tyrrell records one instance of this in *The Personality of Man*, a case record by Dame Edith Lytton. A Miss E. went to sleep between two or three o'clock, and woke up after having had a terrifying dream that "she had been to a place where someone was being mauled by lions," an event that was actually happening that afternoon at Whipsnade. It is, of course, quite possible that this was

merely a coincidence, but warning and telepathic dreams are of such frequent occurrence that some explanation must be sought for them. Now, three things can be said about dreams: the first, that they have their origin in the unconscious part of the mind; the second, that they are affective or emotional in nature; and the third, that they are often symbolic. The last of these characteristics has long been recognized, and it was as natural for Pharaoh to send for his trusted servant Joseph to interpret his dreams as it would be natural nowadays for a man to look at the weather report before going away for the week-end.

The existence of paranormal phenomena of the mind having been proved—so exacting a scientist as Julian Huxley has accepted the validity of these proofs—the next step must be to discover something about their nature. What are the conditions that favour the action of the "Psi" faculty? The subjects that the experimenters have used for their tests can give us little or no help with regard to this. They are quite incapable of explaining what has been happening in the hidden regions of their minds, but something perhaps can be learnt from studying the methods of the earlier protagonists of telepathy and precognition—the soothsayers, diviners and sybils of ancient times. It is noteworthy that all of these exponents of precognition fixed their gaze on some object, such as the entrails of a recently-killed animal, and made use of some ritual, not merely to impress the onlooker, but in order to bring themselves into a state of mind that they had found, by experience, to be favourable to their work. For the same purpose the

Mohammedan diviner looks fixedly at the pattern formed by sand in a shallow disk, at a pool of ink, or even at the grounds left behind in a coffee cup. So also in Europe does the fortune-teller gaze at a crystal and the gipsy at the palm of her client's hand. All of these techniques are methods that the clairvoyant employs to induce a certain receptive state of mind. They probably act by engaging the attention and by thus permitting the less conscious parts of the mind to come into action without interference from the intellect.

How does telepathy work? No answer can at present be given to this question. All that can be said about it is that telepathy is not what many of the older experimenters believed it to be, a promulgation of "thought waves" through space, but that it is a relationship between two unconscious minds. Although the conscious parts of our "egos" seem to be independent and separate entities, it would almost seem that the unconscious parts of our minds are in some mysterious way closely interconnected. Jung has familiarized us with the idea of a collective unconscious, and although he arrived at his conclusions from data of an entirely different kind, the phenomena of telepathy lends his conclusions some support. The "cross correspondence" experiments carried out by Mrs. and Miss Verrall, Mrs. Holland, Mrs. Willett and Dame Edith Lytton in Cambridge about the year 1906 also support the idea that there may be such a thing as a "group mind." None of these ladies were mediums, and all of them were highly educated. They found that with a little practice they could produce automatic writing, and automatic writing is, of

course, an activity of the unconscious mind.

It is difficult to summarize the "cross correspondence" afterwards found in the automatic writings of the experimenters, but the authority who examined them described the various contributions as being "not clear-cut, isolated things with a definite beginning and complete in themselves." They were "tiny bits of very complex patterns." Nothing had been prearranged between the team of experimenters, no one person knew what the other was writing about, and yet they were producing together a kind of mosaic of complementary ideas. Looking at the collected scripts, it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that a close intercommunication existed between their unconscious minds. What was of particular interest was that one correspondent appeared to be using knowledge that by rights belonged to one of her fellows. Thus, although Mrs. Verrall was the only classical scholar amongst them, it was not she, but Mrs. Holland who was selected to make use of Latin words. Mrs. Holland, although well educated, had no knowledge of the classics. It was as though their unconscious minds had been formed into a common pool from which each could select what she needed.

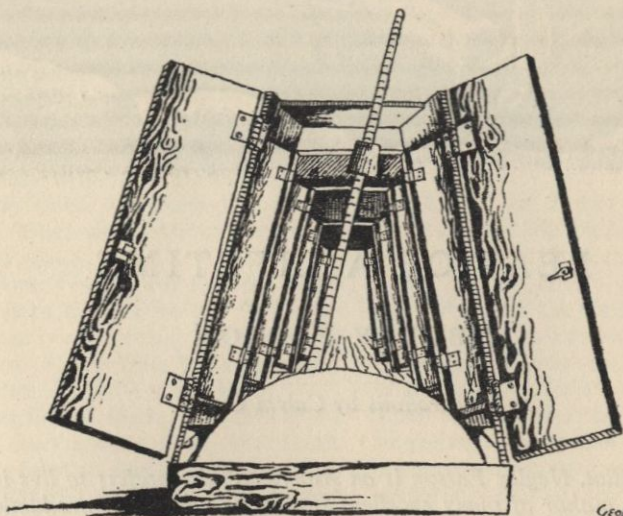
To go further into the subject of telepathy would necessitate an excursion into metaphysics. We should have first to discover the enigma of the mind-body relationship, and if we were dualists, to decide by what means an immaterial entity such as the mind influenced a material entity such as the brain. From this we would have to pass to the action of one mind on another and, before we

had got very far, we would find ourselves lost in a fog of words. It would be better therefore to avoid the risk of this and to summarize what can be said about telepathy at the present time as briefly as possible.

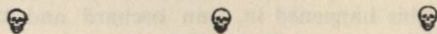
It can be asserted that the existence of telepathy has been proven, that it is a faculty which is widely distributed, but that only in a few individuals is it exhibited in any considerable degree. It can also be stated that telepathy is a function of the unconscious mind, or, if we discuss the problem in terms of the brain, that it is a function of the thalamic area of the brain or that part of it that is concerned with the emotional life. Now, phylogenetically, this is the older part of the brain, a part that in man has been overlaid by the enormous development of his cerebral hemispheres. Many of the functions that are discharged by it in animals have been taken over by the cerebral hemispheres in man. It is through his cerebral hemispheres and his special senses that a man takes note of and adjusts himself to his immediate surroundings, but it may well be that the older part of his brain is still capable of giving him some vague knowledge of what is happening elsewhere. According to Whitehead, everything in the universe takes note of, or prehends, everything else; nothing is isolated and self-sufficient, but is affected by and in turn affects everything else. It may well be therefore that what in man manifests itself as telepathy is a phenomenon to be found in a primitive form, as a sense of awareness of what is happening at a distance, in all living organisms. Some support would appear to be given to this view by the observation that examples of E.S.P. are said to be

very common in primitive races, in other words, in those races in which

the higher centres in the cerebral hemispheres are less developed.



Geoffrey Gane



Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (*Sonnet cxvi*).



Mind is the great lever of all things; human thought is the process by which human ends are ultimately answered.

DANIEL WEBSTER (June 17, 1825).



BEAT OF A LIFETIME

NEGLEY FARSON

Illustrations by Calvin Grey

Like T. S. Eliot, Negley Farson is an American who prefers to live in England. As the author of many excellent stories, he needs no introduction; his readers will want to add his latest, the "Beat of a Lifetime," to their collection.

CAN'T tell you the state this happened in, it might get me into trouble; and I've had enough trouble already in that state. I never want to see it again; but, knocking about down there—with Nick in the yawl—we used to say that it was the prettiest place on God's green earth. It was, too.

The night we ran into Deep Harbour was pretty and peaceful enough to set you to dreaming. Low country, with miles on end of wavy green corn, red patches where they had the tomatoes in; and every now and then we'd run past a little whitewashed

shack set back from the water, with an orchard and "truck" patch behind it—and an old hunting dog barking somewhere.

It is a thirteen-mile run in from the bay, around a neck in the reach, and we anchored about two hundred yards off the town just at sundown. A low bank of clouds under the sun looked like wind, so we put down the port bower and gave her plenty of cable, in case we had to ride out a blow. A little cabin-cruiser lay between us and the shore.

We had caught some horn-pouts up-bay the night before; and while Nick cooked, I furled the canvas and made everything tidy. After putting

up the riding-light I came down, and Nick had the stuff already laid out on the centre-board table—fish, sauté potatoes and black-jack. Skimpy; but we were living that way about then, as we were just about broke. Eighty-five cents stood between us and starvation; we'd counted it that morning and decided to put into Deep Harbour to see if we couldn't get a job on some farm.

We grumbled over it washing the dishes, but we figured that a couple of weeks would get us enough cash to last until we reached the salt-water. When we'd finished we pushed off for shore.

"Work!"—the gang in front of the drug-store laughed at us. "Why, we all doan' want no hands this time of the year. Come 'long 'bout hawvest."

"When's that?" asked Nick.

That tickled them; we didn't know when harvest-time was! We didn't, either; farming wasn't our game. And as far as that goes, I'll bet you that not one of them louts could have tied a bowline, or done a sheepshead, if you'd done it for him right in front of his eyes. But we didn't talk back to them. We had to connect with that job.

After they had got done laughing Nick dug up the "makings" and passed them out—just to show we were friendly.

"We can't live on the fresh air and scenery," he said to them; "we simply got to find work. Don't you know of anything at all?"

"How 'bout your boat, stranger?" one asked. "Want to sell her?"

"How much?"

I knew Nick was just joshing.

The big fellow who had asked the question scratched his head, tried to look like he knew what he was talk-

ing about, and said he "figgered" the *Panther* was worth about two hundred bucks.

"Two hundred dollars!"

Nick was as sore as a crab.

"Why, — it, she's worth more than your whole — little one-horse town!"

The big guy got up and shook his fist under Nick's nose.

"You dasn't talk thataways to me!"

"The — you say!" Nick tells him.

"Go git 'm, Lucky!" the crowd pipes up; and the big guy draws back a fist about as big as a ham.

But Lucky didn't want to "git" anybody after the slashing punch in the mouth Nick handed him.

You know how these small-town crowds fight—like a pack of wolves. They were all over us. I was winded in no time. So was Nick. And there's no use trying to make out those boys couldn't fight; they were knocking us all over the road. It was a shell road; and when they'd grind your head into those oyster-cases it cut like blazes!

"I've broken my hand!" calls out Nick.

"Kick 'em!" I managed to gurgle. "Kick the living day-lights out of the —"

We got to the boat, and — pleased we were to get there; but even then we had to row out quite a piece, as that bunch of swine stood on the beach and pegged stones at us. We lay there and got back our wind.

"Nice little crowd," growls Nick miserably. "My flipper's just giving me —. I tell you what we'll do: we unscrew those boom trees—and then you an' me'll go back—and just walk up the street of that town."

"We will not!" I told him flatly. "I've had all I want. I'm going to soak your hand in hot water."

"Oh, well——"

Nick tried to make out that I was depriving him of something; but I knew he was just as glad as I was to get clear of that bunch of high-binders. Those oyster-shells kept sticking into me all over, too. It was a rough town.

"Well, anyway," said Nick, "I got a few of 'em. That town won't forget us in a hurry."

That was incident No. 1; and we hadn't been down in the *Panther's* galley fifteen minutes when No. 2 comes along. Somebody hailed us from alongside.

"Is anybody in there?"

"You bet," answered Nick with his head stuck out of the hatch. "Two of us. How many are you?"

"One," came a laugh out of the darkness. "Don't be alarmed; I'm friendly."

Nick told him to come aboard; and a strapping big chap in town clothes came over the rail. He stood there, peering down in the galley, and at first all I could see of his face was a whacking black beard, as thick and as shiny as the back of a cat. Looked like a foreigner of some sort, not at all what you'd expect to find in a place like Deep Harbour. He stood there grinning and wagging his head from side to side.

"Beautiful!" He spoke at last. "Never have I seen such a fight. It was ferocious. Splendid! By the way, I heard one of you shout that he had broken his hand; better let me look at it."

He stared from one to the other of us; and Nick held up the bad paw.

"Ah."

The big fellow's face lighted up; he leaned over and began feeling it.

"So," he smiled down at Nick, "grit your teeth. I shall hurt you a little"; and before Nick could do anything, he had poor old Nick's thumb locked in two crooked, hairy fingers.

He gave a jerk.

"Yow!" Nick howled and jumped all over the galley; and the big fellow stood there laughing at him.

"A dislocation of the ——"

Here he used some word that I couldn't quite catch.

"You must hit very hard," he told Nick. "It will be all right now."

It was funny to watch Nick, breathing on his thumb and not knowing whether to get mad or not; and the way that other fellow took no notice of it at all. He had already taken out his cigarette-case and was holding it out for Nick to take one. He held the match for our two, and then blew it out and lit another one for his own.

"Three is unlucky," he told us. "They light the church tapers with one."

Nick had evidently decided to be friends.

"Carlson's my name," he said, reaching up to shake hands. "Much obliged. This man here is my pal, McNab by name. Come down and have a seat."

The big fellow slid through the hatch and soberly shook hands with me.

"Pugh," he said, "is my name."

I saw Nick, who was making some blackjack, start up at that. Sounded odd to me, too; "Pugh" didn't seem to mate with a face like that! The newcomer didn't seem the least bit embarrassed; leaned his back against the foot of the mast and gave the

place the once-over. All the time he was chuckling and rubbing his hands over the knees of his trousers. Clean hands, too. Queer! Me sitting there, staring straight at him, and never twigging at all who he was! I'd seen his picture in the papers often enough!

"Nice little boat you have here," he said, looking up at the racks in the neat little galley. "Yours?"

"Yep," Nick told him; "mine. We're working her together."

"So?" said the other, beginning to smile. "I thought I heard you say before your—ah—combat that you were in search of that?"

"Work?" grunts Nick. "You bet we're looking for work; but this shore of the bay down here is dead. They don't even know the Civil War is over yet."

Here Nick went on to explain how things stood: enough alcohol to cook the next three days' meals—providing we could find them—twenty gallons of gas for the engine, and that eighty-five cents I mentioned before.

"How would twenty-five dollars a day suit you?" cut in the big chap.

Nick whisked round so quickly I thought he had slipped. I was never more surprised in my life; thought the big chap was joking, but he came through to back up his statement.

"I want your boat for a week," he said. "I want you to take me to some uninhabited island in the bay here, some place where I can be by myself, and call for me at the end of that week. I will pay you for the whole of that time."

"Is that all?"

Nick looked suspicious.

"It is," said the big fellow. "And one other thing: I want you to promise that you will say nothing

about it—during that week—to another living soul. After that you can say what you like. Does it please you?" he said, turning to both of us.

I think he must have seen some of the doubt in our faces, for he continued:

"I give you my word of honour that there is nothing criminal about this. Everything is quite regular, I assure you."

Regular! Twenty-five dollars a day—a lonely island—and us to say nothing about it; it didn't seem very regular. Looked like there was a nigger somewheres in the wood-pile; but Nick jumped at the chance—he often bragged that he would do anything once—and reached over to shake hands on the deal.

"I'll take you," he said; "but I'd be a little more happy if I knew you were telling the truth, Mr.—Pugh."

Pugh smiled, just as if admitting that he knew that we knew his name wasn't Pugh, and said:

"Fine; that is a bargain."

"It is," said Nick; "and when do we start?"

"At once, if you can," said Pugh. "Just make for the first island that fits the description. If possible, I wish to be put ashore before daylight."

In a way which I would find it hard to explain he seemed to have taken command over things at that instant. He made us feel as though the *Panther* no longer belonged to us.

He was in the little cabin-cruiser we had noticed lying between us and the shore when we had come in at sunset. He told me, while I was rowing him back in the dinghy, that she had broken down. He was in the drug-store; just about to telephone



across the bay to Oriole for another when we came along and kicked up our shindy. He said we had looked "likely"; so he had changed his mind and come over to offer us the job.

"There is another man with me," he said.

There was, too—a queer, baby-faced youth, with thumping thick eye-glasses that made his eyes look like a cat-fish. He was sitting down in the cabin among a litter of suit-cases and one big pine-box, which I first took to be a coffin.

"Mr. Garrick," Pugh said to the other as soon as we saw him. "Mr. Garrick, this is Mr. McNab, our new *voyageur*. Mr. Garrick, will you please get your articles together; we are going aboard that little sailing-ship out there ahead of us."

Mr. Garrick had a shape like an elephant; but I guessed that it must have been all fat—or else the big box had something mighty heavy in it—for, when he gave it a heave, it just stayed where it was, just as though it were stuck to the floor. Pugh stopped him.

"Mr. McNab," he said; "will you please put these things into your little boat?"

He pointed to the small stuff.

When I came back Pugh had managed to get the big box up the companionway all by himself; at least, it looked that way. Garrick was standing, blinking down below, with a couple of leather suit-cases in his hands.

"Here, let me give you a hand with that," I offered to Pugh; but he waved me aside and got the thing over the rail, cussin' away at a great rate.

Garrick just hopped around and did what he was told.

The wind had picked up a little, hit me quite cold on the back of the neck, and it was a bit of a job to get their stuff over the rail of the *Panther*. The big case in particular made Pugh sweat not a little; and I could have sworn that during one of the heaves he made to get it aboard something like a groan came from inside it. Nick laughed when I told him about it.

"You're balmy," he said, making fun of my nerves, which had been knocked skew-whiff by the Heinies. "You'll be having another spell of the jim-jams if you don't take it easy. That was only the squeak of the wood."

Nick said he was going to put them ashore on Poplar Island, which was a low bit of land we had passed about four miles above the mouth of the reach coming in.

"You remember it?" said Nick. "'Member you said it looked just as though the trees were standing in water?"

I remembered it all right—just a strip of blue mud with a fringe of green, shiny poplars, and a flat, sedgy marsh lying behind them.

"He'll curse you for landing them there," I objected.

"I should worry!" said Nick. "Old Blackbeard said he wanted to be by himself. Well, if you know any more forsaken spot than Poplar, then go out and find it. Besides, there ain't another spot that would fit his description within a full day's sail of us. Why, I'll bet you there are twenty square miles of spladder-docks in back of that ribbon of mud."

It answered the bill; there was no mistake about that. It was the mournfullest place one could think of. No man in his right senses would ever set

foot there; and I couldn't help puzzling over what Pugh had up his sleeve. I could hear him and Garrick gabbling away down in the cabin; they seemed awfully earnest about something. Too earnest somehow to please me; and the more I thought of it the more dissatisfied I was over the contract we had made with them.

It was a hunch—my common sense trying to warn me—but I put all my uneasiness down to the gloomy feeling of putting out of a snug port on a thick night—and that miserable moan of the wind in the shrouds, a sound which will make any blue-nose unhappy.

Once we got the anchor aboard I began to feel better, as motion, no matter what, takes a mind off the strain. We went out under jib and jigger, and even with these two light sails the old *Panther* just stepped it along. That's the nice part of a yawl; she's handy when she's got no more on than a pocket handkerchief. And, sitting up there on the sprit—watching, in case some fool had forgot to put a riding-light up on his craft—I was just about as well pleased that we were rather bare. The *Panther* was taking a bone like a big drift of snow under the bow.

Coming aft, I stooped to peek into the cabin; but Pugh and Garrick had pulled the curtains over the ports. It struck me that it was either a very useless thing to do, or else it was something very much the opposite. In which case they were doing something down there they didn't want us to see.

I told this to Nick, and said I thought I'd butt in on them; but he said to leave them alone; we'd have them ashore in a few hours, anyway; and Pugh had already forked out

over one hundred dollars just to show he meant business. We agreed that that seemed as if he was square; but even Nick admitted that he wouldn't be sorry to see the last of them.

We sat there by the wheel, arguing about what we'd do with the money. The *Panther* needed attention; once she had been white, but the greasy waters of the oil-works in the bay had left a dirty scum all over her.

"Black's the colour," Nick was saying; "black, and then the dirt won't show——"

A most unearthly yell came from the cabin. A —— awful yell!

Nick was across, wrenching at the companionway doors. They were locked!

"What the —— are you drivin' at," he roared, banging on the wood with his fists, "lockin' me outa my cabin? Open these doors, —— you!"

He was mad as a hatter.

There was a rumble of voices, and then Pugh stuck his head out. He was very apologetic.

"My friend has cut himself," he explained. "He dropped a box on his hand. See!"

There was Garrick with a bloody handkerchief wrapped round his hand, and a sickly, scared grin on his face.

"Gee!"

Nick forgot all about being mad.

"You sure let out a yell. Must have hurt you like sixty. Want anything?"

"It is nothing."

Pugh waved a hand.

"I fix him in a few minutes."

And with that he slammed the doors in our faces. He certainly let us know he'd rented the use of the boat all right.

"There's a cool one for you," growled Nick. "Nothing bashful about him. Now what do you make of a cove like that?"

I wasn't thinking much about Pugh just at that moment; I had a whiff of something in my nostrils, something which I had got to know pretty well over in France, but which I couldn't place at all. Also, Garrick's yell was worrying me too; it was too much like Pugh's name to suit me. Didn't fit. It was a sort of deep-chested roar; and from Garrick's shape one would have expected him to yell like a tenor—high and squeaky.

I told Nick about this, but he was one of those hard-headed persons who take an earthquake to make them see anything.

"Aw," he growled at me, "you're a regular old woman; you and your squeaks and yells an' smells—you'll be seeing things next."

Well, bless my soul, I did! I saw Pugh's face come out of the hatchway. It stayed there some time—looking at us; and I watched it. I watched it with all the hair crawling up the back of my neck, but I said nothing about it to Nick. I wish I had now; I wish I had jumped along for'ard and flapped him out of that galley and on to the deck. If ever a man kept his mouth shut when he ought to have been raising a row, it was me then, I can tell you. It would have saved the lot of us.

And as it turned out it was just this seeing things of mine which was to save Nick and me in the end.

But that night I had a feeling that if I voiced any more fears Nick would think I was yellow, so I just kept all I was afraid of bottled up inside me. I did—without Nick knowing it—try the companionway doors,

only to find them locked tight as a drum. And I did, telling him that I was going up to make black-jack, slide quietly in the galley and try the little door which led into the cabin. Locked; I knew it would be.

Nick and I might as well have been sailing a raft for all the use we had of that cabin. I sat there in the dark and laughed. Here were Nick and I, who, to draw it mild, could hardly be classed as good members of the parish, being bossed around on our own craft like a couple of deck-swabs.

While I was down I felt the roll of the sea get under the *Panther*. Big sea, too; I had to hold the kettle on to the burner. We had a hundred miles of open water to windward; and quartering, as we were, once we left the lee of the reach, the *Panther* just smashed into the seas. Coming aft I had to hang on; and there, sitting alongside Nick in the cockpit, was Pugh—sick as a cat. I gave him half a cup of scalding-hot black-jack, and he was all over me with thanks.

"You are a gentleman," he shouted at me. "You have all the fine feelings. Ah, my friends"—he jerked round his head to be sick—"my friends, pain is the only real thing in life. Pleasure—all else—is illusion; but this"—he was violently sick again, and by George, he finished up laughing—"this is real, isn't it? Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Some more of the same line of gibberish followed; he talked as if life wasn't worth living, and then laughed as if he enjoyed it. I kicked Nick's foot, and we sat there and listened. I guess Joe and I had never heard a man talk that way before in our lives. He seemed out of his nut.

What with the sea, and that hairy-faced man shouting to make himself heard above it, I began to feel nervous as ——!

He seemed in great fettle in spite of his stomach.

"You take it well," Nick told him.

"Ah, no." He laughed delightedly, and slapped Nick on the knee. "I give it up well; that's what you mean. Ha! Ha! Oh——"

He was sick again and gave up quite a lot.

Whatever he was, good, bad or indifferent, that fellow was game!

There's no use telling you how we put them ashore. It was just the usual dirty job of a night landing. Old Blackbeard insisted on being landed at once, though it was as black as the ace of spades. We could see that Garrick wasn't at all keen to take a chance on capsizing; but Pugh wasn't letting a little thing like that interfere with him. Nick's hand wasn't much use for handling an oar, so I put him ashore with a lantern and some of the small stuff on the first trip.

Next I took Garrick and their dinghy, which we had brought along with us. Then I went back and got the old man and his box. He wouldn't let us help them pull their stuff along to the poplars; just kept insisting on saying "Good-bye; see you next Tuesday"; so we pushed off and left them. We let them keep the lantern and, as we rowed back, we could see them already unpacking their stuff, Pugh leaning over the box.

As soon as we got back in the *Panther's* cabin we unscrewed all the ports. I knew what that smell was now—ether. The cabin reeked with it. Smelt like a hospital!

"Now," I said to Nick, "do you be-

lieve me that you and I have seen some rough stuff? Or do you still think we've been transporting a picnic?"

He had chucked himself down in his bunk for a smoke; but he sat up at this. He was commencing to show some signs of being worried at last.

"You're sure it's ether?" he asked me.

"Just as sure as I ever was of anything in my life."

"Well, what do you think?" he said, passing the buck to me.

I told him.

"Either we've helped to Shanghai a man—or else murder him."

"Aw," he said, trying to laugh, "you're crazy as a fish! You just pick out the worst thing you can think of and then say that was it. Be sensible. Of course we've sat in at something that ain't on the level. I've known that all the time; but you and I are too broke to pass up a chance like this. A hundred and seventy-five iron men will do a lot of good to us and the *Panther*."

"Yeah!" I pointed out. "And a fat lot of good the *Panther* will do you in jail!"

He got sore at that.

"Jail! Why, look here. If they were bumping a guy off, do you think they'd stick around this island for a week—waiting for us to call back for them? What's eating you?"

"Nothing; but something's made a meal off your brains all right!" I shot back at him. "Who said they would stick around here for a week? You forgot all about their dinghy, didn't you? How do you know that week stuff isn't a blind, anyway? How do you know they have not killed him already and aren't row-



ing ashore right this minute? And listen."

I grabbed hold of his arm, as he was already scrambling up on deck to look for them.

"How do you know they haven't taken any amount of stuff from this boat—and left it alongside him?"

We took an inventory of the *Panther* right then and there; but we couldn't find anything missing except Nick's old mate's cap. He had been wearing that earlier on in the evening, and he couldn't remember now what he'd done with it—whether he'd laid it down some place where it might have gone overboard, or left it on the beach, or what he'd done with it. It had his name and the yawl's inside the hatband. I'd printed it there myself!

"There you are," I said to him. "Plain as day; we're planted."

And planted we were; but not in the way we had it doped out. It was just as if they suspected we might come ashore after them; when we came on deck with that idea in our minds, there wasn't a sign of the lantern. In fact, until our eyes got used to the dark, we couldn't even find the bulk of the island. It took us some time to stumble on the fact that the wind had shifted while we had been arguing down below; and instead of being bow on, the island was almost astern of us.

We gave up the idea of going ashore, and took the *Panther* up the other shore of the island to wait there for daylight. From the first crack of a smoky-grey dawn until the sun was high in the sky we kept a sharp watch in case they should attempt to cross over to the mainland. And, finally, Nick couldn't stick it

out any longer; about noon he shoved off in the dinghy; and through the glasses I saw him land at the foot of the island and strike into the swamp. About an hour later he came over the rail, pleased as Punch with himself.

"A fat prophet you are!" he told me disgustedly. "Here I go and crawl through half a mile of black mud, expecting to see something shady—and what do I see? I see Pugh an' Garrick and a big buck nigger playing tag on the beach. Murder! You make me sick!"

"Where did the nigger come from?"

"How the — do I know? Beachcomber, I suppose. Looked that way, anyway—half-naked. Nigger name o' Fairfax."

"How do you know that?"

"'Cause I heard them calling him that."

"Oh, you didn't go over?"

"No; catch me butting in on their party and losing the rest of our money that's coming to us. I lay there in the bushes and watched. Garrick was sitting on a rock, writing; and Pugh and this nigger were galloping about on the beach. Every now and then Pugh would yell out something about no reaction, and Garrick would jot it down on his pad. The silliest game I ever saw. Fairfax was a bit deaf, too, as Pugh had to holler his name. — fool way to spend a hot day, I'll tell the world."

While Nick was talking he was peeling off his clothes—all covered with mud—and getting ready to sluice himself down.

"You know," he spluttered with his head half in a bucket, "I think it's a booze party. The nigger was

drunk at any rate—staggering all over the place!”

Sitting up on deck there in the hot sun and watching Nick, just as I'd seen him on many and many a morning, everything seemed so peaceful and usual that I began to feel almost ashamed of what I had been sure of the previous evening. A booze party might have answered the bill; niggers were all over the bay, running crab trot-lines, and there was no reason on earth why one couldn't have been on the island; but—twenty-five dollars a day! That was the poser; and in spite of all that Nick said, I knew that that smell couldn't have been synthetic gin.

We cracked on every stick of canvas; and as we shot past the foot of the island I could just make out two figures at play on the beach. It was the last look we ever had of those people. Five days later we walked into the ship-chandler's at Oriole to get some seam-cement we'd ordered the previous day, and were arrested for the murder of Professor Volotov!

“Is this the man wot was wit' you in Deep Harbour?” one of the plain-clothes men asked Nick; and at the same time he took a firm grab on my arm.

“Why—ye-yes,” stammered Nick, hardly able to speak.

“Right!” said the Irishman. “Come along quietly.”

Have you ever run foul of the law? Been in jail and faced the prospect of soon being hung for a crime that you'd never committed? No, I guess you haven't; when the courts get their hooks on to you you're in for it.

Between innocence and crime is sometimes a very small difference; but in this case it was as big as a

mile—and the court couldn't see it. Guilty? Why, it was as plain as the nose on your face! — murderers! That's what we were. People sat in the courtroom and glared at us.

I am not going to take much time telling you what happened to us in that court; and the court didn't waste any either. There was nothing human about justice in that court. It was just a bunch of fixed rules; and as soon as they could finish the rigmarole we were going to be hung.

The judge sat there, scratching his nose, already composing the speech he would give with the sentence! How—how could anyone explain to a crowd like that something which he couldn't explain to himself?

From our fight in Deep Harbour—and the whole town came over to swear what hard characters we were—to the finding of Nick's cap on the beach at Poplar, we had left a string of clues like a paper-chase.

And, knowing this yarn as you do, look what we had to put up against it! Hunting a job—broke—in Deep Harbour; and then three days later turning up in Oriole—and living like kings. Why, even the bum lawyer the state gave us believed we were guilty; he simply got furious when we told him about the hundred dollars.

“Now look here,” he yapped, “don't try to kid me! I'm your lawyer! How the — do you think I'm going to clear you if you don't come across with the truth?”

I told him to go to —!

“Come now,” he said, beginning all over again. “Why did you start changing the colour of your boat? Wasn't it to —?”

People were just the same when I told the story in court. Laughed out

loud when I tried to tell about the box. The judge had to rap for order when I came to where Nick told about Pugh and the nigger playing tag on the beach. And, mind you, this in a state where they still run the Jim-crow cars!

It just shows you how satisfied everyone was that we were guilty. I got the feeling of a man trying to swim against a five-mile tide; he knows that no matter how hard he tries, he's bound to be carried away. People had their minds already made up for them by the papers. Photographs! Volotov, and his assistant George English, which was Garrick.

Long interviews with the man who had rented them the boat, explaining how they had set off on a fishing-trip.

The keeper of the light on Sharp Island tells how he sees Pugh's—Volotov's—body come floating past underneath in the sea. And then a gory description of Pugh's face, which has been mashed to a pulp. Great arguments as to what had we done with Garrick's corpse. (They had found the boat high up on the beach; but a high tide had washed the sands clear of all foot-prints.)

But worst of all were the talks given out by James K. Harvard. He was the millionaire who had endowed the Yardley Institute of Research. He came down to Oriole himself to see that his money got its revenge. Here we'd gone and killed their best surgeon! A couple of other philanthropists came down to take a look at the villains who had done in their pet. They talked! And the newspapers printed it all.

Propaganda! A fat chance we had against a combination like that. Why, I'm willing to bet that there

wasn't a man within fifty miles who hadn't his mind already made up to hang us. A nice lot to furnish a jury!

The case was hurried on; and then one day, when they had me on the rack, I reached the end of my patience. All the time that empty-headed lawyer of ours had been trying to put a story into my mouth, asking questions and then saying—

"Now I'm going to suggest——"

And all the time I had been watching Harvard's fat face leering away, like a spider would watch something walking into its net; and somehow I just got the feeling that if I didn't force a showdown Nick and I might just as well plead guilty and be done with it all. Anyway, I couldn't make things any worse than they were.

Our lawyer was drawing:

"Now, I put it to you——"

"Your honour," I cried out to the judge, "this man is a fool; he's mixing up everything."

And before they could stop me I shouted out all about the rows we had had; how our man had refused to believe us. There was a —— of a row. I was removed.

Back in my cell I had a fit of nerves—trembling all over; and just as I was settling down, in walked Spinx. I'd seen him a day or so before when he had come in for my story—a clever little pale-faced man, reporting the case for a big New York paper.

"Well," he said when the warden had left us, "I think you're innocent. Now just tell me this story from beginning to end—and don't forget anything!"

"Do you mean it?" I gasped.

"Sure," he said, lighting up a little black cigar. "I think you are telling

the truth; but don't get perked up over that. That won't stop these hicks from hanging you. We've got to slap 'em in the face with some cold-blooded facts. Otherwise you're outa luck. Shoot!"

He was a good listener; but that was the hardest job I ever had in my life.

"Make it live!" he kept saying. "Just try to act as if it was all happening again."

When I told him how Pugh set back Nick's thumb, he made me try it on him. He made me try it; and he made me repeat all the gibberish Pugh had spouted while sick in the cock-pit. And, what was astonishing, he corrected me in several places and said—

"Now, didn't he put it this way?"

And he would go on and repeat almost the very words Nick had said.

"Sure!" I exclaimed. "Now, how in —'s name did you know that?"

"Why, my simple-minded friend, you're the most innocent man I ever met in my life. You're as naïve as a school-girl!"

I frowned at that; and he stood there, chuckling at me. Then his face grew serious, and he came over and sat down beside me.

"You have satisfied me," he said. "It's a safe bet that you've never read Schopenhauer; and yet you have been reeling off bits of him—straight from the matrix. Now, if Volotov was easy enough in his mind to philosophize with you, it's a cinch that you weren't carrying him off by the scruff of his neck. That lends colour to your story.

"Also, that superstition about the church tapers and 'three'; there is not one chance in a thousand that anyone but a Russian like Volotov

would mention a thing like that. You wouldn't be able to think of it, anyway. So that last tends to prove that part of your story is true, at any rate.

"But what makes me believe the whole tale, aside from my opinion that you two could never concoct such a one, was your scene in the court just now. You are not clever enough to work off anything subtle like that. That was genuine."

"Thank God!" I almost sobbed, and reached out and took hold of his hand.

He snatched it away and lit another cigar.

"Yes," he said, puffing away like an engine; "I'm satisfied. It fits in with my theory. And a — weird theory it is, too; too wild for these single-track minds down here to believe in—unless we furnish the goods."

He stopped here and paced up and down, thinking over something.

"You're sure," he said, "that the name of this negro was Fairfax?"

"Certain; I made a note of it in my mind when Nick told me. Ask him."

"I have," said Spinx; "several times already."

And then he drove his fist into his palm.

"By—!" he said half to himself. "They used to pull this stuff off over in England and France; but to think that Volotov tried to get away with it here!"

"What?" I asked, feeling more bewildered than ever.

He paced up and down, talking excitedly to himself, and I got bits of it like—

"Yardley Institute—millions—buys judges—buys lawyers—yes, by Jove! Why couldn't they do that, too?"

"What?" I asked.

"Shut up!" he snapped, and then he said:

"Look here, my friend, how long will it take me to get over to Poplar Island?"

I told him that with a fast motor-boat he ought to get there before nightfall.

"Right!" he said; "I'm going."

He called out for the warden to let him out of my cell, and just before going he said to me:

"I'm either the biggest idiot alive, or else I've got a story that will make the whole world sit up. This tale will be a knock-out!"

"What?" I begged him to tell me.

He saw the warden coming down the corridor, and said to me hurriedly:

"Keep these two facts in your head, and in case anything should turn up to delay me, use 'em in court: Professor Volotov left New York on the Florida Limited for Oriole on the night of June the thirteenth. Ask what he was doing on the fifteenth of June at daybreak! Make them tell you—and don't forget the name of that negro Fairfax. I——"

Here the warden jangled his keys.

"Come out of it. You've been gassing long enough."

"Just a minute," Spinx asked him.

But the warden said he had to go off some place and made Spinx leave me.

The fifteenth of June! That was six weeks ago. I couldn't see what that had to do with the case. For the next three days I racked my brains as to how that would help me. I guess if Spinx hadn't turned up I never would have succeeded in making our lawyer put those questions. But three days later I sat in the court, listening to

the judge summing up the case for the jury, when Spinx came in and did it himself.

It was a pretty exciting scene. Here we were just about on the edge of the grace; everything nicely set for the state; and along comes a little man who insists on asking some questions. The prosecuting attorney fought against them; said there was nothing new to be said on our behalf. The case must go on its way to the jury.

While his honour had been talking, Spinx had scribbled something on a sheet of paper, which he then passed over to our lawyer.

He called upon Nick.

"You say that Professor Volotov called this negro you mentioned Fairfax?"

"Yes," said Nick; "I heard them calling him that."

"You saw him clearly?"

"Why, yes, I've told you already I could have reached out and touched him."

"Did he have a scar, a big scar, running diagonally across his forehead, sloping down from the left?"

Nick thought for a moment and then said:

"I don't know. He had something white tied round his head, something flat like a—like a bandage."

Our lawyer then handed Nick something which Spinx had just passed up to him.

"Now here are five photographs. Do you see him among them?"

Nick looked them over carefully and then shook his head. Our lawyer looked pleased at that, and then handed him two more.

"Is he one of those?"

"Sure," said Nick, holding one up. "That's him."

There was quite a little stir at that;

and everyone in the room watched our lawyer as he marked that one with his pencil. I chanced to look at James K. Harvard, and if ever I saw a man looking puzzled, it was he.

"Your honour," said our lawyer, "was there not a negro hanged in this county for murder on the fifteenth of June? A negro named Fairfax?"

"There was," said the judge.

"Is it not the custom in this state to have, aside from the man who pulls the drop, two witnesses to any execution—the sheriff and doctor? Is that not so?"

The judge nodded his head.

"Very well," said our man. "Might I have the names of the two witnesses to the hanging of Frederick Fairfax?"

In the stillness that followed that request, everyone in the court heard the gruff whisper of James K. Harvard to the prosecuting attorney:

"Object!"

The judge looked over his glasses at Harvard in a pained sort of manner, as if to say that this was going too far, and overruled the objection as soon as it was made. As soon as the prosecutor sat down Harvard began talking furiously to him.

There was a low hum of talk all over the room; and when the record clerk read out the two names of the men who had seen Fairfax destroyed by the state, it broke into a babble of excitement.

The doctor had been Professor Volotov.

Our lawyer stood there, smiling; and as soon as order had been restored he turned to the judge.

"Your honour, I will ask you to look at this photograph; it is the Bertillon of Frederick Fairfax."

He passed up the photo that Nick had identified, and the judge glanced at it obediently.

"Thank you," said our lawyer; and then he handed the judge another photograph—an enlargement—about a foot and a half square.

"Can you see a resemblance, your honour?"

I wish I could make you see what we all saw come over the face of the judge. First he just looked sort of officially bored, then curious, and then mad—just as though someone was trying to play a trick on him. Then he took the two photos, held them side by side, and a look of absolute horror came into his eyes. We watched, just like one would look at a movie.

When he spoke it was in a sort of a daze.

"Who took this picture?"

With that question the whole procedure of the case seemed to change; there was a hush just like one feels in a crowd that's watching some bad accident. A sort of awful curiosity. Spinx stood up and answered the judge:

"It was taken last night, your honour, in the swamp on Poplar Island by a wild animal photographer. We set a flash powder on a trap-wire—just the way George Shiras takes his deer pictures—and you see what we caught on the plate! It shows where Professor Volotov took one liberty too many with the devolution of man. From simian to man is all right; but not from man to——"

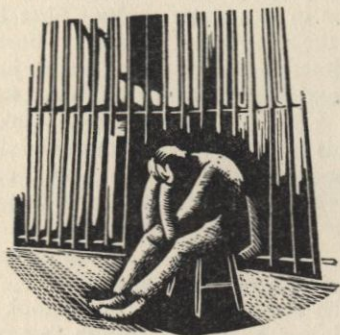
At this juncture Harvard literally hurled himself across to the judge and began talking as if it was his own life he was trying to save; and I guess the people of that state are still

talking about that sudden adjournment.

And that was the end of the case; it never appeared again in the papers. Not a word. It was just as if James K. Harvard—and his money—had said to the Press of the world:

“Here, forget it! It was all a bad dream——”

“It’s no use,” said Spinx, who came down to see us off on the *Panther*. “I’ve lost the beat of a lifetime. The world’s greatest story is climbing the trees of that island——”



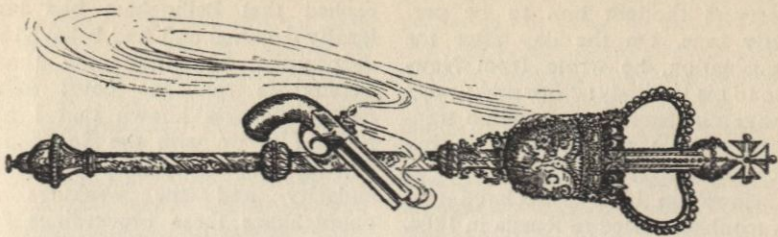
How like to us is that filthy beast the ape.

CICERO: *De natura deorum*, I, 45 B.C.



Men laugh at apes, they men contemn;
For what are we but apes to them?

JOHN GAY: *Fables*, I, 1727.



MURDER IN THE HOUSE

FRANCIS BOYD

Illustrations by Ben Bow

It was always difficult, often exasperating, to get compensation from a Government department. The effort has sometimes driven men crazy—as Dickens showed in that long battle with the Circumlocution Office he described in "Little Dorrit." In this real instance, the anger of an aggrieved citizen, baffled by bureaucratic delays and evasions, was the motive power behind the murder of a politician. Mr. Francis Boyd, who is Political Correspondent of the "Manchester Guardian," describes, with the aid of contemporary documents, the dramatic story behind the assassination, in the Palace of Westminster, of Spencer Perceval, then Prime Minister, as he walked along the Lobby.

ENGLISHMEN do not favour political assassination. Only once has a British Prime Minister been murdered — and he was murdered, appropriately, in Parliament. On May 11th, 1812, John Bellingham shot the Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval, as he crossed the Lobby of the House of Commons.

The Napoleonic War was then at a crucial stage, and in England the introduction of machinery was start-

ing the first industrial revolution and leading to outbreaks of mob violence. It is against this background that we have to judge official reaction against the crime.

One must learn Bellingham's story as he told it himself, for the assassination was conceived in a private world of his own making, with its own standards of conduct. He felt completely justified in doing what he did, and this sense of moral rectitude upheld him throughout the last week of his life in a dignity that was noted by all who came in contact with him.

He was so rational in his statement of the case as he saw it that casual observers thought him to be perfectly sane. On the day after the assassination, he wrote from Newgate to his landlady: "For eight years I have not found my mind so tranquil as since this melancholy but necessary catastrophe."

Bellingham himself declared that his troubles started in Russia in 1804. He was at that time a merchant, or the representative of a merchant, in the timber trade between Hull and Archangel. In the previous year a Russian ship, the *Sojus*, had been falsely reported wrecked in the White Sea, and the owners claimed insurance from the underwriters, Lloyd's Coffee House. Lloyd's were told that the wreck was a fraud and they refused to pay. News of their decision reached Archangel when Bellingham was in the town, and he—an obscure Englishman—was fixed upon by the Mayor, who was "interested" in the *Sojus*, as Lloyd's informer.

"The fact was," Bellingham told his judges at the Old Bailey, "I had not written to them, although it would have been a most meritorious act to have done so."

Bellingham was put in prison, and his accusers decided to proceed against him for the amount of their "loss," some 7,000 or 8,000 roubles. Meanwhile, he discovered that Lloyd's had sent a letter to Archangel clearing him, but as he was still kept in prison, he wrote to Sir Stephen Shairpe, the British Consul-General, and to Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, the British Ambassador to St. Petersburg. Shairpe asked the Military Governor of the province for an explanation, and stated that Bellingham should be re-

leased if he had been illegally detained. The Military Governor replied that Bellingham had been legally detained and had behaved indecorously. "At the same time," Bellingham told the court indignantly, "it was known that I had nothing to do with the *Sojus*; and yet Sir Stephen Shairpe had the audacity and the weakness to countenance these proceedings for the sole purpose of diverting the course of justice." Leveson-Gower surprised Bellingham by replying to his appeal for help. The Ambassador said that the Military Governor's report prevented him from intervening unless Bellingham could produce documents establishing his innocence.

These Bellingham sent, "but from that hour to this moment," he declared at his trial, "I never heard a single syllable from Lord Gower or Sir Stephen Shairpe."

A grievance took root in Bellingham's mind, and during the next eight years it grew until there was no room for anything else. One cannot follow the whole story of his miseries in Russia, but some points stand out. His distress was sharpened by his concern for his wife who had gone out to Russia with him. She was a girl of twenty, with one child in arms and a second on the way. Before Bellingham was able to leave the country his wife had to return to England unaccompanied—a formidable journey.

Bellingham was extremely wretched. The Civil Governor of the province, to whom he appealed, had his case brought before a court, and Bellingham was given judgment against the Archangel party and the Military Governor. But this was only

the illusion of justice and freedom. Bellingham went to St. Petersburg and started a legal action there. But he was in and out of prison on various charges for a considerable period, and he thought always of Leveson-Gower as the author of his miseries.

"It would have been fortunate for me," he said later, "and even more fortunate for Mr. Perceval had Lord Gower received the ball which terminated the life of the latter gentleman."

One is tempted to sympathize with the Ambassador, whose mission lasted only a year. His task was to clamp Russia to the Allied cause against Napoleon, but in 1808 the Tsar Alexander came to an understanding with Napoleon. Bellingham, however, did not excuse the Ambassador on account of diplomatic stresses. Bellingham asserted that Leveson-Gower had found time to deal with a lesser complaint than his own, and mentioned the case of the captain of a Hull ship who disputed a charge of four roubles for pilotage. This case, according to Bellingham, the Ambassador brought four times before the Tsar himself.

One other point about this period of Bellingham's history should be mentioned. At the Old Bailey he denied that he had ever been insane except once in Russia, "when my insanity was made a matter of public notoriety." He gave no details, but was seen to be greatly upset when he referred to the subject.

* * * * *

Bellingham must have got back to England some time in 1810. His home was in Liverpool, but he him-

self devoted a great part of the next two years to an attempt to get compensation for what he had suffered—unjustly, as he insisted. It seems doubtful whether any Government department in Whitehall had any liability at all unless a claim against the Russian Government were to be established. There could scarcely have been a worse moment to present such a claim, even if the British Government had been persuaded to do so. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were strained, and the Foreign Office told Bellingham this on January 21st, 1810. He commented: "Mine was a consideration of justice which no accidental circumstances of policy between the two nations could affect." The exchange with the Foreign Office was the start of an astonishing series of approaches to officials of the Court and the Government which should have given the authorities the clearest warning that they were dealing with a man possessed of a dangerous obsession. The extent of official indifference can only be appreciated if Bellingham's moves are followed in some detail.

The letter from the Foreign Office was a reply to a memorial sent by Bellingham to Marquis Wellesley, brother of the Duke of Wellington, and at that time Foreign Secretary in Perceval's administration. Wellesley was a proud man, a former Governor-General of India, who was so sure of himself that he treated the Cabinet with contempt and ran his department as a private empire. Bellingham next brought a charge against Leveson-Gower and Shairpe before the Privy Council, which informed him that there was no ground for action. He lobbied various Mem-

bers of Parliament, who told him that as his petition involved money it could not be received in Parliament without the permission or recommendation of Ministers.

He therefore applied to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Perceval held this office as well as that of Prime Minister. Bellingham was told, on May 27th, 1810, that the time for receiving private petitions was past for that session of Parliament, and that in any case it was doubtful whether his claim could properly be submitted. By now, Bellingham told his judges, his property had been sold, his creditors were clamorous and his family ruined. "My mind," he said, "was in a state of horror."

Bellingham turned next to the Treasury, which declined to take the case up. The Prince Regent—"the fountain of grace itself," as Bellingham called him—was then approached. Bellingham had previously sent a petition to the Prince Regent in 1807, but nothing had happened then because, as he was told later, it had been mislaid. He submitted a similar petition on January 21st, 1812, and on February 18th the Prince's secretary, Colonel Jack M'Mahon, wrote to say that it had been referred, by command of His Royal Highness, to the Privy Council. This looked like progress at last, and Bellingham called at the Privy Council Office to make sure that they were dealing with what he could now describe as the Prince's business. But Mr. Buller, whom he saw, was not impressed by the claim to compensation. "I don't know where the money is to come from," he told Bellingham, "and you have nothing to expect."

Rebuffed for the second time by

the Privy Council, Bellingham drew out a petition to Parliament and sent it to the Prince Regent asking him to order the Commons to take it into consideration. On March 9th, Mr. Secretary Ryder replied that His Royal Highness had not been pleased to signify any commands respecting the petition.

Some three weeks before the assassination, Bellingham called on his local Member of Parliament, Lieutenant-General Isaac Gascoyne, at his home in Hertford Street, Mayfair. The conversation lasted about an hour, but seems neither to have comforted Bellingham nor to have warned the General.

Bellingham was now desperate. "Finding myself the dupe of Ministers and not likely to obtain redress through their hands, I resolved to take justice into my own hands." He saw no reason to keep this decision private. He communicated it promptly to Mr. Read, the Bow Street Magistrate, who appears to have been one of the few people in this affair to have acted with common prudence. Mr. Read replied that he could not interfere. "But," said Bellingham, telling the Court about this episode, "as was his duty, especially as was proved by the subsequent melancholy catastrophe, he communicated the matter to Ministers." They, one must suppose, regarded the Bellingham case as too boring to bother about. They ignored Mr. Read's warning.

Whitehall was still to be given one more chance to understand what danger threatened. Bellingham sought a final answer to his demand for "justice" from Mr. Secretary Ryder, who referred him to the Treasury. There he saw a Mr. Hill.

"Mr. Hill," said Bellingham, "told me nothing could be done, and added that I was at liberty to take any measures I thought proper and to do, in short, whatever I chose." It is natural to wonder whether Bellingham misinterpreted the official's words, but they represent the sense implicit in the replies he had received from so many other people, and moreover, his account of the conversation was not challenged in court.

* * * * *

Bellingham prepared his attack on Perceval with thoroughness. On April 25th he got a tailor, who lived near his lodgings, to put a pocket on the inside of a coat. He brought a brace of pistols in Fleet Street and practised with them on Primrose Hill. For about a week before the assassination he was seen regularly in the Strangers' Gallery at the House of Commons, and there is a report that his plan was gossiped about in the London Tavern.

A journalist writing after Bellingham's execution suggested that if this report were true, and he thought it reliable, it deserved "the most earnest and minute scrutiny of those entrusted with the supreme direction of the national police."

There was no difficulty about shooting Perceval. On Monday, May 11th, Bellingham stood inside the door of the Lobby and was seen there, "as if watching for somebody that was coming," by John Morris, who passed through the Lobby between 5 and 5.10 p.m. on his way to the Strangers' Gallery. When the Prime Minister came within Bellingham's range, a third person was standing between them, and Belling-

ham had to aim over the stranger's shoulder, with the result that the ball entered Perceval's chest slanting downwards. The Prime Minister died a few minutes later. A score or so of people were about the Lobby at the time and Bellingham was quickly disarmed. He seemed in fact to have been quite ready to help forward the processes of law which were applied so quickly.

Bellingham was taken at once to the bar of the House. The Speaker ordered him to be arrested, and he was examined by magistrates in a committee-room on the premises.

The examination ended at 9.30 p.m., but it was thought too risky to take him at that hour through the streets to Newgate. News of the Prime Minister's death had excited the crowds. Bellingham was not removed from the Houses of Parliament to Newgate until after midnight, and Dragoon Guards escorted the coach he was carried in.

Ministers were scared of the consequences of their own folly. Less than an hour after Perceval's death the doors of Westminster Hall were closed against the public. The Horse Guards were ordered out to patrol the area adjoining the Houses of Parliament. At 8 p.m. St. James's Park was closed, and the Foot Guards, City Militia and Volunteers were called out. The Cabinet met, and the routine despatch of mail from London was held back until orders for the civil and military authorities throughout the country were ready for inclusion in it.

An inquest on Perceval was held next day, Tuesday, May 12th, in the "Rose and Crown," Downing Street, and the jury returned a verdict of

wilful murder. On Thursday, May 15th, Bellingham was tried at the Old Bailey.

The defence was given two clear days—Tuesday and Wednesday—to prepare itself. Counsel had to be briefed. Documents had been taken from Bellingham at the time of his arrest, and the originals were in the hands of the Treasury Solicitor. Witnesses were wanted from Liverpool, but there was not time enough for them to be summoned and brought to London. When one considers the difficulties of communication and travel in those days, it is remarkable that a witness on Bellingham's behalf, Anne Billett, came up to London on her own initiative from Southampton. She read of Perceval's assassination in the newspapers, and believing Bellingham to be mad, she felt it her duty to go to London to say so, but she could not reach the capital before the morning of the trial. The defence rested upon Bellingham's insanity, and his counsel, Mr. Alley and Mr. Reynolds, asked two specialists to examine him on Wednesday. Neither did so. Several eminent people, including Marquis Wellesley (who by 1812 had ceased to be Foreign Secretary) and Leveson-Gower, were subpoenaed for the defence.

The trial opened at the Old Bailey at ten o'clock on Thursday morning and lasted until 6.30 on the evening of the same day. The presiding judge was Sir James Mansfield, Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, of whom a biographer has written that he held this appointment for nearly ten years "without positive discredit, in spite of declining powers." Mr. Alley, for Bellingham, asked at once that the trial should

be postponed because of the absence of material witnesses who could testify to the prisoner's insanity. The Attorney-General, for the Crown, argued that the plea of insanity was a mere pretence, and Sir James Mansfield ruled that there was no ground for postponement. It is evident that the authorities, who wanted Bellingham out of the way quickly, would not tolerate the delay which a proper preparation of Bellingham's defence would have necessitated, and therefore had to discredit at all costs the plea of insanity. It was hardly to be supposed, said Sir James, that a man should go to Russia, or that his friends should allow him to go, if he were in a disordered state of mind. Anne Billett and one other woman did testify to his insanity, but since neither could swear that he had ever been put under restraint as a lunatic their evidence did not save Bellingham.

Bellingham's own statement to the court was the clearest sign of the state of his mind: his first sentences were more eloquent than the plea of his counsel.

"I feel I am under a great obligation to the learned Attorney-General," he said, "for inducing the court to dismiss the objection that was made by my counsel on the ground of insanity; because it is by far more fortunate for me that such a plea should be determined to be unfounded than that it should be established. At the same time I must express my gratitude to my counsel, whose object certainly was most meritorious. . . ."

"Gentlemen, I beg pardon for thus detaining you, but I am wholly unaccustomed to situations like the present, and this is the first time I

ever addressed a public audience. . . . We are now engaged in the investigation of the facts of this most singular affair, and the circumstances under which I am brought (if I may use the phrase), a compulsive volunteer, to this bar. Do you suppose me the man to go with a deliberate design, without cause or provocation, with a pistol to put an end to the life of Mr. Perceval! No, gentlemen! Far otherwise.

"I have strong reasons for my conduct, however extraordinary, reasons which, when I have concluded, you will acknowledge to have fully justified me in this fatal fact. Had I not possessed these imperious incitements, and had murdered him in cold blood, I should consider myself a monster, not only unfit to live in this world, but too wicked for all the torments that may be inflicted in the next."

Wellesley and Leveson-Gower, who were in court, were not called upon by the defence, because these

witnesses (in counsel's opinion) could only have proved that Bellingham had made claims on the Government which no one disputed, and if they had been cross-examined could only have proved their belief that Bellingham was sane. During the trial, Bellingham several times challenged Leveson-Gower to deny what was being said, but Leveson-Gower held his peace.

Sir James Mansfield, in his summing up, stated that no one fact had been adduced which proved that Bellingham's mind was disordered, and the jury took only ten minutes to find him guilty. He was hanged at eight o'clock on the following Monday morning. As he was being led to the scaffold, Sheriff Birch asked him if anyone else had been in any degree connected with the crime. "Certainly not," Bellingham replied.

His last moments were as dignified as his conduct had been throughout the week: by his own standards he had acted justly.





THE SLAVE DETECTIVE

EPISODE I

THE CASE OF THE EMPRESS'S JEWELS

WALLACE NICHOLS

Illustrations by Olga Lehmann

Wallace Nichols is primarily known as a poet, and in his historical novels has given us a poet's dramatic vision of the past. Also, as is shown by his epic novel, "Simon Magus," he is a scholar, with a particular understanding of the Latin world. In persuading him to put these qualities to the writing of a series of mysteries to be elucidated by a Roman slave detective, we have given him the latitude of a poet, and he has given us in return a poet's imaginative prose and a scholar's clear balance of mind in posing and solving his problems. We meet in this first adventure the Roman Emperor who, next to Julius Caesar, the Western world most admires—Marcus Aurelius. His wanton wife, Faustina, and their deplorable son, Commodus, are heard of but not seen; but we shall certainly meet them in later adventures.

TITIUS SABINUS the Senator found the Emperor in a dejected mood. Knowing Marcus Aurelius to be a philosopher, he set this down either to some unsolved problem of thought, or else to some domestic trouble which had broken into his

usual calm of mind. He knew that rumour spoke of the Empress Faustina as being a very extravagant woman, and also of their son, the young Commodus, as being a stubborn, difficult youth to control. But Sabinus made a point of listening to rumour, especially to Roman rumour, with great cautiousness.

Gazing now at the Emperor's

tired face, he began to wonder, with not a little unease, why he had been summoned so unexpectedly to the huge imperial palace on the Esquiline. As far as he knew, there was no public crisis of any kind upon which his advice might be required, nor, as he could see at a glance, had any other senator been summoned to the same audience. He was still more astonished when the Emperor, taking him aside at once, made a seemingly earnest enquiry about nothing of greater importance than a private occurrence in the Senator's household.

"Yes, sir, the thief was discovered," the Senator answered the Emperor, "and the money," he added, rubbing his hands, "was found also. I lost nothing—except my sleep for a few nights."

"It was, then, quite a large sum, Sabinus?"

"It was, sir. My steward from Sardinia had just come with the money from the sale of my lead mines there. He arrived late, and there was no time to deposit it in the bank before morning, and by morning—it had gone!"

"An unpleasant experience," commented the Emperor. "But you got it back—and found the culprit?"

"Both, sir, by the favour of the gods," replied Sabinus, and a rich man's satisfaction oozed from every syllable.

"Rumour has been busy with the affair," smiled Marcus Aurelius.

"Oh, rumour!" muttered Sabinus, and spread out his hands.

"I hope that for once," the Augustus went on, "rumour is true."

"Sir?"

"It is said that you owe the discovery both of the thief and the

money's hiding-place to the cleverness of one of your slaves."

"That is so, Augustus," Sabinus answered, still surprised at the Emperor's apparently deep interest. "It is not the first time, either, that the wits of my good Sollius have served me well in the same way. But never before in so large a matter, but only in cases of petty pilfering at my house here in Rome or at one of my country villas."

"What did you say was his name?" asked Marcus Aurelius.

"Sollius, O Augustus."

"I understand, too," pursued the Emperor, "that he has been useful in uncovering thefts for one or two of your friends."

"I did not know," said Sabinus, unable longer to hide his astonishment at the course of the interview, "that the doings of one of my slaves had interested your august ear. I hope that he has not been meddling in public matters and joining a—conspiracy, sir!"

Marcus Aurelius laughed, and laid his hand familiarly on the other's shoulder.

"I only wanted your report of him," he said. "You see——"

The Emperor hesitated, and laughed again.

"You see," he concluded, "I wish to borrow him from you."

"Augustus!" cried Sabinus, and his mouth remained open.

"Listen, Sabinus," said Marcus Aurelius, and indicating an ivory chair to his guest, he took his seat on a small, gilded Greek couch nearby. "Listen, and I will explain. But what I am about to tell you," he went on in a voice suddenly vibrant with all the might of his august and sacred authority, "must be as secret

as one of the old Mysteries until I release you myself from the obligation of silence."

"Why, of course, sir," answered Sabinus obsequiously, not a little flattered by the Emperor's personal confidence, for it was the first time in his life that he had been so honoured.

"It is like this," the Emperor continued. "The Treasury is being robbed."

"The gods forbid!" ejaculated Sabinus. "Who could do such a thing?"

"That is the problem," was the dry answer. "That is why I wish to borrow your cunning slave."

"Certainly, O Augustus, certainly; he is at your service, wholly at your service, of course! If I had known, I would myself have brought him with me—"

"Wait, wait, Sabinus," said Marcus Aurelius. "You go too quickly."

"Your pardon, sir!"

"The investigations of the Treasury officials," the Emperor went on gravely, "have discovered nothing. There are even no suspicions, and where there are no suspicions there can be no evidence. Probably, too, the whole matter touches someone highly placed. I have therefore to go very carefully. I must not make a mistake when I accuse—whomever I shall accuse. The whole affair, politically, could be very dangerous. It must be handled with more than secrecy, more than discretion: it must be handled wisely."

"Most truly spoken, sir!" hastily agreed the Senator.

"I must therefore test this slave of yours, Sabinus, before I permit him

to touch an investigation so dangerous."

"You will find him wholly trustworthy."

"He is—a young man?"

"No, sir. He is a man in late middle life."

"So much the better. He is educated, I suppose?"

"He was the favourite slave of my uncle, from whom I inherited him," replied Sabinus. "He was picked out, even as a youth, to be my uncle's reader—and my uncle was a great lover of philosophy and poetry, sir—and he had Sollius educated and well trained for that purpose."

"Excellent!" said the Emperor.

He considered a moment, frowning and stroking his beard, before saying anything further, and Sabinus looked at him expectantly. He thought that the master of the Roman world appeared less philosophical than usual, as if, indeed, he were seriously worried. He was pale, and his heavily lidded eyes lacked their usual lustre. Sabinus was about to venture a remark as to his slave's complete dependability when abruptly the Emperor took up the subject himself.

"These thefts," he said, "from the Treasury—for there have been more than one—are so delicate a matter that I would try your Sollius first, my good Sabinus, in something a little less serious before finally giving him so important and confidential a mission."

"Yes, Augustus, I fully understand," replied Sabinus, nodding.

"It happens that the occasion is unfortunately only too immediate—both in time and for my own peace of mind," went on Marcus Aurelius with a touch of awkwardness. "The

Empress has lost some valuable jewels, and again everybody who has been employed to find them, or the stealer of them, has failed. Say nothing to your slave about the more serious matter; tell him merely that he is to help in seeking to discover the whereabouts of the Empress's lost jewels, and send him to me with a serious caution, Sabinus, as to his silence and discretion. I shall give him his instructions myself. Let him come about an hour after noon tomorrow, and ask for Alexias, my Greek freedman."

"You shall be obeyed, O Augustus," answered Titius Sabinus, and fussily took his leave.

Immediately on his return to his own house he sent for the slave named Sollius, and explained to him the great honour that was to be his in serving the Emperor himself, and then at great length, and without the slightest necessity, warned him to be thoroughly prudent and entirely secret.

"You are not to tell even *me* anything," he concluded, as if that was the final height and test of all perfect discretion.

Sollius the slave was a small man, but inclining to corpulency. His scanty hair was thin and greying, and he was more than beginning to go bald. He had a long, slightly fleshy nose with wide nostrils, and very dark, round eyes. He was clean-shaven, and walked with somewhat of a limp, for his left foot had been caught in a wolf-trap when he was a boy. He had a soft voice and a gentle manner. Always intensely neat as to his person, he went about his concerns and household duties with the candid gaze of an overgrown child. His fellow slaves regarded him with-

out special friendliness, but not with enmity or suspicion; that is to say, he was one among them, but not exactly of them, except in the one undeniable fact of their common slavery. That they did not resent his aloofness, or call it the vanity of a favourite with their master, was a tribute to his natural goodness of heart, for he was as kindly a nurse in any case of their sickness as he was skilful as a prober into any matter of mystery.

He had, however, one friend in the son of a slave-girl who had died some years before, a youth now eighteen years old, and named Lucius. It was as though he had taken this youth under his special protection, and some of his fellow slaves would nudge each other when watching the elder man's kindness to the younger, and whisper together that they thought they knew why! Sollius had taught Lucius many scraps of his own knowledge. More than that, he had found him useful, since he had quick wits and a keen pair of eyes, in his various investigations of theft. He was a strong, healthy and athletic young man, and a general favourite in the Senator's household. Sollius had already determined in mind to use him as his assistant should he need help in what the Emperor might be going to ask him to do.

II

At the time appointed, Sollius had entered the great palace of the Roman Cæsars on the Esquiline Hill, and, evidently expected, was immediately escorted by a centurion of the Prætorians, the imperial bodyguard, into the presence of Alexias, the Emperor's principal and confidential

freedman. He was a lean, dark Greek, with a cold, haughty manner, and he subjected the slave to a close, not to say jealous, scrutiny.

"How do you usually begin your enquiries?" he asked at once, as soon as the centurion had left them, and without wasting any words on greeting.

"By understanding the circumstances of the theft," quietly answered Sollius, and the modesty in his tone and manner was already mollifying the freedman's disapprobation of the slave's privileged employment. Alexias had been resolved to give him no unnecessary assistance, but found that his personality was disarming. He coughed, and a slight, involuntary smile touched his lips.

"I am to take you to the Augustus," he said without further preliminary, and at once led the way towards the Emperor's private apartments and into a small chamber filled with innumerable books and scrolls, but otherwise sparsely and most plainly furnished. It looked out on to a small marble portico from which gleaming steps led down into the vast palace gardens.

The Emperor was dictating to Alexander, his Greek secretary, as they entered, and indicating by a gesture that Alexias and Sollius were to stand quietly on the threshold, he continued pacing up and down and wording aloud a despatch to the commander of the Roman army on the Rhine. It was, Sollius soon decided, of no very great importance, and was more an injunction to be watchful rather than active; but the Emperor seemed to be taking unusual pains over the language in which he was clothing his com-

mands. At moments, as he turned in his pacing, he would glance towards the slave of Titius Sabinus, so that by the time that his dictating was concluded he had already made a shrewd assessment of the man's character from the evidences of his features and manner. He was pleased to notice that instead of keeping his eyes respectfully, or timidly, on the ground, the slave had been regarding him with as much open interest as he himself had been regarding the slave.

"Come nearer," he said quietly and suddenly. "You are Sollius?"

"I am Sollius, Augustus."

"You are clever, I am told, in discovering thieves and lost property."

"I have been lucky, sir, and yet—yes!—I have an aptitude for such things."

Marcus Aurelius smiled. He was never one to appreciate the falsely modest when the simple truth could be spoken without vanity.

"The Empress," he said, "has lost a number of her jewels."

"When?" asked Sollius quickly.

The secretary and the freedman both stared. It was not usual for the Emperor to be challenged so abruptly—not even by a senator or a victorious general on leave.

Marcus Aurelius hesitated, and frowned thoughtfully. Sollius looked at him with eyes suddenly bright.

"Three days ago," said the Emperor, closing the slight pause with imperial decisiveness.

Sollius lowered his eyelids for a moment, and then, with an upward glance, he asked:

"Were they taken from her sleeping-chamber?"

"They were last seen in her sleeping-chamber," carefully replied the Emperor.



"Who saw them—last?"

"The Empress herself. She was choosing a ring from the casket containing them. They were there then."

"Was this at morning or at night?"

"It was about sunset. When the Empress retired to rest some hours later, and gave the ring to her attendant to put away, the casket was found empty."

"I should like to see the chamber, the empty casket and the waiting-woman."

"See to that, Alexias—and Sollius is to be admitted to me, without any delay, at all such times as he may wish," ordered the Emperor.

Alexias and Sollius bowed.

"Come," whispered the freedman, and when the Emperor's voice began dictating again they were already in the long, gilded and painted corridor.

"This way," whispered Alexias again. "Follow me."

A guard, another Prætorian, was on duty by a lofty, decorated door. Recognizing Alexias, he let them both pass.

The chamber of the Empress Faustina was spacious, beautifully proportioned and, in the eyes of Sollius at least, unbelievably luxurious. He stood in the doorway, marvelling. But, even while marvelling, he was darting his looks in all directions, and completing in his mind a picture which he knew would remain in his memory with great exactitude.

"This is Marcia," murmured Alexias, and a young, handsome woman came forward from the dressing-table, which she had been engaged in tidying at the moment of their entrance. "You are to answer all the questions which Sollius—this is Sollius, Marcia—will put to you,"

the freedman went on. "It is the Augustus's own command."

Marcia fixed Sollius with a clear and resentful gaze.

"I suppose you have already decided that *I* stole them," she burst out. "Not even the Empress thinks that, and I will not take it from a slave!"

"You yourself are a freedwoman?" asked Sollius with a smile.

"You mistake," she answered proudly. "I am the daughter of a freedman and a freedwoman, free on both sides, and I am a dutiful servant to the Roman Augusta."

"I do not doubt it," replied Sollius. "But tell me this: were you here when the Empress took the ring out of the casket? Oh, is that the same casket over there?"

She nodded, and he went across to the ornate, marble dressing-table. Its appointments were of gold, and the casket itself also was of gold. He stood staring down at it without touching it. Then, without turning, he repeated his previous question.

"I was, slave."

"Did you yourself see whether the casket was then filled with its jewels as usual?"

"I did, and it was, slave," said Marcia.

"Was the casket not kept locked?"

"It was always kept locked. It is only unlocked now because it is empty. Look!"

She moved to his side, and opened the casket by the mere insertion of a painted nail under its lid. It was certainly empty.

"Who entered this room between the time that the Empress took the ring out of this casket and the finding that the rest of the jewels had been stolen?" asked Sollius.

"Myself, twice," she answered. "None else, at least, had any right or proper occasion to enter."

Sollius rubbed his chin.

"Not even the Empress herself—and, perhaps, a friend with her?"

Marcia shook her head.

"The Empress was at a dinner-party," she said. "Also," she went on, a trifle maliciously, as if she enjoyed making the problem still more difficult for the slave, "a guard, one of the Prætorians, stood in the corridor all the while."

"Was the guard changed during any part of the time?"

"He had but newly taken his post when the Empress left her chamber, and he had not been relieved," replied Marcia, "by the time of her return."

"Do you know this Prætorian personally?" asked Sollius sharply.

"No more," she answered with a faint, scornful smile, "than I know others of the Prætorians who take their turn of guard. He is not, though you seem to suspect so, my lover. I look higher, slave, than a soldier!"

"Is the same guard on duty now?"

"No, it is another man."

Sollius turned to Alexias.

"I should like to see that guard," he said.

"He shall be summoned," the freedman promised.

Sollius fixed his gaze once more upon Marcia, and eyed her for a moment or so in silence, but she did not fidget under his scrutiny, and returned it with the same proud scorn as before.

"Have you no guess, yourself, as to the thief?" he asked, and his voice was neither accusatory nor suspicious, but strangely compelling.

"None, O slave. I know nothing, and equally suspect nothing."

"Thank you," he answered, bowed courteously, and turned to go.

"I must see that guard as soon as possible," he said when he and Alexias were walking away down the corridor. "I should like also a list of the jewels. Judging from the size of the gold box from which they were taken, they were smallish in size and number."

"You shall have the list, Sollius," replied Alexias. "But I can tell you myself that they consisted of rings, ear-rings, bracelets and hair-adornments—but, though small and containable within a single casket, of great value. The Empress would not wear them if they were not," he added with a swift, sharp glance.

"That is true," answered Sollius gravely.

"What else do you wish to see, or do?" asked the freedman.

"I should like," replied Sollius, "to examine that part of the gardens which is outside the chamber that we have just left."

Alexias looked instantly dubious.

"That is a very private part of the gardens," he said. "I should have to obtain the permission of the Empress to take you there. She may be there herself at this hour—and no one may intrude upon her privacy."

"She is not there," answered Sollius confidently. "I saw no sign of her when I looked out over the gardens just now. Besides," he continued, drawing himself up into an attitude very unbecoming, thought Alexias, in a slave, "I have the Emperor's own commands to do as I wish—or have I not? You heard them from his own lips."

"He did not give you permission

to intrude upon the privacy of the Augusta," said Alexias stubbornly. "I heard nothing about that. Be reasonable, Sollius."

"I *must* see that part of the gardens," insisted the slave of Sabinus. "Above all things it is important. Shall I go to the Augustus for his permission? He would, I am confident, give it to me."

"Come," answered the freedman brusquely. "I will take the risk!"

He led the other forth by secret passages into the air and the sunlight. Outside Faustina's apartments, below their position and the marble steps leading down from them into the scented luxury of the gardens themselves, Sollius became quickly busy, examining the grass, the shrubs, the nearest flower-beds, the gleaming steps, top to bottom, and, indeed, the whole vicinity. He was almost like a sniffing dog, thought Alexias disgustedly, for he could not see what good was being done by such actions, and he was annoyed, too, over having been forced to bring the slave into the imperial gardens at all. But the Emperor had a use for the fellow. . . . He shrugged his shoulders, and stood watching while Sollius continued his investigations below the Empress's apartments.

"Do not be too long," whispered Alexias, staring nervously around. "The Empress could have us whipped for this—even *me*."

"I am ready now," said Sollius. "There is nothing to be seen—which is often as good, my friend, as to see everything! The two sides of a coin make but one piece of money after all, not two."

Alexias wrinkled his brows in the effort to understand such a puzzling

remark, but what with his haste to leave the place where they were and his still doubtful opinion of the slave's qualities, he left the matter without comment, and hurried his companion back into the palace.

"What now?" he asked.

"I am going home," answered Sollius, "to think. I shall come again and ask for you early in the morning—and let that Prætorian be with you."

With a pleasant smile he begged the freedman to show him the nearest way out of the palace, for with its hundreds of confusing corridors and passages he felt bewildered, or so he said.

Alexias stared after him as he saw him forth, and wondered what would come of his enquiry. He had a sudden cold feeling about the heart, and turned away to his other duties with a deep sigh.

III

As soon as Sollius had returned to his master's house he sought out Lucius. He found him carrying in a huge basket of vegetables from the garden towards the kitchen.

"When you have taken those to the cook," he said, "I have need of you."

"But, Sollius, if the cook wants me to do more errands for him——"

"This is more important, far more important," Sollius answered. "It is on—ahem!—our master's business, and you can tell Tuphus the cook that for a little while you are as good as *my* slave."

Lucius looked at him enquiringly, and then suddenly a grin spread over his face.

"Good, Sollius! Oh, good!" he cried, and shouldering his basket

once more, he went off into the kitchen. Almost immediately he was back again.

"Come," said Sollius, and he led the way along a dark passage which came out near the chariot-house and the stables.

Behind these lay a walled enclosure containing a round, stone pool filled with carp. It was a place where they could generally count upon being able to talk undisturbed. Standing beside the pool, and looking down among the dark, swimming forms without any expression upon his face, Sollius began to speak. He told his young companion everything. He knew that he could trust him, and that he would have to employ a helper in his new task, and also that there was nobody else, as he had already proved, with the right kind of aptitude for being his assistant.

"I suppose," said Lucius after he had listened carefully, "that either the waiting-woman—did you say she was named Marcia?—or the guard took them."

"I cannot answer about the guard," replied Sollius, "for I have not yet questioned him. But I am sure that Marcia had nothing to do with it, for I think that she is as puzzled as I am. I could see it in her eyes."

"And *are* you puzzled, Sollius?" asked Lucius seriously.

"I am," answered Sollius, and sighed. "The signs are so contradictory. I have even wondered whether there has been any theft at all!"

Lucius gaped at him.

"But would the Emperor himself have employed you to find out about it if—if there had *not* been anything stolen?" he asked.

"It could be possible: he might himself be deceived," said Sollius, musingly, still gazing down into the pool. "There are so many rumours," he muttered under his breath, "about the debts of the young Commodus—and his mother has always spoilt him."

"When you say that the signs are contradictory, what," asked Lucius, "do you mean?"

"I mean," Sollius replied, "that I saw no scratches about the small keyhole of the casket; that I saw no marks beneath the Empress's apartment; that Marcia was more puzzled than afraid, when I should have expected her to be more afraid than puzzled; and that I felt Alexias was, as it were, playing a part, as if he thought that my intrusion into the mystery was unnecessary, but that he dared not tell the Emperor so. All this," he added, spreading out his hands so that they made a shadow fall across the water and disturbed the otherwise sleepy carp, "makes me wonder if I am being—deliberately misled. But, Lucius, I must question that Prætorian who was on guard on the evening of the supposed theft before I make up my mind about that word 'supposed.'"

He sighed, and then was silent for a while, staring down into the pool at his feet. Suddenly he spoke again, and more briskly:

"There is something that I want you to do for me, Lucius."

"What is that, Sollius?" asked Lucius, and his eyes brightened.

"I want you to mingle with the slaves in the money-changers' quarters. Find out from gossip whether any jewels have been pledged for security yesterday or to-day, or sold for any large sum, or—any gossip

about a sudden appearance of jewels in unusual places."

"I can do that, Sollius," replied Lucius eagerly.

"Meanwhile I shall see that Prætorian," mused Sollius. "But I doubt—I really doubt—if I shall learn much from him."

He shook his head dubiously, and led the way back to the kitchen quarters.

"Go on your errand at once," he whispered. "I will make it right with Tuphus—or our master will, if I fail. Is not the Emperor behind it?"

Lucius grinned, and sped away.

IV

Early, as promised, Sollius hastened to the palace next morning, and asked for Alexias. He was taken to a small, bare room, somewhat away from the imperial apartments, and lit only by a pale, dusty light that filtered through a grating. It was like a guardroom, except that its appointments were domestic rather than military. He was left there alone for quite a long time, and was beginning to feel impatient, and even a little angry, when Alexias hurried in with a scared face.

"He has disappeared!" he whispered hollowly. "I went for him myself, but he was not in his quarters. He has disappeared," he repeated, "just as if he were a deserter. Nobody can understand it. Nobody!"

"Has the Emperor been told?" asked Sollius, plucking at his lips.

"It is not a nice report to make," answered Alexias, and gestured impotently.

Then his face brightened as he produced a scroll from somewhere about him.

"But I have the list of the missing jewels," he said.

Sollius brushed it aside, and the Emperor's freedman stared.

"But you asked for it?" he stammered.

"I know," said Sollius. "I may need it—or may not. But the disappearance of this Prætorian changes the order of my plans. The sooner he is found, whether alive or dead——"

"Dead?" cried Alexias in horror. "Do you think *that*?"

"I fear it," replied Sollius. "Have you seen the man's centurion?"

"He knows nothing."

"You mean that he *says* he knows nothing," answered Sollius. "Bring him here," he ordered abruptly.

The freedman drew himself up, but meeting Sollius's eye, he shrugged his shoulders.

"As you will," he said stiffly. "We have the Emperor's command to obey you."

He turned quickly, and left the slave once again alone. Sollius stood perfectly still, and closed his eyes. He did not open them until he heard the rustle of metal as the centurion was brought in by Alexias. Then he fixed the man with a deep stare.

"Your name?" he asked.

"Decius," answered the centurion sullenly.

He seemed to have come unwillingly and to resent any interrogation by a slave. He stood rigidly, one hand on the brazen hilt of his short stabbing-sword.

"What is the name of this missing soldier?" pursued Sollius.

"Constans."

"When did you last see him?"

"Last night—in a tavern."

"Was he drunk?"

"Constans had a strong head," answered Decius, and would have laughed if he had not remembered that his questioner was a slave. He stood more rigidly than ever.

"Did you leave him in the tavern, or did he come away with you?"

"I said I saw him last in a tavern—not going to it, nor coming from it," replied Decius.

"You did not part from him at the tavern door—in the street?"

"I left him with a girl on his knee," said Decius gruffly.

"Which tavern was it?"

"*The Two Cranes*, in the Subura," answered the centurion without hesitation.

Sollius rubbed his chin while he thought briefly.

"And you have no idea at all what has happened to him?" he asked.

"I know less about it than about the Emperor's philosophy," replied the still sullen centurion, yet with a fugitive touch of contemptuous humour, nevertheless, for he was beginning to thaw a little under the slave's quiet and assured manner.

"Has anybody been sent to that tavern to make enquiries?" asked Sollius.

"The tribune sent," was the answer.

"With no result?"

"With no result!"

"Did nobody there remember his leaving?"

"Nobody," answered Decius. "At least," he added, a little less surlily, "nobody was willing to admit to remembering anything."

"Ah-h!" breathed Sollius. "Has this tavern a good reputation?"

"It is in the Subura," answered the centurion with a meaning shrug.

"Even the worst district of Rome,"

said the slave, "can have one decent tavern in it!"

"Then your experience is different from mine," replied Decius, and this time he laughed outright.

He had a clear-cut, honest face, thought Sollius, looking at him with a newly probing gaze. Suddenly he made up his mind.

"Come, centurion, we will go there now, you and I, together."

"Softly, slave!" cried Decius. "Who are you to give me orders? I have answered your questions because Alexias told me to answer 'em, and Alexias is the Emperor's own servant. But this is another matter. What'll my tribune say? A soldier—and a Prætorian, mind you!—can only take orders from his own officers."

"That is all right," said Sollius quietly. "Alexias will tell you that in this matter my orders are as good as the Emperor's own."

"What, slave!" burst out Decius.

"Quietly," said Alexias, and touched the centurion's arm. "It is as he says. He has the Emperor's authority for what he is doing. Go with him. I will explain to your tribune."

"Castor and Pollux flay me!" cried Decius. "This is a pretty thing: a centurion of the Prætorians to take orders from a slave!"

Nevertheless, in spite of his bluster, for once it was so, and he and Sollius presently departed on their errand side by side, the upright, marching Prætorian, and the fattish, shuffling slave making a comical enough sight for those who passed by them in the narrow, tortuous and crowded streets.

The thoroughfares of Rome were inordinately dirty and noisy, and

those who walked had a bad time of it, being continually pushed to the walls by the litters of the important or the wealthy, borne by running slaves, generally of huge stature, negroes or Cappadocians being the favourites for that kind of work. All Rome was dirty, tortuous, unsavoury and crowded, but no quarter was as bad in all those respects as the infamous Subura, the haunt and kennel of the worst elements of the population. Sollius knew it well, but he never entered it without the utmost distaste. The inns and hovels were little better than thieves' dens, and worse; every kind of rascality and vice was at home; it stank both physically and morally.

The centurion led the way down an evil-smelling byway between high walls that leant crookedly towards one another like two drunken men seeking to hold each other up, yet never managing to make actual contact in their swaying towards one another for support. Though the day itself was bright, the byway was so dark that Sollius frequently stumbled over the uneven cobbles, slippery with all kinds of nauseous garbage.

The two had uttered no word during their journey. But it would have been difficult to have conversed amid such constant jostling and noise; and now, in that quieter spot, the centurion cleared his throat, spat and spoke:

"We are nearly there, O slave. The open doorway at the end, see?"

It was more like the entrance to a dark cave than the door of a supposedly inviting tavern, and was no advertisement of its pleasures. Indeed, thought Sollius, it needed courage to enter at all. At night it would

be even more daunting to a timid man, though, no doubt, there would be a torch in the iron sconce at the side of the entrance.

"I'll see you come to no harm," grunted the centurion through the side of his mouth as if he had read his companion's thoughts.

He plunged into the darkest recesses of the alley with the familiarity of frequent experience, and was about to enter into the black mouth of the doorway when a man, rushing out as in a violent hurry, thrust him against the wall, and was gone before either he or Sollius could catch at him and hold him. They could hear his sandals slapping against the cobbles as he sped away down other thoroughfares, and then the noise was swallowed up in the greater noises round and about.

The centurion grunted angrily, and then entered the tavern without further hindrance. Sollius followed at his heels. It was lighter inside than the slave had expected, for two or three clay lamps were diffusing a pale light in an inner room. But the immediate entrance, a smaller room like a vestibule, was both dark and empty. The whole place smelt of rancid oil, sour wine, stale vegetables and fetid odours of every conceivable variety of dirt and corruption. Sollius sniffed audibly.

"You're too dainty!" muttered Decius as he led the way through towards the inner room.

But Sollius had not been savouring the unpleasant layers of dead air about him, but was trying to remember where he had smelt before the perfume which had come from the garments of the man who had rushed out past them. And then he knew. It had been in the bedchamber

of the Empress. His mind suddenly grew wary. They should have stopped that running man!

He gave a swift glance about him as they entered the inner room. It had benches about the walls; wine-casks at one end, in a kind of bricked, recessed tunnel, too small to be termed a cellar, yet serving something of the same purpose; and stools, some still lying where they had fallen the previous night, and others disposed about conveniently for those drinking. At the moment, however, only two occupants faced the centurion and Sollius as they entered, the tavern-keeper himself and a flute-boy, the latter very pale, puffed under the eyes, and drowsy. A flight of shallow stone steps led to an upper floor. They were festooned with cobwebs and covered with dust and dirt. The whole place seemed never to have been swept or cleaned since it had been built, perhaps over a hundred years before.

"What d'ye want?" asked the tavern-keeper, glowering through the dim light.

"You're to answer some questions," replied the centurion brusquely, "and mind you tell us no lies."

"I've been badgered with questions for hours," growled the other. "I know nothing. Your comrade strode out o' that doorway as well as he entered through it—or nearly as well," he added with a truculent leer. "I won't say as he wasn't drunk."

"Who helped him out?" asked Sollius.

"And who are *you* to be asking that or any other question?" demanded the tavern-keeper.

"I am his uncle," answered Sollius, lying glibly, "and his mother, my sister, lies dying. He must be fetched

home. Cannot you help us at all?"

His voice was pitched just in the right key, neither wheedling nor exacting, but anxiously pleading. The centurion stared sidelong at him with a new appreciation of his parts.

"If I had nothing to tell a Prætorian officer," grunted the tavern-keeper, "am I like to have anything to tell a fat rascal like you who couldn't even pay me for a blind-man's wink?"

"Even a blind-man's wink," laughed Sollius, "might tell me what he had heard with his ears!"

"I heard nothing; I saw nothing; I know nothing," said the other, and his tone had finality. "D'ye think I'm such a fool as not to be able to sell any kind o' knowledge to a good bidder? Or not to save my skin if I had knowledge when a Prætorian officer came sniffing around with a meddling nose? I heard nothing; I saw nothing; I know nothing," he repeated, and spat without caring where.

"There was no brawl?" went on Sollius doggedly.

"There's always a brawl!" leered the other. "That's life: drink and brawling. Men are men in the Subura."

"There was a girl——" suggested Sollius.

"He had no money," answered the tavern-keeper shortly. "She wasn't on his knee long, I can tell you that. I don't allow it—when there's no money. But why this fuss over a missing soldier?" he asked with lowered brows, suspiciously. "What's he been doing? Threatening the life of the Emperor? Or teaching young Commodus evil manners? But any teacher o' such 'ud soon end by being the pupil o' that young lad, prince as



he may be, and dainty brought up! I wonder his father lets him out of his eye. I'd keep him well watched, I would—or send him to one o' the frontiers to learn war."

"Peace, rascal!" cried the centurion. "D'ye want a whipping after I've made my report?"

"I'm only saying what everybody is saying," growled the tavern-keeper, and made a lewd gesture. "The Emperor is too good for such dogs. Good men don't see all as they ought to see, and there's a lot in Rome that needs looking at—though I hope it won't be in *my* time," he added with a salacious grin. "I've my living to get!"

Sollius could bear the fetid atmosphere no longer, and he was convinced by now that the tavern-keeper really knew nothing. He turned.

"Come," he said brusquely over his shoulder to the centurion. "There is nothing to learn here."

He stumbled out through the dark outer room and so to the alley outside. As soon as they were a little distance down this, he laid a hand on the centurion's arm, and whispered urgently:

"Go back, and fetch out that flute-boy!"

Decius stared, but seeing the expression on Sollius's face, he bit back the sarcastic retort which he had intended to make, turned smartly on his heel and re-entered the tavern. He was out again with the flute-boy before Sollius had reached the corner where the alley debouched into the crowded and wider way. The flute-boy appeared terrified. The centurion held him firmly by an arm.

"Come with us," said Sollius, and his voice was kindly. "We mean you no harm."

"What do you want?" stammered the boy. "I have done nothing. I'm a good boy. Everybody round here will give me a good name."

"Nobody round here could give anybody a good name!" answered Sollius a little primly. "Don't let go of him, centurion."

"Where are you taking me?" whimpered the boy.

"We can't talk in this noisy bustle," replied the slave, and he led the way, with the centurion still grasping the flute-boy by the arm, at his heels.

V

He did not lead them to the imperial palace, but to the house of Titius Sabinus, his master. There he took them to the same walled enclosure behind the chariot-house where he had talked with Lucius.

"We can be private here," he said.

It was certainly very quiet, there by the carp-pool.

"Tell me," Sollius began, "who it was that hurriedly left as we entered the tavern where you play your flute."

The boy was shaking with fear, and could hardly stammer out:

"He had b-been there all n-night."

"You have seen him in the tavern before?"

"Once or twice—lately. What are you w-wanting of me?"

"Only true answers to my questions," replied Sollius softly, "and then you can go back as quickly as you can run. Do you know his name?"

The flute-boy shook his head.

"He is a rich young man," he said, "but no one mentions his name."

"Have you seen him close—under the lamp? Does he wear a great deal of jewellery: rings and gold chains and so on?"

"He wouldn't in the Subura!" muttered the centurion. "Or not for long!"

"Answer me, flute-boy!"

"Not that I have seen. Myrtis says——"

"Who is Myrtis?"

"One of the girls in the house. I play for their dances."

"Go on."

"Myrtis says he is a gladiator. But——"

"Go on."

"I don't suppose she really knows. She is always telling lies."

At that moment Lucius joined them.

"I heard you had returned, Sollius," he said, "and Tuphus said you had come this way."

Sollius took his arm, and they walked to the other side of the carpool out of hearing of the others.

"What have you found out?" he asked in a lowered voice.

"Nothing, Sollius. No jewels in any quantity have been sold or pledged just lately."

"Not by—the Empress's son?"

Lucius started, and then looked scared.

"I did hear something about him," he whispered. "He is in great debt and seeking a loan."

Sollius rubbed his chin.

"Then no jewels have been—ahem!—abstracted for *his* benefit," he muttered in a muse, "so everything hangs upon finding that lost Prætorian. Ah, you won't have heard about that," he added, and gave a brief account of his own researches that morning. "The flute-boy, after

all, knows nothing. I am disappointed. I had expected more from him. I think it very likely that the man who brushed past us was a gladiator, as Myrtis says. Even his scentedness is a confirmation."

"A scented gladiator?" exclaimed Lucius. "But they are such tough men—they have to be!"

"Many of them," answered Sollius dryly, "are ladies' favourites. But that is a different matter."

He broke off with an impatient gesture, and led the way back to the centurion and the flute-boy.

"You can go," he said to the latter with a smile, and clapped him on the back. "Take him into the kitchen," he directed Lucius, "and wheedle Tuphus into giving him some aniseed cakes."

Lucius took the flute-boy away.

"A further question or two, my friend, and you can go, too," said Sollius to the centurion.

Decius mumbled under his breath, but appeared ready to answer, nevertheless.

"Had this missing Constans relatives in Rome?"

"A mother and an elder brother, a cobbler. Neither has heard of him. I was sent myself to find out."

Sollius frowned, and once more rubbed his chin.

"Had he any special interest in life outside his being a soldier?" he asked after pondering silently for a while.

"Drinking and girls: I know of naught else," answered the centurion bluntly and a little sourly.

"What was his character—as a soldier?"

"As a soldier? He wouldn't be one of *us*," said the centurion of the Prætorians proudly, "if he hadn't a

good name and a clean tablet in records."

"Desertion has been hinted," suggested Sollius.

"No Prætorian ever deserts!" roundly asserted the other. "The pickings are too good!"

"I know you are the most privileged troops in the Empire," said Sollius placatingly. "But I am sure that you can tell me something that I ought to know—something that, perhaps, you don't realize that you know yourself. Think for a moment quietly. Look at the carp there as you think; their quiet swimming about will help to compose your mind. I have often found it useful in that way. And then speak the first thing about this Constans which enters your thoughts, no matter how trivial or how silly it may seem—just the first thing that enters your head, centurion."

Decius did as he was told, staring down at the carp in puckered concentration. Suddenly he began to laugh.

"What is it? What have you remembered?" cried Sollius eagerly.

"It was nothing, nothing at all," replied Decius, still laughing, "but it was funny at the time. We all laughed about it. Anyway, he got a gold piece from the Emperor for it, and the promise of a gardener's job when his service days are over. We've nicknamed him 'the gardener,' though I've never seen him dig in our camp garden all the while I've been stationed in Rome, and that is many years now, slave."

"Why did the Emperor give him a gold piece? Go on, go on!" urged Sollius impatiently.

"It was this way," answered the centurion leisurely, and laughing and

smiling as he talked. "It was the Empress's birthday, and we were paraded in her honour. We had a rose issued to each of us, and we were ordered in the march past to throw our roses in a heap at her feet, each file in turn. Constans had had a thick night at a tavern, and had come on parade without breaking his fast, but with a bunch of radishes hid in his tunic to chew while standing at ease before the Augusta's arrival. We always have to parade hours before time! Well, somehow, after the roses had been issued to us and fastened in our helmets, Constans had the ill-luck to drop his and lose it during a bit o' drill we were put through to fill out the time. It was a real bit of evil luck, for he would be on the outside of his file as it marched past the Emperor and Empress, and it would have been seen that he had nothing to throw on the heap. Had he been on the inside it might have passed unnoticed, though an officer *was* level with the rank behind. However, there it was, and without his rose he was in a fair sweat, I can tell you. When the time came, what else could he do but fling down his bunch o' radishes? Large 'uns, they were, too! Quite like prize ones! With luck, in such a shower o' roses, they'd not have been noticed. But Constans was never a lucky man. We often say he's the victim o' the evil eye! Anyhow, the Empress saw it. Sharp eyes, as well as beautiful ones, has the Empress! And she whispered to the Emperor. After the parade Constans was summoned to the Empress's footstool, and accused o' being disrespectful and unsoldierly. He was like to be whipped, but he always had a tongue in his head, had Constans, and the cheekiness of a British

gooseboy. I have served in Britain, and know! Well, he got out of it. Said they were his own growing. Said he thought it more of a real homage to the Empress to give her something of his own, and not a mere flower provided by the Senate! The Emperor laughed, and the Empress—though I don't think that at first she had meant to be kind about it—took a look at the Emperor's face—and fetched up a smile. All was safely over—and then the Emperor made his promise to take Constans on as a gardener when his time of service should be up. And he no gardener at all! Laugh! That night the whole barracks was one roar! Well, that's all—and it can't have anything to do with his disappearance now. It was over a year ago."

"Thank you for telling me," said Sollius quietly. "Thank you, too, for taking me to *The Two Cranes*. I'd not like to go there alone. I think that is all I want of you."

"Then I'll go back to barracks," answered the centurion. "It's been better than drilling, anyway, even if it has been o' no use. If you want to know what I think, Constans is in the Tiber with some woman's husband's knife in him. Why there's such a fuss about him is what puzzles me."

He nodded, and marched away, whistling.

VI

Lucius found Sollius still standing by the carp-pool.

"The flute-boy has gone," he said. Sollius did not answer.

"Have you discovered anything?" asked Lucius after a pause.

Sollius sighed.

"I am not sure," he answered, and

his face was grave and unhappy. "I do not like being—deceived. And I can see only deception, whichever way I look."

Lucius stared at him.

"I don't understand," he said.

"Neither do I," answered Sollius ruefully. "Is our master within?"

Lucius nodded.

Sollius went indoors, sought out the Senator his master, and put a single question.

"Why, yes," replied Sabinus. "It is about three miles out along the Appian Way. I have had the honour of visiting there myself. How are your investigations getting on?" he asked anxiously. "It was on my recommendation that the Emperor is employing you in this matter, and I should not like you to—fail," he whispered.

He looked at the slave questioningly, but Sollius did not respond in the confidential way that the Senator had expected.

"I have discovered hardly anything," murmured Sollius. "But a swallow can smell spring ahead before he begins flying home from Africa!"

Sabinus dismissed him almost irritably.

VII

"I am going to the Augustus's palace, Lucius," announced Sollius in the early evening of the same day. "I wish to ask Alexias one more question."

The house of Sabinus stood in its own grounds, with extensive gardens, and the way from the house itself to the gates was long, winding and overshadowed by chestnut trees. It was growing dusk, and the sky was already filled with the first stars. Nearer the gates the trees were more

crowded and the darkness more complete. Sollius strode on through the shadowy avenue in a deep muse. He was both sure and puzzled.

Something like a large corn-sack was suddenly and swiftly drawn over his head; his legs were knocked from under him; and then his hands were roped behind him, and his ankles were bound together at the same time. Evidently his assailants were two in number. And now, one taking his shoulders and the other his feet, he was carried away, half-smothered in the sack, he knew not whither.

He had not struggled with his captors, for he was not a man of violence. Except for being startled at first, he was not frightened. He was, in fact, intensely curious, eager to know what would happen next, for he knew that his abduction must have some connection with what he was investigating. He felt, too, that if they had been going to kill him they would have done so straight-way.

They did not carry him very far, but transferred him to a vehicle of some sort, drawn either, he judged from the sounds, by a pair of horses or mules. Probably, he guessed from the creaking noise of four wooden wheels, it was some kind of a farm-cart.

In this he was taken a considerable distance, but in what direction he had no means of telling. The cart was hooded, he judged, for all outside sounds seemed muffled—and by more than the sack over his head—even the voices of the driver and his companion. It was now quite dark, not only within the vehicle, but in the open air and the countryside through which they were passing. It must have been quite late at night

when the cart suddenly stopped to the furious barking of watchdogs and the rattling of their chains in the kennels. He recognized the peculiar bark of one of them. It was, surely, a Gallic hound. Sabinus possessed one, which had been the gift of the Emperor himself. He was glad that none of the dogs was loose. To have him torn to pieces might be a good way to dispose of him with all the appearance of accident, and very unpleasant, indeed! But the longer he had thought—and he had had plenty of time for cogitation—the more sure he had become that no real violence was intended.

He was lifted out of the vehicle in the same manner that he had been lifted in, and carried into what seemed to be one of the outhouses of a farm. The corn-sack was taken from his head as he was laid against one of the mud walls, but neither his feet nor his hands were untied. A single clay lamp on the floor in one corner dimly lit the place. A number of spades and other agricultural implements were lying about, and he thought that his guess was probably correct, and that he was in an outbuilding of a farm, or perhaps of a country villa. He looked at the two men who had abducted him, and recognized neither; but he had not expected to recognize them. The dogs were still barking.

"Dost thou know why thou'st been brought here?" asked one of the men in a harsh, truculent voice.

"I think so," quietly answered Sollius, blinking in the light of the lamp which the other man had taken up and was now holding close to the prisoner's eyes. Sollius noticed that this second man was tall, lean and very straight of back.

"Thou'dst be a fool if not!" snarled the first man. "We have orders to tell thee to stop looking for the thief o'—thou knowest what as well as I do."

As he spoke he showed what he was holding in his hand: a short length of thin, knotted strangler's cord.

"Well, thou seest, slave? And understandest?"

The other man straightened himself, and laughed.

"Thou canst not escape," he said, and put down the lamp on a dusty tool-bench nearby.

Sollius looked at him.

"You, of course, are Constans," he said.

"Oho!" laughed the Prætorian, in no way disconcerted. "Thou'rt a sharp one!"

He seemed more good-humoured than his fellow, who was scowling, thought Sollius, in a very horrible manner. How far would they go in torturing him? He wondered if what he had come to guess could really be right! If it was, he could laugh at the proceedings; if not, he was in a most miserable and fearful position—and might never know the truth. To die without knowing all about the affair shook his equanimity in prospect more than the actual danger in which he stood.

It was Constans who finally menaced him with a woodcutter's axe, swinging it above his head, all his outward good-humour gone in a flash as his companion rasped out:

"A dead guesser can't guess—right. But it might save your life—to guess wrong."

"Dost hear, slave?" asked Constans, the axe still poised in air.

"What dost thou know?" de-

manded the other, fingering the knotted length of cord.

"Answer, slave!" said the Prætorian in a hissing whisper.

"I can tell what I know only to the Emperor," answered Sollius, and hoped that his voice sounded firm.

"Leave the Emperor out of this!" said the man with the strangler's cord.

"It is the Emperor's business," replied Sollius. "How, then, can I leave him out? I shall tell you nothing," he added with as much show of courage as he could imitate, and even then he did not know whether he had cause for his worst fears—or not. Well, he had to test it, the one way or the other. "You can kill me," he said huskily, "but you won't get a word out of me. And you must not be too sure," he added, blinking up at them, "that I have anything to tell."

"Anything or nothing, our orders are the same," said the man with the cord, and glanced at his companion.

Constans lowered the axe, and gave Sollius a nicely calculated blow with a chopping fist, and the slave knew no more.

VIII

When he came to himself, he found that he was lying near the gates of his master's house, with Lucius bending anxiously over him, and two others of his fellow slaves standing by. It was still night.

"What happened, Sollius?"

"That," replied Sollius ruefully, "is *my* question, not yours!"

"We heard a cry," said Lucius, "and found you unconscious on the ground here."

"It wasn't *my* cry," muttered Sollius.

"That is all we know."

"It was a signal—to fetch you out," whispered Sollius.

"Who attacked you?" asked one of the others.

"Help me up," murmured Sollius.

They led him into the slaves' quarters of the house, and attended to his bruises. He had more than one. He felt dizzy, and his head, neck and jaw ached most painfully. He was undressed and laid in his bed. Lucius watched over his uneasy slumbers until morning. It was not a long watch.

Sabinus, who had been informed of the "accident" to his favourite slave, came to see him with the first light.

"How did it happen, my good Sollius?" he asked.

Sollius answered with great care:

"I do not remember very much about it, lord. I was—thinking—and walking near the gates, and was suddenly attacked—and I remember nothing more until I was found by Lucius and the others."

Sabinus rose from the stool on which he had been sitting, tiptoed to the door, and looked along the corridor outside the slaves' dormitory with exaggerated caution. Then he returned, and speaking in a whisper, said:

"You have discovered something, then, my good Sollius? The thief tried to silence you? Excellent! You must tell the Emperor to-day."

"Indeed, lord," replied Sollius weakly, "I had intended to ask for an audience to-day. I have not told you everything—but on second thoughts, lord, I will. I was more than just attacked," he went on, his voice gathering strength as he related the rest. "I was abducted, too."

Sabinus, after he had heard the whole of his slave's adventures, rubbed his hands.

"Excellent, Sollius, excellent!" he cried, beaming. "You are clearly on the right track. I am well pleased with you! I will myself accompany you to the Augustus."

IX

Marcus Aurelius received them again in his small, plainly furnished, private chamber, filled with innumerable books and scrolls and scroll-containers. There were just the four of them: the Emperor, Sabinus, Alexias and Sollius.

"You say," said the Emperor, a slight smile on the lips under his beard, "that you have discovered the thief of the Empress's jewels. This is quick work, Sabinus!"

The Senator, in a flutter of pleasure and self-satisfaction, bowed. He might have spoken had the Emperor given him the opportunity, but Marcus Aurelius, used to quelling the loquacity of senators, immediately addressed Sollius again:

"Have you the jewels?"

"No, sir," answered Sollius.

The Emperor frowned.

"But you know the thief?"

Sollius hesitated briefly, and then answered:

"If, O Augustus, I may set out what I take to be the circumstances, I think that you yourself will be able to name—the culprit."

"I shall be interested in every word you say," replied the Emperor. "Let me hear!"

"I have had many suspicions," Sollius began, "chasing one after the other like a dog after many hares. First, I suspected Marcia, the Augusta's waiting-woman, but there

were no true signs pointing to her, and both she and Alexias seemed so genuinely puzzled—I had toyed with the idea of both of them being in league. I soon dismissed both from the case; but I had to consider them."

He glanced apologetically at the Emperor's Greek freedman, but received only a glare in response. He sighed, and went on:

"Have I your pardon, Augustus, for aught I may say? You have commanded me to tell you everything, yet if I do——"

He spread out his hands.

"Offence may come!" he whispered.

"I am no Caligula or Nero," replied Marcus Aurelius gravely. "Tell me everything you had in mind."

"Sir, I wondered whether the Empress herself might not have—secretly sold them."

"The Empress—sold them!" exclaimed Marcus Aurelius incredulously.

"For the money," pursued Sollius quietly.

"But the Empress," said Faustina's husband, "has no need of money."

"Perhaps," Sollius suggested in a lower tone, "to pay some debt of Prince Commodus."

The Emperor frowned.

"But I have just this morning paid his debts myself," he said in a voice of half-angry distaste.

"I am only relating my suspicions, O Augustus, in the order of their crossing my mind. I found out that I was certainly wrong in this one."

"Found out? How?" questioned the Emperor, very seriously.

"I had enquiries made in the quarter of the money-changers," the slave answered. "But no jewels had re-

cently been offered for sale, or pledged, and Prince Commodus had been seeking a loan—before this morning, Augustus!—so no jewels had been sold for his benefit. And when the Prætorian was missing I was all the more certain of the Augusta's innocence. It was, in fact, the disappearance of the Prætorian which set me upon the right way. For, sir, a Prætorian does not 'disappear'—discipline in the Guards is too strong. But had he been murdered—because he knew something that it would be fatal to the thief for me to discover? Yet, had he been murdered, his body should have been found, probably near the tavern of *The Two Cranes* in the Subura. But it is clear that he left there, at least, safely. I decided that he had not been killed, but just—removed out of my way. That brought back into my mind the lack of evidence that there was concerning a theft at all."

He paused, and gave the Emperor a direct look.

"The jewels, after all," the Emperor quietly reminded him, "were missing from the Empress's casket."

"Precisely, sir: missing—from the casket. But 'stolen' is another word. I looked over the ground outside the Augusta's chamber, but saw no sign of any intruder. An intruder into that secret part of the imperial gardens would need wings to drop from Heaven: he could not go thither on his feet. It was the print of feet, and any other kind of visible disturbance, that I could not find. I decided against a thief entering from the gardens, O Augustus. And then the Prætorian was missing. At first, I did not understand that, and suspected, indeed, that he had been killed; but when I visited the tavern in the

Subura where he had last been seen, I found no sign of anything like murder. I concluded that whatever had happened to him had taken place after he had left the tavern and not in the tavern itself. I saw a scented gladiator there—but suspected other matters, none relative to the missing man. But, sir, a scented gladiator is himself a cause for enquiry.”

He gave the Emperor another deep glance, wondering the while how much, or how little, that august personage knew of the fearful rumours concerning his wife. He guessed that any clever woman could outwit that noble character, so philosophical in temper, so simple of heart. But Marcus Aurelius gave no sign of inward disturbance.

“Go on,” was all he said.

The three listeners hung on the slave’s every word, spellbound by what he was telling: Sabinus, smilingly proud of being his master; Alexias deeply puzzled and beginning to prick with unknown fears; the Emperor enigmatically calm.

“Then,” continued Sollius, still fixing the Emperor with his gaze, “I was set upon. I expected to be slain out of hand. But I was not slain; I was abducted; I expected to be tortured to tell all that I knew, but I was not tortured, only threatened. Then I was knocked out skilfully—and returned where I was taken. There seemed no purpose in it unless it was to frighten me. I *was* frightened, of course. I am only an elderly slave, not a man of war or adventure. But when I came to no serious harm, I began to think again over all my scraps of evidence. One of the men who had abducted me was the missing Prætorian. Who could have employed *him*, except one whom he would

obey without question? His companion, too, I recognized, though not at first: he is one of a troupe of actors. You, O Augustus, have shown him favour for his playing in Plautus.”

“It does sound like a prank of Sicinius Malvus,” said the Emperor with a smile.

“Then,” pursued Sollius, “I recognized the kind of bark peculiar to a breed of hound among the many barking at the farm to which they had taken me. It was the bark of a Gallic hound. There are few of them in Rome. My master has one, a gracious present from yourself, Augustus. Previously, as he will bear witness, I asked my master a question. He answered that a certain small, private villa and farm lay off the Appian Way about three miles out. I guessed that it was thither that I had been taken—and where else could the Prætorian have been so well hidden? When I came to myself, safely back at my master’s gates, I knew the truth. It is that truth, sir, which I am waiting for you to command me to tell.”

“Do you need my ‘command’ to tell it to me?” asked Marcus Aurelius, stroking his beard.

“I dare not tell it without, O Augustus,” answered Sollius.

The Emperor rose, crossed the chamber to a recess containing some marble shelves upon which stood a number of circular, silver containers of scrolls and rolled books. Bringing one back with him, he returned to his former place, and tipped its contents on to a small, round, marble table in front of him. The missing jewels poured out in a glittering cascade of rainbow-coloured beauty.

“I took them with the Empress’s

permission," he said, smiling, "to make a test of your powers, Sollius, before I employed you in a more serious matter. I seem to have deceived you very ill! I hope that Malvus and Constans were not too rough with you. But I had to test your courage as well as your wits. I am satisfied. Sabinus, will you lend me this clever slave for as long as I need his quick brain?"

"Ah, Augustus," cried Sabinus,

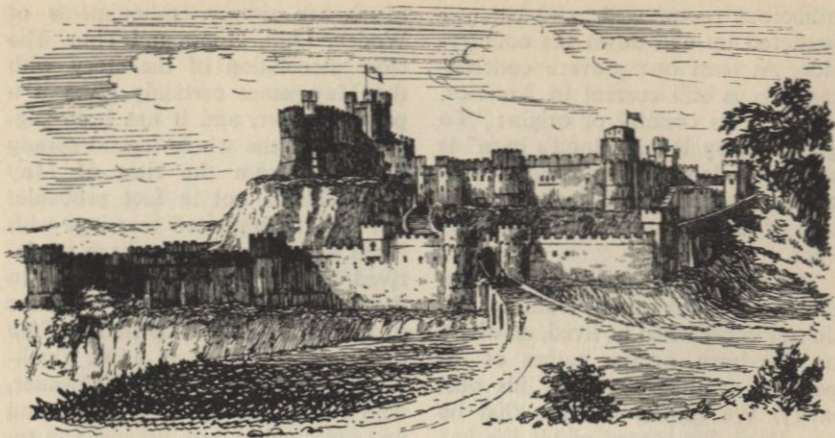
bowing and self-important—it might have been he who had unravelled the little mystery and not Sollius!—"all that I have is at your command."

"But I ask only for your Sollius," laughed the Emperor. "I have great need of him. If you will leave him behind you, Sabinus, I will tell him, now, at once, everything that is known about these thefts from the Treasury, and then he can set to work on a real mystery!"



Slavery is as ancient as war, and war as human nature.

VOLTAIRE: *Philosophical Dictionary*, 1764.



ROBIN HOOD

CHRISTINA HOLE

Illustrations by G. A. H.

We read in a newspaper recently that Nottingham is to have a statue to Robin Hood, and that a "suitable committee" had been appointed by both parties of the city council to consider what sort of statue should be ordered and where it should be sited. We hope that the committee will get the statue before it chooses the site; and let the right artist choose the form of statue. Robin Hood is one of the great English figures, a folk-hero known to the world. Even Tom Sawyer, in his village on the banks of the Mississippi, knew how to play the game of Robin Hood, and how, in his last moments, he shot an arrow through a window, asking to be buried where it fell. Miss Christina Hole has gathered together much interesting material about a hero who may never have lived, but whose ancestry was probably pagan.



HIGH among the folk-heroes who adorn our history is Robin Hood. He is probably the most popular and certainly the best known. Some version of his story is

familiar to everyone; his exploits are among the things that "every school-boy knows." His name, and the names of his followers, appear on inn signs and club banners, and in the Courts of the Ancient Order of Foresters; it is given to a thaw wind and a hedgerow flower, and to

numerous rocks, wells and barrows scattered up and down the countryside. At least one proverb concerning him is still current in America, if not in its country of origin: "To go round by Robin Hood's barn" is to go the longest way round. Most of us, if asked, could suggest a picture of his character and his appearance.

But what do we really know about Robin Hood? Virtually nothing. We do not know when he lived, or where he was born, or the names of his parents, or the reason for his outlawry. We cannot be sure that he ever lived. No record of his life has come down to us, nor any documentary proof of his existence. There are only the popular ballads and the folk-plays, a few sparse references in mediæval chronicles and poems, and the fact that he has been a popular hero for at least five hundred years.

Scholars have argued about him for generations without much result beyond the expression of personal opinions. He is variously said to have flourished in Richard I's reign or that of Edward II; to have been a simple yeoman or a dispossessed earl, and to have been outlawed for debt or for rebellion against the king. Marvellous and impossible deeds are freely ascribed to him, and even his more credible exploits have been so heavily embroidered that immediate doubt is thrown upon their truth.

He is also said to be an elf, a fairy, or a metamorphosed god. W. H. Stevenson calls the entire saga "a mediæval myth sprung from the mists of Teutonic Paganism." H. Bradley thinks it "part of the great Aryan sun-myth," and so great a scholar as S. O. Addy considers that Robin, Scarlett, Little John and

Much are simply embodiments of Woden, Loki, Honir and Thor. The close association of the story with the May-games certainly gives it a pagan flavour, and it has been suggested that the whole legend sprang originally from the rites of May Day. This is not in fact probable; but Robin's supposed marriage with Maid Marian may have been so derived. She does not appear at all in the earlier ballads, and we first hear of her as Robin's bride in *The Ship of Fools*, published in 1500. Tradition says she was Matilda Fitzwalter, who was loved by King John, and was poisoned by him because she rejected his addresses.

There is, however, no record that Robin ever married her, or any other woman. A certain Robert Hood mentioned in the Wakefield Court Rolls for 1316, whom Joseph Hunter thinks was the outlaw-hero, had a wife called Matilda, but this was certainly not King John's victim, for she was dead long before. But there was a character named Maid Marian who seems to have been part of the May-games even before Robin appeared in them; and it would be an entirely natural development for these two—both representatives in a sense of spring and of resistance to tyranny—to become man and wife in popular tradition.

Robin Hood was also connected with witches, fairies and demons. In his *Fairy Mythology* Thomas Keightley tells us that one of Robin Goodfellow's names was Robin Hood. This mischievous spirit was a fairy or demon in the Middle Ages, but he probably started life as a god—perhaps as that mysterious Horned God who is found in many parts of Europe, and whose worship is said

to have continued in the witch-cult. A tract published in 1638 shows him with horns on his head and goat's feet, dancing in the centre of a ring of witches. The figure of Robin Goodfellow here depicted is clearly a demon; and if it seems a far cry from this horned and cloven-footed devil to the jovial outlaw of Sherwood, it may be that here we have the link between the mortal forester and those high gods from whom his legend is said to have arisen.

Robin as a name is not without a sinister significance. Dame Alice Kyteler confessed in 1316 that she worshipped a spirit called Robin Artisson, by whose power she cast spells and practised sorcery. The Wincanton witches of 1664 cried "Robin!" when they wished to summon their chief, and added, "O Sathan, give me my purpose!" when he appeared. The surname Hood is sometimes said to be a contraction of Robin-with-the-hood, the outlaw being so called because elves wore hoods. It is perhaps significant that he and his followers always wore green, which from time immemorial has been the traditional colour of the fairy-folk.

Robin also resembled the ancient giants, in that he was supposed to lift immense weights and toss about boulders which no normal man could move. Robin Hood's Penistone, in Yorkshire, is a huge mass of stone weighing several tons, which local tradition asserts he kicked without difficulty from the top of Shacklesburgh. A large rock in the Cheshire Tame bears the marks of his fingers, pressed there when he hurled it from the summit of Werneth Low. Like the giants, too, he built or used prehistoric barrows. Two such near

Chard were stands on which he and Little John played quoits; two more near Robin Hood's Bay were built by him for archery practice, and on another near Tilston Fearnall he stood to shoot at Beeston Crag.

All these magical attributes, coupled with an almost total lack of documentary evidence, undoubtedly suggest a myth rather than a real man. Yet one cannot assume that Robin Hood never lived in this world simply because he is associated with witches, giants and fairies. Almost every folk-hero has been the subject of wild and impossible tales which obscure, but do not disprove, his authenticity. Wild Edric, for instance, was an undoubtedly historical character, but he is said to have had a fairy wife, and to be living still in the lead-mines of Shropshire, whence he rides out to warn his country of impending war. Sir Francis Drake, too, performed many wonders, and his drum is still said to sound when England is in danger. No one doubts that Charlemagne and Owen Glendower existed; but marvellous stories are told of them also, and even a sober merchant like Sir Richard Whittington has become the hero of a widely diffused and charming folk-tale.

Tradition is rarely a good guide, but it cannot be altogether disregarded. The odd part of the Robin Hood myth, if myth it be, is its sudden appearance at a fairly late date, and its persistent localization in certain well-defined districts. It is true that the name occurs occasionally in other parts of England. There is a Robin Hood's Butts in Dorset and a Robin Hood's Bower in Maidenhead Thicket. A cross named after him served as a Lincolnshire boundary-

mark in Leland's time, and there is a Robin Hood's Hill near Gloucester. But the great majority of the place-names occur in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire, with a few in Cumberland, Cheshire and Staffordshire; and it is to these counties that practically all the legendary incidents are normally assigned.

The wide diffusion of the folk-plays is enough to account for isolated names in other areas. Robin Hood bowers were built everywhere during the May festival, and Robin Hood plays were acted all over England, as the churchwardens' accounts show. The actors in these plays were often nicknamed after the characters they habitually portrayed, and possibly it is they, rather than the originals, who are commemorated in some cases. But if the May-games alone were responsible for the saga, we might expect a number of graves, birthplaces, dwellings and similar memorials in every part of the country. But Robin Hood has one traditional grave, and his birthplace, though claimed by three counties, is always in Yorkshire or the Midlands. Little John's grave is in Scotland as well as Derbyshire, and his name occurs in Dublin also, but almost all the other traditions are found in five or six adjoining counties. This in itself suggests the memory of a real person, for a spring deity would be found everywhere, and a woodland spirit would surely occur in more than two of the great mediæval forests.

Another theory is that there was more than one Robin Hood, and that the name was a general term for a certain type of felon. This may well be true, but it does not explain why the name was so used. No doubt

many robbers adopted a name so famous in the annals of crime. J. Stow tells us of thieves in Sussex and Surrey who were known as "Friar Tucks," and R. Fabyan mentions a thief who called himself Grenelefe as Little John once did. Robert Stafford of Lindfield was apparently nicknamed Friar Tuck also, for he is so described in the Calendar of Patent Rolls for 1429-36, and doubtless there were many others who, for one reason or another, bore names taken from Robin's celebrated company.

Nevertheless, it is possible that one individual first made the title famous. The fact that the incidents of the story are all confined to one area suggests this, and so too does the fact that the hero's exploits, even when strongly exaggerated, all bear the stamp of a single consistent character. Nor is there anything inherently improbable in the legend as it has come down to us, when once the magical details and exaggerations have been discounted.

Robin's traditional mode of life was quite possible in the Middle Ages. It is unlikely that he captained a band of 150 trained archers, but he may well have had a small band of followers. The mere presence of an outlaw in the forest would be enough to attract adventurous or dishonest men, and a very little organization would make them the terror and admiration of the neighbourhood. No one man, however well supported, could have performed all the daring feats ascribed to Robin Hood. But one spectacular rescue, or one attempt on the Sheriff of Nottingham's life, would be enough to establish his renown, and the multiplications would then arise naturally

from the gleeful exaggerations of his admirers. With good luck and local help, a bold outlaw could probably elude capture for years, and if such a man did in fact succeed in defying the law with impunity for a considerable time, he would rapidly rise to the rank of folk-hero. Thenceforth he would become the archetype of the admired thief, whose name would be adopted by later generations of robbers, and whose reputation would doubtless be swelled by the exploits of many lesser men born long after he was dead.

But if we accept him as a living person, what are we to believe about the details of his career? The story as the ballads give it is that, after he was outlawed, he collected a mixed band of young men, trained them to be the finest archers of their time, and lived a free and prosperous life in Sherwood and Barnesdale Forests. He also had a refuge at Robin Hood's Bay, and occasionally operated in Plumpton Park, Cumberland. In these districts he levied toll upon all wealthy travellers, and especially upon the clergy; and finally he died, or was murdered, at Kirklees Priory at the advanced age of eighty-seven. Being old and enfeebled, he came to this remote nunnery to be nursed by his aunt, the Prioress. She ordered that he should be bled and—whether according to tradition, by deliberate malice, or, as seems more probable, through the leech's ignorance—the blood was allowed to flow too long, with the result that he died. In his last moments he staggered to the window and shot two arrows through it, saying he must be buried where they fell. The first was carried away by the River Calder; the second fell in the park.



On the spot where it lighted, he was laid to rest, and there his grave is still shown, together with the window in Kirklees Priory Farm through which he shot his last bolt.

The traditional year of his death is 1247, but there is no certainty about any of his alleged dates. The *Sloane MS.* says he was born in 1160 "at Lockesley in Yorkshyre, or after others in Nottinghamshire."

J. M. Gutch, however, gives his birth-date as 1225; Joseph Hunter says he was born near Wakefield between 1285 and 1295, and was outlawed after taking part in the Earl of Lancaster's rising in 1322. The place, like the year, is uncertain, for there is no trace of any village called Lockesley in either county. There is a Loxley in Staffordshire where, according to a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1820, a certain Robert Fitzooth was born. This man's father became involved in Robert de Ferrers' rebellion in 1173 and lost his lands in consequence. His son being thus impoverished, fell into debt and was outlawed, and thereafter he adopted the name Robin Hood and took to the woods as a robber.

Tradition, however, places the hero firmly in Nottinghamshire or Yorkshire, and it is possible that the mystery of the non-existent village is explained by an entry in John Harrison's *MS. Survey* of 1637. He tells us that Great Haggar's Croft in Yorkshire "is environed with Loxley firth," and that near it is "Little Haggar's Croft, wherein is the foundation of a house or cottage where Robin Hood was born."

Loxley here is clearly the name of a natural feature, not a village, and it may be that this entry establishes

Yorkshire's claim, notwithstanding the ballad which speaks so confidently of "Locksley town in merry Nottinghamshire."

Perhaps the earlier dates are the more probable, for it is evident that Robin was well-known to everyone by the middle of the fourteenth century. Since he was never the leader of any widespread cause, it is likely that his renown was at first only local, and some time would be needed for it to spread over the whole country. Yet J. Fordun mentions both him and Little John as early as 1341. In *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, written between 1355 and 1365, a drunken priest boasts that he "can rhyme of Robin Hood and Randolph, Earl of Chester." He obviously expects his hearers to be familiar with both names, and this suggests that songs and tales concerning them had been current for some time. None of the ballads that he presumably knew has come down to us to-day. The earliest we have is the *Lytell Geste*, which Wynkyn de Worde printed about 1489, but there is no doubt that others once existed, and were probably based upon traditions still older.

In 1432 Robin's name was familiar enough for someone to state in Parliament that a certain Piers Venables had taken to woodland robbery with a band of followers "like as it had been Robert Hood and his meynie." By the mid-fifteenth century he was firmly entrenched as the principal character of the May-games, and had displaced the traditional May King. Plays depicting incidents of his career were regularly acted on May Day or at the Whitsun Ales, and they were so popular that serious riots broke out in Scotland

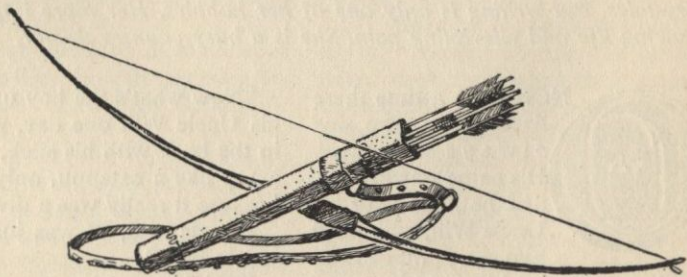
when their performance was forbidden in 1555.

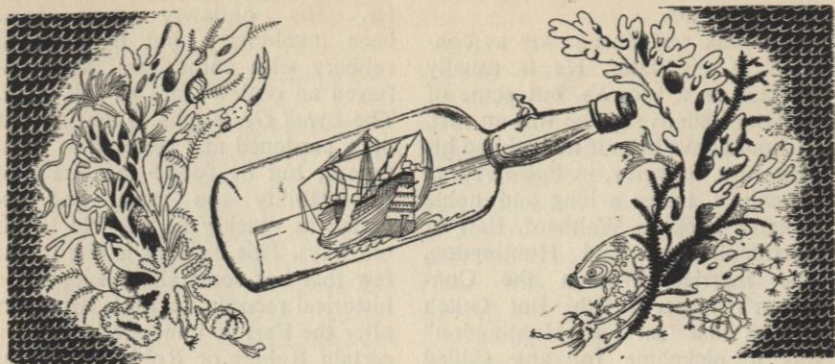
His rank and lineage are as confused as his dates. He is usually described as a yeoman, but some of the later ballads says he was an earl, or should have been if he had had his rights. Dr. Stukeley, in *Paleographia Britannica*, traces a long and noble pedigree back to Waltheof, Earl of Northumberland and Huntingdon, who married William the Conqueror's niece, Judith. But Gutch tells us that "an Earl Huntingdon" was a nickname for any skilled huntsman. Probably Robin was in fact a yeoman, as the earlier ballads say, and was simply raised to the peerage by popular affection, as some other heroes have been unofficially raised to the rank of saint.

That this cheery and successful outlaw should be the darling of the people is not surprising, for he stood for everything the poor lacked or dared not attempt themselves. He represented freedom, adventure and a life unspoiled by toil; he not only defied the law and despoiled the rich, but did it with impunity. Unlike most of our traditional heroes, he

was not a particularly noble character. His outlawry may have been involuntary, but he took to robbery with enthusiasm, and preferred an outlaw's life to any other. The *Lytell Geste* tells us that he was once pardoned and restored to royal favour, but he found the strain of respectability too great, and reverted as quickly as possible to his old ways. This incident is one of the few that has some slight support in historical records. In 1324, two years after the Earl of Lancaster's rising, a certain Robert or Robin Hood was Groom of the Chamber to Edward II. He remained at Court for eight months, and was then discharged as being no longer able to work. This is not quite so romantic as a voluntary return to the forest, but the recorded facts suggest at least a slight foundation for the incident in the ballad, and also the possibility that Hunter is right when he identified the outlaw with the Robert Hood of Wakefield Court Rolls.

Perhaps one day some hitherto undiscovered record will come to light and set Robin Hood firmly in the ranks of real men.





SHIPSHAPE SHILLING

LILIANE CLOPET

Illustrations by Pauline Diana Baynes

Here is something new—a detective tale for children; and here is a new kind of detective—a fairy. Children like fairy-tales, tales of adventure, tales of “cops and robbers,” tales about children. Why not provide for all these juvenile tastes in fiction with a tale in which a child solves a mystery and enjoys an adventure in company with an immortal imp? Miss Clopet has brought us a delightful fairy story, and in “Shipshape Shilling” has created a detective who interests, not simply by his supernatural attributes, but by his odd, amusing personality. Miss Clopet is already the author of a book of fairy-tales. But writing is only one of her hobbies. Her more important job is saving life and alleviating pain. She is a busy country doctor.



ONCE upon a time there lived a boy who was a l w a y s in trouble. His name was Pringle, and he lived with his Uncle Will, who liked him very much and didn't say so, and his Aunt Roberta, who didn't seem to like him one little bit and often said so. He was lonely and unhappy, and thought he would like to run away from home.

“Now what's the boy up to?” said his Uncle Will one day, poking him in the back with his stick, which had a top like a catapult, only narrower, because it really was a divining-rod.

Pringle said, “I was just thinking, Uncle Will.”

“Thinking about your Aunt Roberta, eh? You try thinking of something quite different and you'll feel quite different.” And he prodded Pringle quite hard in the back.

"What shall I think about, Uncle Will?"

"Oh dear," said his Uncle Will; "what a boy for questions it is! Think about what's become of your aunt's brooch, because she's tearing the house to pieces looking for it, and if she doesn't find it, just to put her mind at rest, she'll blame you as usual!"

And sure enough a sharp voice could be heard calling, "Pringle! Pringle! Now where's that good-for-nothing boy?"

"That's your Aunt Roberta," said Uncle Will. "She sounds as mad as a wet hen. She's a woman who knows her own mind, too, and she's set on finding her brooch."

"I've not seen her brooch," said Pringle.

"You've seen it at Christmas and again at Easter and every Sunday afternoon the same as we all did. Dear me, she's getting madder. You'd better run along before she sees you. And think out how to get back her brooch. And if you find it, I'll—why—I'll give you the loan of my divining-rod for a whole week!" And Uncle Will clapped his hands as if Pringle were a goose that he was shooing away.

Pringle ran as far as he could and as fast. And as he ran he tried to think about his Aunt Roberta's brooch.

Now he lived in a very small village indeed. In fact, it was nothing more than a single street, with his own home at one end of a row of ten houses and the grocer's shop at the other end. And just beyond the grocer's, as if it marked the edge of the world, was a patch of grass, and then the great cliff fell sheer down to the sea. But if you lay flat on the

edge of the cliff and looked down, you could see far below a row of fishermen's cottages. There were ten of these too, each backing on to the cliff, and beside each cottage was a huge water-butt painted blue like the sea, and beside each butt, smoking his pipe and watching for the return of the herring-boats, was an old sailor-man.

Of course, Pringle couldn't see all the sailor-men as he looked over the edge of the cliff, with the sheep cropping the grass and coming closer and closer to where he lay. He could see only one old man looking a much darker blue than either the sea or the painted water-butt against which he leaned, and looking quite like it in shape.

"He'd tell me how to think and think," Pringle said to himself, "because he's been leaning there and thinking and thinking for years. But how can I reach him ever?"

By now the sheep were close to him, and as Pringle jumped to his feet to look about him, they all rushed away, bumping against each other and slithering on their little hard hooves as they hurried off down the cliff.

"If they can go down the cliff, so can I," thought Pringle. So he followed them, and when they came to a place where the sheep-track forked in two directions, and they chose the fork that led up the cliff again, he took the one that wound down it. And in no time at all, because he rolled down the last steep bit, he found himself beside the blue barrel against which the old fisherman was now leaning and smoking his pipe, and watching Pringle as he tumbled helter-skelter and head-over-heels right to his feet.

"There's an easier way down than that," he said, "but maybe not a quicker. Why the hurry, son?"

Pringle said, "I could see you from the top there," and he pointed up towards the little green patch beyond the grocer's shop, "and I thought you could help me."

"That's easy enough," said the old fisherman.

"Is it easy, really, to find Aunt Roberta's brooch?"

Pringle's eyes were as round as marbles at his new friend's answer.

"Nothing easier. We'll step inside and put it to Mr. Shilling—Shipshape Shilling is his full name."

"Who's Mr. Shilling?" Pringle asked as they stepped from the bright light outside into the interesting darkness of the end cottage. "Another sailor-man?"

"He's a sailor too, but a different sort of one, as you'll see." And he blew on a small whistle that hung from his watch-chain.

"Can't hear low notes," said the old fisherman. "That's why he can't always hear me when I call him. But that whistle now, it's special: he'd hear it if he were at the other end of the world or up in the moon."

Pringle laughed and said, "He couldn't be up in the moon."

"Young fellow——" The old sailor-man paused.

"Pringle's the name."

"And mine's Thomas; shake!" He held out his hand and Pringle shook hands with him. "Make no mistake, young fellow, Mr. Shilling *could* be in the moon if he felt like it, but he wouldn't feel like it, ever, and why? Because if he got there he'd crack in the cold, and that would be the end of *him*. He's made of glass, see—green glass. That's what I meant

when I said he was a different sort of sailor-man from the usual."

Pringle was so astonished that he couldn't say a word.

"See that bottle?" Pringle looked round and saw on a table a bottle with a full-rigged ship inside it. "That's a ship inside there, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Pringle.

"And inside a ship, what would you expect to find but the crew? You don't think, Pringle, that's what's wrong with you!"

"No," said Pringle, even more astonished still.

"Not that you'll ever see them. For they've gone: lost at sea, all except Shipshape Shilling."

"Oh," said Pringle, "was he the captain?"

Thomas put a horny finger against the side of his nose and winked. "He *says* he was."

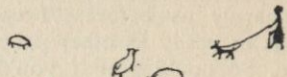
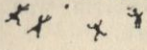
"I've never seen a green-glass man in all my life," said Pringle.

"Well, you'll have to look pretty close to see one now. And why? Because being *glass* he's the kind of chap you're apt to look *through*. And being *green* he don't show up against the grass; or if he's out swimming, which he often is, he don't look any different from the water he's swimming in. The green seems to lose itself in the blue."

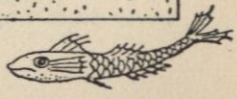
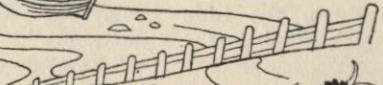
At that moment someone said, "Well, Thomas, you called me. What do you want now?" The voice was nearly as sharp as Aunt Roberta's.

Pringle looked round and then down, and so he saw Shipshape Shilling for the first time.

Thomas said, "It's this boy who wants you, Mr. Shilling. He came rushing down from the village at the top, there. Couldn't get here fast enough. And why? Because his aunt's



MIND THE COWS



lost a brooch, and he wants you to find it."

Shipshape Shilling looked hard at Pringle, and Pringle didn't find it easy not to stare just as hard back.

"I didn't really mean to trouble *you*," Pringle said.

"It's no trouble," Mr. Shilling said as sharply as before. "I can find things as easily as other people lose them. So could you if you'd think more than you do. Tell you what, we'll go and look at your aunt."

He strode to the door and Pringle hurried after him, and they began climbing up the cliff, but not by the way Pringle had come down it.

The green-glass man said, "Look here, I can't climb all the way up there. It's much too far. I'll get on your shoulder and you can carry me."

Pringle thought to himself, "I'd much rather *he* carried *me*. And why does he want to *look* at Aunt Roberta?"

Shipshape Shilling said, "You're not made of glass, but I can see all you're thinking. If I were to carry you, we'd never get anywhere, because you're so heavy. But if you carry me, we'll be at the top in no time at all. And why? Because I'm so light you'll move as if you had wings."

And indeed it was so, for in a minute they were at the top of the cliff and walking down the little street towards Pringle's home at the far end of it.

"And I want to look at your aunt to see if she's the kind of lady to lose a brooch or have it stolen from her."

"Nobody'd steal anything from Aunt Roberta. I'm sure they'd be much too frightened of her. And she never loses anything. She's always

saying, 'A place for everything and everything in its place.' And it's true."

"Ah," said Shipshape Shilling, clapping his hand to his head and making a tinkling sound as he did so. "Now you've given me a clue, a wonderful clue!"

Aunt Roberta was weeding her front garden.

Pringle and Shipshape Shilling leaned over the wall to watch her. Mr. Shilling was so much smaller than Pringle that he had to stand on tiptoe on the top of a box before he could rest his chin on the wall too.

"D'you know what she's thinking?" he said. "She's thinking that *you* should be pulling up the weeds. And she's thinking at the same time that you should be cleaning the windows. You'd be surprised at all the things she thinks you should be doing at this very minute." He stuck his chin on the wall again to watch Aunt Roberta.

"Oh dear, she'll hear you!" Pringle whispered.

"No, she won't. She's too busy thinking to hear anyone. Now she's thinking of her brooch."

"How d'you know?" said Pringle, astonished.

"I know everything that people think."

"I bet you don't know what her brooch looks like," Pringle said.

"It's all diamonds," said Mr. Shilling, his eyes glittering, "real diamonds."

"How do you know?" Pringle asked, his own eyes as round as marbles.

"Because she can't think of anything else, far less hear anything or even see anything. Those things she's pulling out, they aren't weeds. They're wallflowers, and your aunt's

as mad on her flowers as a chicken is on chickweed. So what's she thinking of? Her brooch! And why? Because it's diamonds. She's never seen the like of it in all her life. And neither has the Row. And now it's gone!"

"I don't suppose you'd know where it is?" Pringle said, greatly impressed.

"I know where it isn't. It's not buried in that garden."

"Of course not. Why should it be?" Pringle asked with a laugh.

"Because it might have dropped off when she was gardening. Brooches can come undone, and then there's nothing for them to do but fall down."

"Perhaps it did fall and—and someone saw it and picked it up and ran away with it."

Mr. Shilling said, "If you'd think you'd know your aunt wouldn't go gardening with a real diamond brooch in her dress. She'd use a safety-pin, as she's doing now."

Pringle could see the large safety-pin in her gardening apron.

"Where else isn't it?" he asked.

"It's not lost."

"But you know it is," said Pringle. "I told you so."

"It's not *lost*. Your aunt's too tidy to lose anything. She's even tidying her wallflowers into one pile and the daisies into another. My word, won't she be mad when she finds what she's been pulling out!"

"Do you really think someone's stolen it because it's all real diamonds?"

Shipshape Shilling didn't answer. He said, "Let's walk round the house." So they walked round it.

"That's your aunt's room," Mr. Shilling said, pointing with a long

glass finger at one of the windows, "and that's yours."

"Oh yes," said Pringle; "and that's the parlour. There's a stuffed white owl in it."

"I know that," said Mr. Shilling. "That's of no importance. And it's not kind to stuff owls. You wouldn't like anyone to stuff you."

"But I didn't stuff it. Neither did Uncle Will. He was given it long ago. So the owl would be dead, anyway, by now."

"You talk too much," said Mr. Shilling.

Pringle didn't want to offend him, so he said, "How did you know which was Aunt Roberta's room and which was mine?"

"The wind mostly comes in from the sea. That would worry your aunt, blowing things about. So she'd choose a room to leeward. That leaves nowhere for you to sleep except the other room."

"Maybe I sleep downstairs, I know a boy who does."

"Your aunt wouldn't let you do that and you know it. You'd always be in and out of the pantry taking things."

Now this wasn't true. Or, rather, Pringle didn't think it was, though he knew that his aunt thought so.

"Perhaps you'd like to go inside now. You needn't look at the stuffed owl."

"I needn't go anywhere, thank you. I know all I want to."

Shipshape Shilling lay down and clasped his hands behind his head and looked up at the sky. He was lying on a narrow grass strip. It was very green, and always bitten short by the little teeth of sheep or by the great salt gusts of wind that rushed in from the sea and tore at it. And as



he lay there, so neatly dressed, so shipshape, he was most difficult to see, because he was much the same green as the grass. So Pringle took care never to take his eyes off him.

"What else do you know?" Pringle said, beginning to think that his companion had fallen asleep with his eyes open, and wanting to waken him.

"Well, there's only one door into your house, and your aunt keeps her eye on that, so no thief could ever get out *that way*."

"He could if he came when Aunt Roberta wasn't there."

"Then she'd have said so. And she hasn't. And it wasn't a 'he.'"

"But she wouldn't have known if she wasn't there."

"Oh yes, she would," said Mr. Shilling, sitting up with an angry jerk. "She'd know the moment she looked down at that nice sanded step of hers. There'd be footprints. You don't *think*, Pringle."

Pringle changed the subject of conversation.

"What do you mean when you say it wasn't a 'he'? Was it a lady?"

"I never knew of ladies who could fly like mosquitoes," said Mr. Shilling.

"I didn't say a lady who could fly like a mosquito."

"She'd have to, wouldn't she?" said Mr. Shilling sharply, "or she'd leave her footprints too. And if she didn't walk, then there's no other way into your house except by flying."

"If the thief was a ghost," said Pringle, "it could get through the walls."

"And how would a ghost pick up a heavy thing like a brooch? Have you never seen a ghost's hands?"

"No," said Pringle.

"All ghosts have butter fingers. And even if they could pick up things like that, how do you think they'd get them out of the house again? A ghost can pass through a wall, but a brooch can't."

"Oh!" said Pringle.

Shipsshape Shilling said: "That leaves the window, doesn't it? It's the only way in. I suppose even you can see that?"

Pringle looked up at the window. It was open. "Wouldn't Aunt Roberta notice if anyone tried to get in that way?" He was really laughing at the idea, though he kept his face as solemn as if it had been his aunt to whom he was talking.

"Everybody would see it," said Mr. Shilling; "so as nobody's mentioned it, it didn't happen. You're not a very clever boy, are you, Pringle?"

"I've never been a detective before," said Pringle.

"I'm always detecting," said Mr. Shilling. "I find it easy, because I think so clearly. It's my being made of glass, I suppose, that makes everything so clear."

"Well, you don't seem to have found out much about Aunt Roberta's brooch," said Pringle.

"Oh, but I have!" Mr. Shilling said. "I've found out everything: how it was stolen, where it is at this very minute, how to get it back again. How *you're* to get it back again. First of all, about the time. I'm sure you'd like to know exactly *when* it was stolen."

"Oh yes," said Pringle.

"It was between eight o'clock, Greenwich time, and half-past nine this morning. Place? You'd like to know *where* it was when it was stolen. It was lying on a plain white cover on the table on the right-hand side of

your aunt's bed. And *how* did it go, eh?"

Shipsshape Shilling turned his sharp green eyes on Pringle, and Pringle thought at once that he was going to accuse *him* of having stolen it.

"It went through the window," said Mr. Shilling.

"Did it?" said Pringle, amazed.

"It did."

"How did you know?" Pringle said.

"Because there was no other way for it to go. At that time in the morning, there you all were, you and your Aunt Roberta and your Uncle Will and the cat, sitting in the kitchen eating your breakfasts. I can tell you what it was you were eating. It was porridge."

"How do you know that the cat was there, or that we've got a cat?"

"There's catmint in the garden, isn't there? And who could that be for, eh? It's hardly likely that your aunt would want to draw other people's cats to rampage among her flowers. I'd say he was a great big Tom cat, and that he came between your aunt and her wits. So where would it be at breakfast but at the kitchen table with you all, waiting for titbits and a saucer of cream?"

"Oh," said Pringle, "I see."

"The stairs run from the bedroom down into the kitchen, so *that's* no way for a thief to want to take out of the house. The only other way out, then, is by the window. And that's the only way *in*. So that's how it went. Aren't you going to ask me how I *know* exactly how it was taken away? And how I *know* exactly where it was?"

"If you really think you're right, I'd like very much to know," said Pringle, who thought Mr. Shilling the most conceited man he had ever met.

Mr. Shilling nodded twice, a trick he had when he was pleased.

"Your aunt wouldn't wear a valuable brooch like that except on a Sunday."

"She wears it at Christmas and on her birthday," Pringle said.

"But it isn't Christmas or Easter or her birthday, or she'd have it on at this minute and she'd not be wearing an apron. Please don't interrupt if you've nothing useful to say. Today's Monday. So your aunt wouldn't be wearing her brooch again for a whole week. Seven days: that's a long time, so she wouldn't want to put it away in cotton-wool, in its cardboard box amongst her handkerchiefs the second she took it off."

He looked hard at Pringle, but Pringle wouldn't ask him how he knew that. He was sure it was something he should be able to think out for himself.

"She'd leave it out till the last possible moment," Mr. Shilling went on. "And when's that? When she goes upstairs on Monday morning to make the beds. And when's that? After all the work's done downstairs."

"How do you know all that?" said Pringle, astonished.

"You aunt's a clean, neat lady and fond of a garden. And why? Because it's fresh and wholesome. And she'd want her house to be every bit as fresh as her garden, so she'd have her windows open and the bed airing as long as possible. And 'possible' is nine-thirty a.m. After that she's got shopping to do and dinner to cook and the garden and sewing and cakes. She'd never get it all done if she didn't do the beds by nine-thirty, would she?"

"No," said Pringle.

"When she takes off her brooch on a Sunday night, where would she put it but on the table beside her bed, so that she could see it there, under her nose, shining like a star until she falls asleep? And she'd find it there still shining like a star when she opened her eyes next morning. I know that there's a table, because she's got to have somewhere to put her clock. And that's got to be an alarm clock in case she sleeps in, and she wouldn't let that go off, I can tell you, any more than you would, bouncing her out of her nice sleep. So she's got to be able to reach it the second she puts out her hand. So the table's got to be beside her bed. That brooch would be the last thing she'd look at as she left the room in the morning."

"Aunt Roberta goes down at six, not at eight," said Pringle.

"She does, but your Uncle Will doesn't. He'd be in the way. He comes down at the last minute, when he's called, and that's eight sharp. And then the room's empty, with the curtains blowing and the diamonds all glitter-glitter and the window wide open. And who should go passing that window, this morning, all eyes for the glitter-glitter brooch and plans in his head to pop in and steal it? Eh?"

"I've never seen anybody tall enough to look in at anybody's upstairs window," Pringle said. "He'd have to be a giant."

"All eyes and greed," continued Mr. Shilling, as if Pringle hadn't interrupted him. "Look," he pointed, "what's that?"

Pringle looked. All he could see was Mrs. Doblin's Jackdaw.

"That's Mrs. Doblin's Jack," he said.

"Then you had better ask Mrs.

Doblin to give you back your aunt's brooch."

"Mrs. Doblin couldn't look into Aunt Roberta's room even if she stood on tiptoe."

"She'll give you back your aunt's brooch, all the same, if she's honest."

"Do you mean that *she* came in by the window and stole it?" His eyes were round with surprise.

"That jackdaw of hers did. If you ever thought, you'd know that. Who but a bird could get in through a window and not be seen? And of all the birds, who but the jackdaw goes stealing things? And what does *he* fancy? He fancies most, let me tell you"—and he prodded Pringle as hard as his Uncle Will did—"sparkling things like diamonds. Well, there's only one jackdaw in the place—I know, because I've been watching—and you say he belongs to Mrs. Doblin. So if Mrs. Doblin will let you climb up her roof, you'll see when you look down her chimney—and don't ask which one, for no bird, not even a goose, would have a nest in a

chimney with a fire underneath it—you'll see your Aunt Roberta's brooch and a lot more things that people have lost and blamed other people for. Good-bye. Thomas will want his dinner now."

Shipshape Shilling jumped to his feet and strolled off to the edge of the cliff, and almost at once Pringle lost sight of him, perhaps because in that light he was transparent.

But what he had said was true.

In a nest in Mrs. Doblin's chimney were buttons and marbles and a new penny and a red pencil and a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles and the diamond brooch.

"Where did you find that?" said his Aunt Roberta.

Pringle told her every word, just as it happened.

"Who hides, finds," she said, jabbing the brooch into her dress.

A large black cat was walking towards her.

"It's a wonder you didn't say Tom found it for you," she said, and picked up the cat and went indoors.





But, Mummy, there *is* something under the bed!

CLORINDA HER DIARY

*Exclusive fashion designs
and illustrations*

by

MAURICE BROWNFOOT



Be pleased to meet Clorinda—the well-dressed woman detective. There is an ill-founded superstition abroad that a well-dressed Englishwoman is almost a paradox. Of course this isn't true, but Clorinda is fortunate in having Maurice Brownfoot, the dress designer, amongst her London friends. As Brownfoot saw that she knew how to wear good clothes he was delighted to try out the latest Paris and London fashion trends by designing dresses and hats especially for her. Who is Clorinda? Her identity for the present must remain disguised by the mask of her eighteenth-century first name. Her adventures, as displayed in these opening pages of her diary, suggest that she has courage, resource and feminine intuition. We hope that her detective powers will intrigue everyone, and we believe that her fashionable clothes will interest the women, as her personality will charm the men. There is one endearing point about her diary. Like the diary of the young lady in "The Importance of Being Earnest," it is full of intimate little confidences about her feelings, and is, therefore, clearly designed for publication.

MONDAY.—
Here I am in London after a bumpy journey. I slept for the first four hours. When I woke, we were flying over the sea between Italy and Sardinia—the Tyrrhenian Sea, I remember it used to be called on my school atlas. What a long time

ago!—not in fact, but in experience. The sun was shining and the sea looked as blue as it does in summer, but not so blue to my eyes as the Ægean. I thought, "I wouldn't mind falling into it if I could give my name to a bit of it, like Icarus: the Clorindan Sea." Not bad, but rather egoistical.

When I woke, a pleasant voice behind me said, "Hullo!" I turned to

find that it was that nice young man Bill Molloy. I remembered Ames telling me he would be on the same 'plane. We shared a box of candies and talked about Athens and going home. He confided to me that when he was in Athens the word "London" brought tears to his eyes, and when he was in London the same thing happened over Athens. "Two loves have I of comfort and despair," he bawled at me, to the astonishment of our fellow-travellers. We got on extremely well, and when we parted at the airport we arranged to meet again some time and go to the flicks.

All I have done so far is to have a bath and consider my wardrobe, which will be ready for me. I have become so used to wearing uniform that I have forgotten the power of clothes to change one's personality. I've almost forgotten how to stand and how to walk as a human being and not a W.A.A.F. officer. But it will come back. I felt it coming over me again, as the scent of Aunt Barbara's blue bathsalts curled round me just now. Wouldn't it be funny if the chameleon didn't change colour because of some inner emotion, but if he *first* changed colour, like a cinema organ, and *then* felt differently?

I am getting light-headed and must stop. It's lovely to be here—and what a bed!

London is being kind so far. The air is quite mild and there is watery sunshine. It's good to look out over this very dull respectable square and realize that just around the corner, as the song says, is—what? As I write that, everything suddenly turns bitter, because J. isn't here. Still, he wouldn't want me to wear mourning for him. I'm one of the people who got a last letter

after the bad news. I thought, as I opened it, "I've heard about this, from women who lost men in World War I—but I never thought of it as real, as something that would happen to *me*." It was a hasty note scribbled in pencil just before they took off. It was one of those "Don't-worry-I'll-be-back" kind of letters that he had never written before. There was a postscript: "I'll take great care not to bomb Candia—it might smash those big jars you're so keen on," and then another postscript crossed out—but I could read it: "If by any chance I don't get back from this one, for God's sake don't make a mess of things." I know what he meant.

But that wasn't what I meant to write about. I want to put down, before I forget, something about my surprising interview with Ames.

Ames has always been a good friend of mine in a distant impersonal sort of way. I met him first at Oxford, through J., who admired him excessively. At least, I thought it must be excessive, though J. wasn't given to hero-worship; but I suppose it was my own excessive partizanship that spoke. Ames was five years older than J., and already a Wing-Commander when he came up for that Eights Week, and I met him with all my prejudices thick upon me. For one thing, I had gathered from J. that Ames was a woman-hater, or rather—much worse—a woman-despiser, though J. never said so. It wasn't true. I expect Ames had had every reason to form a similar prejudice against me: praise of somebody else always has that effect on the small-minded. But Ames wasn't prejudiced or small-minded. He looked me over as he would have looked over a car or a 'plane, and decided I would do. I

looked him over and decided he was all right. Since then we have been friends, as J. wished, if you can call such an emotion-free relationship friendship.

Ames was then a tall, fair-haired, very thin young man with a yellowish complexion, not unhealthy, but permanently changed as if by residence in a hot climate; and in fact I believe he was born in China. His speech was laconic and incisive, his brain as quick as lightning, though he never bothered to prove this. I say "young," because actually he was then only twenty-five; but Ames has never looked young. He will never look old either. I noticed, when I saw him in Athens two days ago, that he was even thinner and that his hair had a sprinkling of grey. But he is the sort of man who gives one a feeling of permanence. If he died to-morrow, I should feel regret, but no great sense of loss, because it would be impossible to think of him as undergoing any real change. He always reminds me of Horace's *monumentum aere perennius*, except that he doesn't suggest comparison with bronze so much as with steel, and very finely tempered steel at that. It is his soul, not his body, which has this steel-like quality. He frightens me a little sometimes.

Well, I was packing up, preparing to go home on Saturday as arranged, when an orderly delivered me a note from Air-Commodore Ernest Ames's headquarters at the British Institute of Palæology: could I come up to his office at my early convenience?

My heart turned over. I was afraid he might have found out something more about that last flight of J.'s, and coward that I am, I didn't want to hear. I'd used up all my energies fac-

ing the prospect of going back to England without him. However, I told the orderly I'd be along in half an hour, and prepared myself as best I could.

It always gives me a turn (as our Nanny used to say) to go back to that place where J. and I once spent a marvellous half-year looking at pots and working in the library. The lower house was then the hostel, and the Director had the upper house, half lost among the pepper-trees. I remember once when I was still very new and had only a few words of Greek, I lost my way and was conducted by a charming Cretan servant with moustaches like a Klepht right into the presence of the Majesty, who laughed and gave me a cup of coffee and a glass of ouzo. I thought of that when I walked into the same large bare room last Wednesday and saw Ames with his fair hair receding from his forehead and his parchment-like skin, grinning at me from behind the desk like a reincarnated mummy.

"Sit down, Clorinda," he said, cutting out the formalities. "I hear you're off home on Saturday. Will you do something for me?"

"With pleasure," I said, feeling weak at the knees with relief at his casual tone. He doodled a curious sign on the blotting-pad in front of him.

"It's nothing much," he said. "And it'll mean you can get away a couple of days sooner. All I want you to do is to take back a crate of gramophone records." He looked up quickly from his doodling and gave me one of his disconcerting smiles: "Oh, it's all right! Nothing in code hidden among them. You can play them over here first if you like, on my pick-up." He swivelled round on his chair. "They're just a few period pieces I've

come across here—folk songs from the islands for the most part. You'll like 'em." He looked lovingly—more lovingly, I feel sure, than the way he has ever looked at any human being except perhaps his mother—at the crate standing behind him on the bare floor beside the radio.

"Just take them with you," he said. "See they don't get handled too roughly. See them through the Customs. They're all second-hand, so you won't have much to pay—probably nothing at all." He swivelled back towards me, fitting his long legs with difficulty under the desk. "Then take 'em home in a taxi. Play 'em over if you like. There are a couple of enchanting things from Chios. Then take 'em along to the address I give you and sell 'em."

"Sell them?" I was much more daunted at this prospect than if he had told me they were secret messages to be guarded with my life. I hate selling things, especially for other people.

"Yes." He scribbled down an address on a slip of paper and handed it across to me. "It's a Record Exchange shop near Charing Cross Road. They're Greeks. They haven't been there long. You'll need to haggle. If they offer you less than fifty pounds, just shake your head. They'll come up to it in time. You know the way."

I did; but that didn't give me confidence. However, he smiled at me so persuasively that I couldn't refuse. I took the paper reluctantly. It said:

STAVROS RECORD EXCHANGE

Missel Street,

Charing Cross Road (corner of Cockburn Street), W.C.2.

Underneath, in Greek lettering, was

the name PAVLOS KOSTOPOULOS.

"What's this?" I said, handing it back to him. "Is this the man I'm to ask for?"

"Oh, that!" Ames sounded, even to my ears, a little too casual. "No, no, don't ask for him—at least, not directly. But I should be glad if, when you're there, you'd try to find out if anybody knows his whereabouts. You see, I sent him over a fortnight ago with a similar parcel of records, and I've heard nothing from him since. I'm wondering if he's absconded—or —"

We stared at each other very keenly indeed, and I noticed, as one does in these crucial moments, that his eyebrows and eyelashes were paler than his skin.

"I see," I said at last. "And you really think you've chosen the right person for the job—me, I mean, not Kostopoulos?"

Ames nodded. I could see he was pleased with what was virtually an acceptance on my part.

"You speak Greek like a native," was all he said, "and your hearing's pretty good, I imagine." He leaned back and stretched out his long legs under the desk, so that I had to remove my feet hastily. "How many languages do you speak, Clorinda? Legend says eight."

"Nine," I confessed with some reluctance. "But it's just a trick, you know. It so happens that I've had the opportunity—"

He didn't bother to listen.

"Write them down here," he said, passing me another slip.

I began:

"French, German, Italian, Greek —"

His low incisive voice interrupted me:

"One more thing, Clorinda. You can ask about Kostopoulos so long as you do it in a sufficiently off-hand way. But there's a name I want to put to you which you mustn't mention—and if it's mentioned in your hearing suddenly, you must look blank, or just"—he smiled—"just very classical."

I glanced up, in the middle of writing "Hungarian."

"You remember," he went on in a still lower tone, "a certain lady at Corinth who got frightfully mad with her husband and bumped off her two children to spite him?"

"Medea," I said in as low a voice as his. I didn't know why, but he had infected me with the need for secrecy.

"Yes. You know how it's written in Greek, of course. You probably also know how she's represented on vase-paintings. Well, keep your eyes and ears open. Any information you gather on that head, however apparently irrelevant, make a note of it in your mind and let me have it."

"How?"

"Oh, I'll find means to get into touch with you. But we've got to have a sign ourselves. Can you think of one?"

"How about the Greek Koppa?" I said, drawing it on the paper and passing it to him. "Like a Q with a straight tail: Ϟ."

"Right. But in case there's any mistake, let's add something. How about CREDE Ϟ, like Byron's motto? If anyone says 'Crede Koppa' in your ear, you'll know you can trust him completely. We won't even write it down, in case it falls into the hands of the enemy." Slowly and carefully he tore up the strip of paper and set fire to it in his ash-tray.

"Medea?" I said softly. "Koppa's

a Corinthian letter, you know. It was on their coinage with the colt."

"Perhaps. Well, run off now and finish your packing. The 'plane will leave to-morrow. By the way, you'll have company. Bill Molloy will be on it too." He stood up and held out his hand. "Good luck, Clorinda—and many thanks."

His grip hurt, but it cheered and warmed me. I'm still wondering what it's all about. But I must go down now and be sociable, or Aunt Barbara will be getting impatient. And I'm hungry. I smell bacon.

Tuesday midnight.—What a day! I must begin from the beginning. As soon as I'd finished breakfast, Barbara came down, very early for her—I'd forgotten she always breakfasts in bed—and said:

"Stand up, child, and let me look at you."

I stood up dutifully, feeling rather awkward in my pre-war suit, much too short in the skirt and altogether wrong somehow. Of course, it felt a thousand times worse under Barbara's eyes. Not that she's ever anything but kind; but she's also very firm, especially about clothes.

"Well, now, darling," she said, "we must get a taxi *at once* to Joanna's, and get you all the lovely things Brownfoot so kindly designed for you. Joanna has had them ready for weeks. Wasn't it lucky all the measuring and fitting was finished on your last leave?"

Barbara smiled at me with the most engaging sweetness. I always forget she's my aunt, even by marriage, she looks so young as a rule. I don't know her age, but I believe Uncle Guy married her when she was about my age, so she must be over



fifty; but I wouldn't give her a day over forty. Not that I'm a good judge of age. Am I a good judge of anything? I don't know. But Ames must think I have some powers of observation, or he wouldn't have asked me to act for him—and he certainly *is* a good judge of character. He has to be, with his job.

Well, we went to Joanna's, and Barbara conducted operations in masterly style, while I watched myself change successively from a Young Lady Out Walking, a Young Lady at a Dance, and so on and so on, to a Young Lady Going to Bed. Yes, she even bought me some silk nightdresses! I left wearing a smart walking suit, and my old suit was ignominiously wrapped up in brown paper to be sent after us, though I think they all thought its proper place was in the incinerator. I must admit a new confidence swept over me. . . . Barbara waved aside all talk of cost. I did enjoy it.

We lunched together at her club, and rushed off to get the hats Brownfoot had planned for me.

Then I set off in some trepidation to Charing Cross Road.

I asked the taxi-man to drop me outside Foyle's, and there for a while I wandered about, picking up books but not really taking them in; I was merely collecting myself for what I felt to be a rather important commission. As I stood turning over the biographies, I heard a cheerful voice behind me:

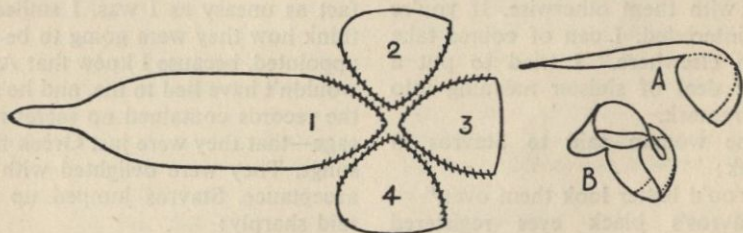
"Hullo, what are you doing here?"

It was Bill Molloy.

"Have you time for a cup of tea?" he said.

I explained that I had some shopping to do. I would have liked to ask him to come with me to the gramophone shop—I'm sure he can haggle better than I—but I wasn't sure if Ames would want him to know about this; so I promised to rejoin him later, and set off.

Stavros Exchange was a dark narrow shop with the walls lined with records. The girl at the counter, dark and pretty, withdrew, when she heard my business, into an inner room, and closed the door. Then the



Make this attractive "Clorinda" hat—in corduroy velvet or other suitable material. Take the measurements from the crown of one of your old felt hats. Cut out two pieces No. 1 and one piece each of Nos. 2, 3 and 4. Sew the two No. 1 pieces together, then sew the other pieces to it as indicated by the crossed lines, making a jockey cap with an extra long peak as in Fig. A. Turn back the peak and fasten with a large brooch or ornament at the side as in Fig. B.

proprietor came out. He was a short, fat, little man, with olive complexion and black moustache and restless black eyes.

"Ah yes," he said with a strong accent, "come this way, please."

I followed him into the inner room, where a stout dark woman sat at a typewriter, and a long, lean young man with crimped dark hair sat on the table smoking a Cyprus cigarette. They all eyed me with what I thought was a slightly insolent air.

"Now what can I do for you?" said Mr. Stavros, if that's his name.

"I've just returned from Athens," I said. "I've brought some records. I wondered if you'd care to buy them. They're rare specimens." I groped in my bag and produced a list, which I'd had the sense to draw up the evening before.

Stavros looked the list over contemptuously, and made a face.

"Nothing of any great value here," he said.

"Oh Lord," I thought; "now I've got to haggle!" Most unconvincingly I protested: "They *are* valuable. I want a good price for them. I won't part with them otherwise. If you're not interested, I can of course take them elsewhere." I tried to put a great deal of sinister meaning into this remark.

The woman said to Stavros in Greek:

"You'd better look them over."

Stavros's black eyes registered agreement, I don't know how. To say they snapped would give a wrong impression, they were so black and juicy-looking; but I noticed a change, a shifting, a new concentration.

"Have you brought them with you?" he said.

"No. But I'll get them if you'd like to see them."

Another quick exchange between the fat woman and Stavros.

"If you please," he said to me. "Or shall I send for them? If you'll give me your address——"

The young man with the crimped hair half-slid off the table in readiness, but I said firmly:

"No, thank you. I'll fetch them. What time do you close?"

"Oh," said Stavros with a brilliant smile—what teeth they have! It must be the olives—"we are here till six. After that, you have to knock at the side door, if you please. Unless you will come round to our little place in Wren Street. We can give you a cup of Turkish coffee and listen to the records in peace. We should be honoured." He gave a fat little bow and sat down.

It sounded dubious; but something prompted me to accept.

"All right," I said. "Perhaps that would be better. There are about thirty records, and it will take some time if you want to hear them all."

I could see from the glances exchanged that they did. They were in fact as uneasy as I was. I smiled to think how they were going to be disappointed, because I knew that Ames wouldn't have lied to me, and he said the records contained no secret message—that they were just Greek folk-songs. They were delighted with my acceptance. Stavros jumped up and said sharply:

"Despoina, give the young lady our address."

Despoina typed rapidly and passed the slip across to Stavros.

"Kostas will stand at the end of Wren Street and look out for you," said Stavros, waving the slip towards

the crimped young man, and then handing it to me with another bow. "It is a little difficult to find."

The name Kostas gave me a sharp jab, reminding me of the second part of my mission. I walked towards the door, my ridiculous heart beating furiously. At the door I turned with studied nonchalance and said:

"A friend of mine in Athens has asked me to enquire whether you've seen anything of Mr. Kostopoulos. He was supposed to bring you some records a fortnight ago, but nothing has been heard of him since."

The trio were silent, and their arrested postures told me that the name had significance for them.

"Kostopoulos?" said Stavros, recovering, and rubbing his nose with a short fat finger. "The name's common. We have several clients of that name on our books. Despoina, do you remember such a gentleman?"

Despoina stooped down and drew out a ledger from under her table. She opened it and ran a finger down the page.

"Kostopoulos," she said. "Let me see. An elderly gentleman?"

"I don't know," I said. "I've never seen him. But I rather gathered he was young. It was his fiancée who asked me to enquire, as a matter of fact. As she hasn't heard from him she's getting worried." I smiled inwardly to think of my transformation of Ames into Kostopoulos's fiancée.

She slammed the book.

"No," she said firmly. "He hasn't been here so far as we know."

Stavros beamed and threw out his hands: "Sorry!"

"It's of no consequence," I said, like Mr. Toots, and vanished round the door.

It was just on four o'clock when I

rejoined Bill Molloy, still patiently waiting in Foyle's. He was about halfway through Glenway Wescott's *Household in Athens*.

"What a book!" he said to me as I came up. "It knocks all these Bloomsbury rabbits into a cocked hat. Well, I suppose I'd better buy it."

"Let me give it you for a Christmas present," I said.

"No—I'll give it to you. It's not pleasant reading, but"—he dived into his pocket—"it does let one know what one's up against."

I glanced at him sharply. But he said no more. We went off to tea, this time to my club in Audley Square, where there's peace.

"Well, did you do good shopping?" said Bill. There was no one else in the large drawing-room, and I had an impulse to try him out.

"Actually," I said, "I wasn't buying things. I was trying to sell something. Records, in fact."

Bill nodded. "Did you succeed?"

"I don't know yet. I'm going along this evening to run through them. I didn't take them with me."

"Where?"

I handed him the address.

"I suppose," I said tentatively, "you wouldn't care to be somewhere in the offing around six."

"You needn't have asked," said Bill, leaning forward. I thought he was going to kiss me, but to my relief he whispered in my ear: "*Crede Koppa*."

"Oh, thank God!" I said, nearly kissing *him* in my relief. "Listen, Bill; what *is* this about Kostopoulos? Why do I have to look for him? And what have the Stavros's to do with it? Are they holding him or something? If so, why?"

Bill glanced round, but there were



no club members lurking behind our settee.

"Clorinda," he said, "you're up to your neck in something and you don't know it. I told Ames he ought to tell you beforehand and let you choose, but he wanted to give you a trial run first. He's grooming you for a sort of international detective—breaker-up of neo-Fascist spy-rings and so on. If you succeed in this assignment you'll be given others. That'll be your reward."

"Good heavens!" I said. "Why me?"

"Because you're a woman. Because you're good-looking in a nice English way and not flamboyant. Because, although you're very acute and perceptive, you're also completely straightforward. Because you know your way around. Because you speak fluently about twenty European languages—"

"Nine," I said.

"Because—forgive me, my dear, but Ames is an Intelligence chief and it's his business to use us for his purposes—because having lost what mattered most to you, you don't much care where you go or what you do in a good cause."

"I see," I said slowly. "And Kostopoulos?"

"Kostopoulos is dead," said Bill. He pulled out an *Evening Standard* and pointed to a small paragraph:

"Found drowned. The police are anxious to establish the identity of a young foreigner found floating in

the river in the early hours of this morning, below Battersea Bridge. Dark-complexioned and sallow, aged about twenty-five, he was wearing a striped grey suit, blue shirt and brown shoes. There were no marks of identity, but in his jacket pocket was found a copy of the *Medea* of Euripides in Greek. Any person having information please ring Whitehall 1212."

"Medea!" I said, scarcely audibly. But Bill heard.

"Exactly!" he said. "That's their sign-manual. They're a daring lot."

"Dear me!" I said. "And is there to be another little incident in Wren Street this evening, do you suppose?"

Bill shook his head. "They won't touch *you*. You're a British subject, and it would cause too much of a stink. Kostopoulos, poor fellow, was a traitor in their eyes, because he was working for Ames. The record-shop is their news centre and information bureau. They only want to pump you—about Ames, how much he knows about them; about any further envoys, and so forth. *You* want to pump them about Kostopoulos and above all about Medea. She's the head of the whole works."

"Do you think Despoina is Medea?" I said.

"Never!" said Bill. "Medea won't show herself. The Stavros's are cat's-paws, like you and me. No, Medea is big stuff, *crede Poppa*. She's a woman with a fearful grudge against life, for some reason nobody knows. Perhaps she's a hell-hath-no-fury lass: they usually are. Or else she's got a crush on some potential dictator, like Frau Siegfried Wagner and Hitler. Such women will eat their children as well as murder them if necessary. I'm col-

Clorinda's Suit.

Tailored in fine grey gaberdine. Belted jacket with blouse back, square shoulder yoke, snug-fitting front offset by stand-away patch pockets. Pencil-slim skirt. Front view of suit on page 106.

lecting material for her biography. She has quite a lot of crimes on her hands."

"Do you know anything about her?"

"Nothing whatever, except that she's one of the sort that like to sign their works of art. It's a well-known form of vanity among criminals—big ones, that is. Little ones don't dare. This time she's used the whole blessed book for her signature. I wonder if she bought it at Foyle's?"

I jumped up. "That's an idea! It's only a faint clue, but Foyle's is so near the gramophone shop, they might have got it there. Let's go and find out. Someone might remember."

"Wait a minute," said Bill coolly. "I'm not lazy—but you surely realize that the whole of Charing Cross Road is devoted to books, new and second-hand. And there's the rest of London."

"Well, but we must try everything," I said. "You could start one end and I the other. Better still: could we find out from Scotland Yard exactly what the book looked like—the edition and binding? There might even be one of those little labels inside, giving the booksellers' name."

Bill got up: "I'll go and 'phone."

In a few minutes he came back, his eyes shining with excitement.

"I got through all right," he said. "I was put through almost at once to a Chief Clerk or something. He read me out the full description." Bill consulted a piece of paper:

"Book in left-hand inner pocket of jacket, 6½ inches by 4½, much stained with water. Cover greenish-brown. Title THE MEDEA OF EURIPIDES, EDITED BY CLINTON E. S. HEADLAM, M.A., FORMERLY FELLOW

OF TRINITY HALL, CAMBRIDGE. Published by the Cambridge University Press, 1904. Pencil-marked in places. Prices marked in pencil on inner leaf, one and six (two and six crossed out). Owner's name: G. Summers, Clare."

He stopped: "Does that tell you anything?"

"Certainly it does," I said. "In the first place, the book was second-hand. G. Summers, of Clare College, was the undergraduate who bought it for half a crown and sold it probably for sixpence. It was then resold for one and six. Secondly, it's one of the Pitt Press Series. I know that greenish-brown cover well. We used that edition in school, and we didn't like it because it had no vocabulary in the back. Anything else?"

Bill read on: "Page 33 cut across the bottom right-hand corner. Small label on inner front board, bottom right-hand corner: O. P. Richards, Bookseller, Charing Cross Road."

"Come on!" I said. "We must go there at once. Did you gather if they suspected foul play?"

"He didn't say so. All he said was they were anxious to identify the body. He asked me to go round. But I said I'd never seen Kostopoulos, so I couldn't identify him. Could you?"

I shuddered. "No, and if I could, I don't think I would. I'd rather do something easy first. Let's rush round to O. P. Richards in case he closes."

We rushed.

O. P. Richards was one of the smallest, grubbiest little second-hand bookshops, and the old man in charge seemed to be nearly blind. But his memory wasn't lacking. He said he hadn't sold any copies of the *Medea*, but there had been a couple

of copies of it in the bookcase outside the shop until a week ago. Then they were missing. He hadn't noticed the gap until he had brought the cases inside at closing-time; but he associated the theft with a suspicious-looking character he had seen for a moment fingering the books that morning—a foreigner, he thought, but he was not sure he could identify the man because his own sight was so bad, and so many foreigners stopped there to look at the books. He had not done anything about it, because naturally he never put anything valuable in the outside bookcase and preferred to lose a book or two rather than have the police snooping round.

Obviously he hadn't yet seen the evening paper. I didn't enlighten him. I thought he might queer our pitch. I was anxious to get back to the Stavros's before their fears were aroused.

"Let's walk past the shop," I said to Bill. "They ought to be there still: it's only twenty to six."

A fine drizzle was falling, and the street was gleaming wet. We sauntered past; and I was not altogether surprised to see that the shop was shut and the notice CLOSED was hanging on the door. We knocked on the side door. No one came.

"There's nothing for it but for me to try Wren Street," I said. "But I must have the records with me this time."

As we dashed home in the taxi, Bill said:

"Who stole the book? Kostopoulos, do you suppose?"

"No," I said. "One of Medea's employés, obviously. But he made a mistake to steal it from a nearby shop—and he really ought to have removed the bookseller's label. That

was very careless. If I were Medea, I'd give him the sack."

"Pooh," said Bill. "He wouldn't know about booksellers' labels."

"Then she shouldn't employ him," I said.

We reached the house.

I had the greatest difficulty in escaping from Barbara.

"Oh, darling!" she said, when I met her in the hall and said I was going out again at once; "must you? I've asked some people in to meet you. You promised you'd dine here."

"So I will," I said bravely, though I had the gravest doubts if I'd be dining anywhere.

She looked through the open door. The street lamp showed Bill sitting in the back of the taxi.

"Who's the young man, darling?" she said rather archly. "Do I know him?"

I told her.

"Well, bring him in for a drink when you get back."

I said I'd try; but I had no intention of doing so. Barbara is too inquisitive by half, and somehow I don't think Bill would like her. She's a perfect dear, of course, but she does rather terrify young men of Bill's age and kind.

Luckily she then went off to dress, and I was able to get Morris to carry the records down without any further conversation. Bill put the crate between us. We didn't talk much on the way there. I dropped Bill in Leicester Square, and it gave me confidence to see his stocky purposeful figure pushing his way through the crowds towards Long Acre.

"Wren Street," I said to the driver.

"Wren Street?"

"Yes, Wren Street," I repeated irritably. It would be my fate to get

hold of the one taxi-driver in London who didn't know the way. It was news to me that even one existed. But when I saw the narrow entrance, I wasn't so surprised. He put me down outside Number Ten with my small crate.

It didn't look like a habitable dwelling. It looked like a fruiterer's warehouse. The door was tightly shut and the windows were boarded. There were no lights to be seen inside, and the lane was lit by one lamp on the corner. Round about were leaves of Savoy cabbages trampled into the greasy slime on the cobbled road and the pavement. I wished I had asked the man to wait. I wondered how soon Bill would be within call. He wouldn't show himself with me, of course. Hoping he was just round the corner, and summoning up all my courage, I hammered on the door. No reply. Not a head visible anywhere. The street was deserted. I knocked again and again. My knocking echoed hollowly inside.

I was uncertain what to do. I wanted to get into touch with Bill, yet I was afraid to leave the crate unguarded. While I stood there wondering, playing my torch on the door, a scrap of white paper caught my eye on the slate doorstep. I picked it up and brushed off the mud with my handkerchief.

It was a triangular scrap with Greek lettering on both sides. Only two lines had been preserved intact on either side at the bottom. One pair read:

“. . . δοκῶ γὰρ δυσμενῆς εἶναι
δόμοις, ἡμεῖς μὲν ἐκ γῆς τῆσδ' ἀπαροθμεν
φρυγῆ . . .”

Just above was the figure 930 in the margin. I turned the paper

over. On the reverse side I saw in Greek capitals in the margin MH.

I didn't wait to read more. They were the first two letters of the Greek word MEDEA!

I looked round wildly. Bill's head appeared round the corner of a nearby doorway.

“They've gone!” I said. “But look here! I think I've found the missing scrap cut off from the page of the book in Kostopoulos's pocket!”

We could do nothing till the morning. I took a taxi back home with my crate, and so arrived in time for Barbara's party after all. She was delighted. It was quite a good little party too, especially as I was able to wear my new cocktail suit from Joanna's.

Now I am sitting up in bed with the triangle of paper before me. Tomorrow I hope to get hold of a copy of the Pitt Press *Medea* and make sure that it's the missing piece of page 33. But I feel sure it is. What significance has it? Was it dropped there accidentally or deliberately? Certainly it was deliberately cut out, not torn. Is it meant to be a message, and if so, from whom to whom? The meaning of the words seems apposite—the bottom two, for instance:

“Since I seem unpopular with the authorities, I shall take flight and leave this country.”

On the other side, one of the mutilated lines reads:

κείνης ὁ δαίμων

(“The luck is on *her* side”). That has a very mocking ring.

Well, I must try to sleep now. My brain won't work any more.

Wednesday.—Completely baffled!

I escaped from Barbara this morn-

ing by looking rather arch myself, so that she assumed I was meeting my new friend. I took a taxi straight to Cockburn Street, and was astonished to find the shop open! The pretty dark girl was at the counter, and Stavros himself was bustling about in the window rearranging cards and goods. He looked up, saw me, and made violent gestures inviting me to enter.

I went in, this time with no sense of fear. He laid his fat little hand on my arm, which I didn't like much, and steered me into the back room. There was Despoina sitting at her typewriter. Everything, in short, was the same, except that Kostas with the crimped hair was no longer draped over the edge of the table, and still more remarkable, there was a complete change in the appearance of the Stavros's themselves.

Despoina stood up as I approached, and Stavros went to her and put his arm round her. They looked like Tweedledum and Tweedledee standing there side by side with the most ridiculous and yet pathetically woe-begone expressions in place of yesterday's bounce. I looked from one to the other and said:

"What's the matter?"

"My dear young lady," said Stavros, "my wife and I are desolated! You think we fooled you last evening—that we were most impolite. But we have had terrible trouble. The young man you saw here yesterday, Kostas Kizanis: he has vanished, taking everything he could carry!"

"Good heavens!" I said. They both looked so yellow and so long-faced and dark under the eyes that I felt extremely sorry for them. "Can't you get on his track? Have you informed the police?"

They both nodded eagerly. Stavros replied:

"Yes, yes, we have informed the police. They have been here this morning, and also round to Wren Street. But there are no clues—no finger-prints, nothing. He was an accomplished thief. He came with a van and ransacked the shop here after we left last night. We left rather early, you see, in order to make our little preparations for your visit. Before he left, he 'phoned us from the shop to say you had rung up saying you would prefer to meet us here. So of course we came round at once. This was shortly before six. But no one came. We waited here for a while. We did not then notice anything wrong—we were so worried because we had missed you. We thought Kostas must have made a mistake, or perhaps we had misunderstood him. At about seven o'clock we hurried back to Wren Street. But it was too late! All our money had gone, and many valuable records!" He squeezed his fat hands together. "Please excuse us, but we are ruined!"

I excused them, and after more lamentations on their part and attempts at consolation on mine, I left them, promising to return with my records later.

What has happened? Is Kostas Kizanis responsible for Kostopoulos's death? Has he taken fright and left the country? Or has he himself gone the same way as Kostopoulos?

I don't know. And there's not much I can do further about it at present.

Thursday.—Last night I was thinking, "I wonder what's happened to Kostas?" and making up schemes in my head, disguises and so

forth: could I, for instance, put on a navy blue suit, white blouse, black stockings and flat hat, and patrol Wren Street looking like a policewoman? But I haven't the right-shaped legs (Queen Anne), I'm afraid. And supposing a real policewoman or man came along? I should get run in as an impostor, and my new career would be nipped in the bud. Besides, I can't expose Barbara to the ignominy of having to come and identify me, and myself to the idiotic necessity of explaining. No, I must think of something better than that. But what? To-night I am so stupid! Shades of Dupin, Lecoq, Sherlock, inspire me!

Two things, however, I have done. First, I have played through all the records entrusted to me by Ames. They are, as he said, quite without significance so far as I can see. There was one, a Bridal Song from Chios, that brought tears to my eyes. The words are:

*"You are leaving, dear Maiden,
you're going far from us,
And the world will be leaving us
soon.*

*Yes, the world will be leaving, and
half of the sunshine,
And gone from us
all of the moon."*

And then there was the splendid Kleptic Song of Iotis:

*"Come, let us go and live where the
wolves have their lair.
On the plains sit slaves who work
for the invader.
On the mountains dwell the sons of
the free with sword in hand."*

That wouldn't please a neo-Fascist! But it's so well known in Greece that

I can't think it would have any special meaning. To-morrow morning I shall take them round to the Stavros' shop and try my luck again.

The other thing I did was to make a careful study of that triangle cut from Headlam's *Medea*. At first I thought of going out and trying to buy a Pitt Press edition for comparison; but I didn't want to be seen in the Charing Cross Road, especially on such an errand, and the thought of combing the other bookshops bored me. So I took out the scrap from my wallet and tried to see what I could make of it as it stood. It is, after all, the only clue I have, and a most valuable one. Sooner or later, I suppose, I shall have to turn it over to the police; but not yet.

It looks like this:

λόγους,
ὦ μνησθήσομαι.
μ' ἀποστείλαι δοκεῖ,
τὶ λῶστα, γινώσκω καλῶς,
μποδῶν σοὶ μήτε κοιράνοις χθονὸς
ναίειν, δοκῶ γὰρ δυσμενῆς εἶναι δόμοις,
ἡμεῖς μὲν ἐκ γῆς τῆσδ' ἀπαροῦμεν φυγῆ,

This is obviously the right-hand page. If one turns it over, one gets:

εἶ
γυνή, προ
μή μοι σύ· περὶ
χρυσὸς δὲ κρείσσων
κείνης ὁ δαίμων, κεῖνα νῦν
νέα τυραννεῖ· τῶν δ' ἐμῶν παίδων
φυγῆς ἂν ἀλλαξαίμεθ', οὐ' χρυσοῦ μόνον.
ἀλλ', ὧ τέκν', εἰσελθόντε πλουσίους δόμους,

I have pored for a long time over this piece of paper.

The first question is, why was it cut out of the book? There are, it

seems to me, two possible answers: the person who cut it out either wanted to retain it as a piece of evidence against the people who threw Kostopoulos into the river, or else he wanted to plant it on someone. It is of course completely damning. Whoever had it in his possession would be bound to be accused, if it were found on him. I look and look, and a cold thrill shoots through me as I realize that *I* am the person in that uncomfortable position. I have locked my door.

The second question is, was it by chance that they cut out that particular piece, or was it deliberate? Again a cold shudder goes through me as I read the mutilated lines. I wish I could remember how the whole passage goes. I can't though, and I'm sure there's no copy of *Medea* in this house. However, probably it doesn't matter. There was no need to cut it diagonally if they wanted the whole. Let me see how it goes as it stands—somehow like this (I try the side with the number on it first):

. conversation.
. I will recall.
. It has been decided to
 send me away.
. for the best, I well realize,
. a nuisance to you and to the rulers;
since I seem to be unpopular with the
 authorities
I shall take flight and leave this
 country.

Now I try the other side. It's part of the same scene in the play, an argument between *Medea* and *Jason*. She says:

"Don't argue with me.
Gold is more powerful . . .
Fortune is on her side, her cause . . .

She is young and a princess; for my
children . . .

I would give my life, not merely gold.
Come, children, go to the wealthy
abode . . ."

Well, that, I think, makes it quite clear: it's the first side that's apposite. The second doesn't apply, except for the extraordinary fluke that the words "Fortune is on her side" happen to occur in it. It has been cut off by someone who knows that a decision has been taken to get rid of him—to send him back home, perhaps, for inefficiency. Anyway, here is someone with a fear and a grievance. Further, he knows that if he possesses this bit of paper and goes to the police with it, he can inform against the murderers. He can, in short, turn *King's Evidence*. He can say, "I was forced to look on and see this thing done; but I managed to cut out this piece of paper that joins up with a page in the book found in the dead man's pocket."

But suppose the man who cut the page is suspected. Suppose . . .

I can bear this no longer. I must do something. But what—what?

Incidentally, how odd it is that I haven't heard a single word from *Bill Molloy*? Why hasn't he rung up? He didn't actually say he would, but somehow I assumed it when we parted. If he had been going away to see his people, surely he would have told me so. I haven't seen him even to tell him how mistaken I was about the *Stavros's*. It's not that I'm not perfectly prepared to carry on with this business by myself; but it was useful to have someone I could trust to talk to about it. Someone I could trust? . . . *Ames* did say I could trust anyone who whispered

Crede Koppa in my ear. I can't have made some awful blunder, can I, at the very outset?

The remembrance of Bill's honest face and round green eyes makes me feel ashamed of such a thought. But isn't it my business to suspect everybody?

A plan of action begins to form slowly in my mind as I look at the little crate standing in the corner of my room. Yes—yes, I think that's what I'll do.

Saturday Night.—At last, at last I am alone! I write like a Mrs. Henry Wood heroine—but I have every right to. I have had an experience which would have made that good soul boggle, except that she would never have envisaged such things happening to a well-brought-up young lady.

The doctor has been for the second time, and says that though I am suffering from shock there is nothing else wrong with me—nothing that a day in bed won't cure. So here I am with some luminal tablets to hand and a bottle of yellow fizzy stuff which I believe contains glucose and which seems to me at the moment more delicious than Sparkling Muscatel. Tomorrow no doubt I shall loathe it, but to-day—I am suffering from shock.

Barbara has at last gone away to her bridge, and I have got out of bed, locked the door and unlocked my case. My diary is safe, thank heaven. My wrists are a bit sore, but my hands are quite all right, and I shall need them, or one of them, to get down to the story of yesterday and the astonishing result of my Plan. I wonder if I dreamt it? No, there are various bruises and scratches—alas,

for my poor nylons so recently acquired!—to prove the contrary. But why be surprised? Life is as dull as you make it, or as melodramatic. I've known that for a long time.

The first part of my plan was simple. Yesterday afternoon, at half-past three when it was already getting dusk, I got Morris to ring up for a taxi, and I set off once again with my crate of records to the Stavros's. Luckily Barbara was again out playing bridge. *Pons asinorum* she calls it with a tinkling laugh, but she wouldn't miss it for anything.

The girl at the counter was there, looking rather pale and tired and as if she'd had a gruelling day. She asked me if I'd mind waiting for a minute, and I sat down and waited for twenty. At last the door of the inner office opened, and a man—a plain-clothes officer, I guessed, and rightly—came out looking very efficient, unlike me, and went off in a car. The girl announced my presence.

The Stavros pair didn't come out to meet me this time, and I think they would probably have put me off, but I followed their minion so closely that they had to ask me to come in, and even to summon up a ghost of a welcome. They both looked awful. But I was determined to do my act, so I ignored their obvious desire to see me in Hades, and said with my brightest smile:

"I'm so sorry not to have brought the records before, but I thought you mightn't have been open until to-day."

Stavros began to excuse himself.

"We were hoping to close early this evening," he said ingratiatingly, "so if you could leave them here and we could go through them in the morning——"

"I'm sorry," I said, still more brightly, "I'm afraid I can't do that, as I have another gentleman coming to hear them at my house this evening. But I thought it was only fair to give you the first refusal. I think I told you before, there are some very valuable pieces among them." I tried to infuse a world of new meaning into this remark. "I brought them *straight from Athens*," I said slowly and emphatically. "But of course if you're not interested——"

History repeated itself. Stavros glanced uncertainly at Despoina, and Despoina gave her nod and said in Greek:

"You'd better go through them, Markos. One can't tell."

I looked at her blankly, as if I hadn't understood a word, and added:

"I think you may find it *worth your while*."

To my delight I saw the flicker of understanding in her black eyes. I pressed home my meaning.

"I have one or two other things to do now. I suggest you play through *all* the records right away, and I'll return in a couple of hours, say just before six. Will that do? That should give you plenty of time to go through them *all*." I rose. "By the way, I'm not selling them for myself, but for somebody in Athens who was anxious you should go *right through* them and take your choice. He said he would guarantee you wouldn't find the time wasted."

At that they could scarcely get rid of me quickly enough. Stavros hurried me to the door, saying:

"Of course, of course! We shall be delighted! Nothing is too much trouble for us if it is to oblige a customer." His native habit of haggling,

even then, would not be denied. "Not that I think there's anything very valuable there—but we'll see, we'll see." His animation had returned as he followed me through the shop bowing and smiling. In the doorway I turned.

"Is there any news of Kostas and the stolen property?"

"Eh?" He looked taken aback for a moment, as if I had reminded him of a disagreeable incident by now almost forgotten. "Oh, no, no news! The fellow has got away, I fear. In London it is easy. The police are still troubling us with their questions—but"—he shrugged and showed me his brilliant teeth—"they won't find him. He will lie low, and then he will leave the country. Meanwhile——"

"Meanwhile, you are ruined," I reminded him in my gentlest tones. He gave me a quick look, but my Anglo-Saxon face expressed, I trust, nothing but candour.

"Well"—he smiled and shrugged again—"perhaps it is not as bad as we thought. Kostas was not a very good judge of records. Very few people are."

"I'm sure *you're* one of them," I said, giving him a meaning look, and added skittishly: "Till six o'clock then." As I stepped into the street we waved each other a merry farewell.

I would have given much to hear what he said to Despoina when he got back to her. But I had no time to spare for idle conjecture. So long as they were deceived into spending the next two hours going through those records and looking for a non-existent message, that was all I cared about. Now I had to get to Wren Street.

There were no taxis available, so I ran all the way. Luckily it wasn't far.

It took me about eight minutes, I imagine. Soon I found myself out of the range of lights, out of the traffic and the crowds, rounding corners, hurrying along the narrow cobbled lane. I slowed down as I reached the door where I had picked up the tell-tale triangle of paper. The lane was dark and empty as ever; and this time I had not the comforting knowledge that Bill Molloy was pushing his way along Cranbourne Street towards me. But I was so absorbed in my problem that I had no time to feel nervous.

The problem was how to get inside Number Ten. It was now half-past four. I had, therefore, at the very outside an hour and a half. In my coat pocket I had one short stout screw-driver taken from Aunt Barbara's toolbox. I had borrowed it from Morris on the ground that I wanted to open my crate with it.

I looked up and down the lane. Nobody was visible. Above the doorway of Number Twelve next door was a sign announcing that This Valuable Freehold Property was For Sale. The valuable property appeared to consist of a tumbledown warehouse that had once been a shop; but if there had ever been glass in the window it had long since gone and had been replaced by boards. This was my one hope. I had noticed the boards last time, though hardly consciously, and it had seemed to me that they were old and possibly rotten. One of them had a hole in it where there had once been a knot in the wood. I played my torch through it and applied my eye. Nothing to be seen on the other side except damp walls and a rotting floor. If only I could get in. . . .

Cautiously I applied my screw-driver to the join between the boards.

The plank bent—cracked a little—yielded at the bottom. In a moment I had squeezed through. Thank heaven I am still thin and can make myself thinner on demand (there is seldom a demand—but that's by the way). I replaced the board, pulling it into position after me—and behold, the first stage of my career as a housebreaker was accomplished!

A high squeak coming from a corner made me jump a foot into the air—well, anyway, made me jump. I snapped on my torch again, full into the bright green eyes of a mother cat who was feeding her four kittens on a heap of straw. I apologized, put out my torch, and groped my way to the door, which I had seen hanging drunkenly off its hinges. I was in the passage, climbing gingerly up the plaster-strewn stairs. "Bomb damage," I thought, and hope began to sink inside me. "There *must* be a way through somewhere—I feel it in my bones!"

I mounted the second flight of stairs. They were steep and narrow, and in places the boards creaked ominously under my tread, though I tried to make myself as light as a fairy. The building was three stories high from the ground, and there was a basement too: I had noticed the iron grid over it as I had entered. In fact, I had been standing on the grid when I had prised open the plank across the window.

At last I was at the top, but no nearer, apparently, to getting through to Number Ten next door. I stopped and listened. There was no sound, except the faint singing of a water-tank above my head. I played my torch on the ceiling: there was the manhole with a short iron ladder leading up to it. I mounted, and pushed the wooden

trapdoor up with my hands. A shower of dust and plaster descended, nearly blinding me and making me want to sneeze.

I was by now rather distressed about the damage to my new smart black coat, but it couldn't be helped. I hoisted myself up and through, and found myself standing on a decidedly rickety flooring among the tanks and the pipes. I lowered the lid gently and looked round.

I was in the space directly under the roof. There was no room to stand upright until one reached the centre; and the foothold was precarious. The large beams running from end to end looked solid enough, but the spaces between them were nothing but lath and plaster, in places broken through and hanging down. If I lost my balance walking along a beam and put my foot on the laths, down I would go. I remembered my practice on the balance-forms at school, said a silent prayer to the soul of my dear old gym-master, and started out.

I reached the big water-tank in the centre, from which the smaller ones appeared to be fed on each side. There was no doubt about it: the same water-system supplied both buildings. I suppose the two houses had originally been one. Anyway, the tank-room ran right across both; and if I stepped along the next beam I should undoubtedly find myself directly above Number Ten.

Again I set out along a beam and arrived safely at the smaller tank. I looked down; and to my joy, between the two cross-beams I saw a large gaping hole in the lath and plaster, and beside it the second manhole, the one belonging to Number Ten. I crossed to it, lifted the lid, and feeling with my toe, found the iron rung of

the ladder. Gently, using my head, I allowed the lid to descend; and here I was at last in the Stavros home.

I stood there feeling rather silly. It was all very well to have arrived; but what was I to do now? It wouldn't be so easy to get out again. Well, there was no choice but to go on down the stairs. I started off, with every nerve on edge, down a staircase similar to the one next door, but without the débris. I reached the landing of the second story, and could hear no sound. I did not venture yet to try the doors that I passed, when they were shut. One or two were open, and I could see a few pieces of wood lying about, as if from broken-up boxes, but nothing more. The rooms were bare and unfurnished. These floors, at any rate, had been used only as storerooms. I went on down the stairs, which continued to be steep and narrow, until I reached the first floor.

Here I paused again. And now I heard a sound which made me go quite stiff with fright. Somebody was moving very quietly behind the closed door of the room in front of me. The sound was so faint that if I hadn't been keyed up to the highest pitch I wouldn't have noticed it; and yet it was unmistakable, a rustling as if someone were sidling along the wall, and an occasional creak of a floorboard. At the same time I was aware of the steady hum of traffic in the distance; but it seemed to throw into greater relief the tiny sounds nearby, against the background of silence in the house and outside it. I squeezed myself into a corner of the landing and waited. The door began slowly to open. . . .

I could feel it rather than see it. I dared not show a light, neither did

the inmate. Suddenly I knew I was betrayed. The overpowering desire to sneeze came over me. I fought it. I felt for the tiny handkerchief that I had bought with so much pleasure last week, and wished it were as big as a pillow-case. But the strangled sneeze rang out like a bomb explosion in the silence of the narrow, empty house, and I was undone.

A large torch was flashed in my face. A rough male voice said:

"Come out of there!"

Desperate, I flashed my small torch back, and simultaneously we both gasped each other's names:

"Bill!"

"Clorinda!"

Bill dragged me roughly but silently into the room he had just come from, and shut the door.

"God!" he said. "What are you doing here?"

"What are *you*?" I said indignantly. "Surely *I* have more right here than you! You might have let me know you meant to queer my pitch, instead of stealing a march on me!" I felt that there was something wrong with these metaphors, but my sense of injury swept aside all lesser considerations.

"I was only taking a look round," said Bill apologetically. "I'd have told you all about it later. But there's no time to argue now."

"How did you get in?" I said rather jealously.

"Up the fire-escape—through the backyards. I've been hanging about here all day waiting for the Stavros's to come back. You know they've got Kostas here?"

We were whispering rapidly. Bill explained how he had been all over the house, which was empty at present, though obviously it had been

used as a storehouse "for more than gramophone records, I'd say," he added. He had found that the only inhabited part was in the basement. This was quite luxuriously fitted up with Turkish carpets and hangings, a divan, cushions, a lot of brass-work and so on. There was a small kitchen with a well-fitted store-cupboard; he had appropriated a box of figs, and we ate them as we talked.

"And Kostas?" I said.

"Tied up. Gagged," whispered Bill. "Lying on the divan. He's not asleep, and he's terrified, poor chap. I went in and had a look at him, and he rolled his eyes at me. The girl from the shop came back here at two this afternoon and gave him something to eat. They exchanged a few words in Greek, but I wasn't able to follow. She took the gag off and put the stuff near him and sat and waited. He rolled over and ate the food off the plate like a dog, and asked her for a drink. She got him a glass of water and tilted it into his mouth. Then she quite coolly replaced the gag and went off again. He seemed too cowed to shout or struggle. His resistance is gone."

I thought. Then I said:

"Bill, I've got an idea. I'm going to interview Kostas. He might talk to me if I spoke to him in Greek. Anyway, I can try. Could you stand somewhere and give the alarm if anybody comes? I'm hoping I've managed to keep the Stavros's occupied till about six at the earliest. What's the time now?"

It was five minutes to five.

"Right!" said Bill. "I'll stand by the front door and head them off somehow. If I whistle, bolt upstairs and through the landing window on to the fire-escape. I'll push them over

and dive out of the front door. Good luck!"

As I felt my way downstairs to the basement, I became aware of a change of atmosphere. This part was lived in. There was a smell of fried food, rich and succulent. I could almost see the *dolmathis* wrapped in vine-leaves. There was also a mingled aroma of Greek tobacco and some exotic scent.

I crept on and pushed open the door. It was just as Bill had said. The basement room was like a little harem. Not a space on the walls was left uncovered with hangings; my heels sank into the thick carpet, and the heat and airlessness were such as only a Continental can stand. I played my torch around, and saw poor Kostas lying with his crimped hair, dishevelled now, pressed back against the cushions of the divan, the black gag across his mouth, his brown eyes rolling. I went towards him.

"Don't be afraid," I said in Greek. "I'm your friend."

Gingerly, disliking the feel of his greasy hair, I undid the gag and waited while he licked his dry lips like a dog.

"Water!" he croaked.

I fetched some water from the kitchen, poured a little *retzina* into it out of a bottle standing on the draining-board, and brought it back. He gulped it eagerly, raising himself up with difficulty, as his hands were tied behind his back and his ankles and knees also were tied together. After he had drunk the wine and water, his yellowish colour improved a little. He asked for a cigarette. I gave him one of my own, and lit it. Then I said in English:

"Who has done this to you?"

He shook his head.

I repeated it in Greek. He gazed at me appealingly, but still he wouldn't answer.

"Look here," I said, "I'm willing to help you to get away if you'll answer a few simple questions. The front door's open. You can walk out if I cut those ropes. What are you waiting for? Are you afraid I'll give you away to—Medea?"

The look of terror in his eyes was piteous to see.

"I'm on the *other* side," I said softly. "Now listen: did *you* help to dump Kostopoulos in the river?"

"No, no!" he cried.

"Were you there?"

"No."

I could not tell if he was speaking the truth. I proceeded:

"But you stole the book that was found on the body. And you cut the piece off the bottom of the page. Why did you choose that bit, by the way? You read Euripides, evidently, so you must have had a good education. How did you come to get mixed up with these people?"

He found his tongue. "I was at the University of Athens," he said with some pride. "I was a student of law. I was hoping to go in for politics. But—*they* got hold of me. It's difficult to get on unless they help you. They are everywhere."

"Who are 'they'?" I said.

He regarded me dumbly. I could see that nothing would induce him to say. His fear of "them" was too great. Perhaps he thought "they" had sent me to try to get him to talk. I tried another line.

"I take it 'they' are annoyed with you," I said. "Why?"

He looked round him anxiously, and wriggled a little in his bonds.

The cigarette hung from the corner of his lip and the smoke curled into his eyes. I felt sorry for him, but I could not bring myself to go any nearer.

"They said I'd made a mess of things," he muttered. "They read in the papers about the book. They made out I was trying to work against them. They won't believe me when I say I didn't mean it. They won't believe it was a mistake. Anyhow, they don't allow mistakes."

"I see. You stole the book from the stall in the Charing Cross Road, but you forgot to take the label out. Is that it?"

He nodded.

"But it wasn't a mistake when you cut the piece off the bottom of the page."

He was silent.

"Why did you do that? Was it to have a piece of evidence you could use against them if necessary?"

No reply.

"They discovered that too from the report in the papers," I said. "They decided you were a traitor to the cause, and they inveigled you round here. When you got outside, something made you suspect what was about to happen, and you threw the bit of paper away. Is that right?"

I could see that I had guessed more or less correctly. The poor wretch rolled over and lay still, and the cigarette-end fell out of his mouth on to the carpet, where it smouldered for a moment until I stamped it out. In the light of my torch he looked ghastly, and I wondered if he had fainted. I tried one more question:

"Where did they put you that night? The police came next morning. Where were you?"

"Upstairs under the roof," he mut-

tered with a groan. "I rolled about, and in the end I fell through the ceiling. But nobody heard."

"That accounts for the hole in the lath and plaster," I said. "And I thought it was war-damage! Well, Kostas, if you don't get out of here, you're in for a very nasty time, it seems. Once more, will you tell me *who* are the people you've been working for? Who murdered Kostopoulos? Above all, who is Medea?"

At this name a shudder ran through him.

"Nobody knows," he said. "And nobody ever will." There was a queer note of loyalty in his voice that mingled strangely with his terror.

"I will," I said defiantly. Already I saw this business as a struggle between myself and this unknown female Harpy. "Well, I haven't much longer," I went on, "so you'd better make up your mind quickly if you want to get away before Stavros and his wife get back."

Suddenly there was a loud whistle from above. A door banged, shaking the whole house. Then there were confused sounds of struggling: kicks and blows on the floorboards above, gasps and grunts and muffled exclamations, then the thud of a body hitting the ground. My blood ran cold. It seemed only a second later—a horrible second—when hands seized my wrists from behind and another hand smelling horribly of tobacco and garlic was clapped over my mouth. The light was snapped on.

"Good heavens, a woman!" said the thug who was holding my wrists.

Kostas, writhing violently, fell off the divan, and the other thug let go of my mouth to fall on top of him. I let out a screech that could have been heard in Piccadilly, I should

have thought, before someone stuffed a piece of cloth into my mouth. A noise on the stairs heralded the very undignified entrance of Bill, who rolled to the bottom and lay gasping like a fish. The thug who had finished with Kostas got up and gave Bill a kick in the ribs and another on the back of the head. Bill groaned and lay still.

Down the stairs followed Stavros first and then Despoina. Gone were the woebegone expressions; so too the smiles and the bows. They looked what they were: a pair of underlings, filled with greed and malice and a false sense of power.

"The English girl," said Despoina, giving me the disagreeable look that was natural to her. She was matter-of-fact and cool. Markos Stavros was excited.

"What are we to do now?" he said, squeezing his fat hands together. "She will spoil all our plans! We can't leave her here. And this one—" He gave poor Bill another kick, but Bill was no longer able to feel it.

"Take them with us," said Despoina. She took charge, naturally, with her hard common-sense. I wondered if Bill had been right in assuming that she was not Medea. But then I looked at Kostas, who was watching her with fear, certainly, but not the same fear as the mere name of Medea had evoked in him.

Despoina turned to one of the thugs:

"Where's the van?" she said.

"Round the corner."

"Bring it round, Markos."

Her husband hurried off. She turned to the two thugs:

"Carry the others upstairs. Keep the door closed till I knock. I'll keep watch." She too went off.

In a minute or two I heard the sound of the van above in the lane. The two thugs carried first Kostas, then Bill, up the narrow stairway, and then came to fetch me. It was no use struggling. If I had, they would have lifted me off my feet; but as it was, I managed to walk. I arrived in the passage at ground-level just as Despoina's three knocks sounded on the front door.

"Put Kostas in the van," she hissed, as the door opened a little, "and you go with him, Demetrios. You know what to do. We'll bring the others. Pavlos, you come with us when the van has gone. Put this one"—she too gave Bill a kick—"in the back seat on one side of you, and the girl on the other side. Come on!" She took a firm grip of my arm.

I heard the van leaving. A minute later I found myself in the back of the car, with Pavlos sitting between me and the lolling form of Bill. Stavros took the wheel and Despoina climbed in beside him. The van ahead of us turned into Long Acre.

The blinds of our car were down, but I saw the blessed lights of Piccadilly, Park Lane, Bayswater Road, Shepherd's Bush, come and go. I was beyond despair. I simply sat wondering whether this was really myself or some other person.

We were speeding away beyond London. We had turned off somewhere after leaving Western Avenue, and I was utterly lost. I wondered if Bill were dead—and how soon it would be before I followed him. The thug called Pavlos smoked cigarette after cigarette, and the smoke blew across my face. Despoina and Stavros were silent, except for once when she said:

"You cleared up everything?"

"Everything."

"Good."

Not another word passed between them until after what seemed an hour's driving through dark lanes, and then through woodland country. Despoina said:

"This is it. Throw them out here."

Stavros pulled up.

"Throw the man into the ditch," said Despoina to Pavlos. "Untie him. He can't do any harm. We want it to look like an accident. Hold the girl till the last minute. She may scream. Be ready to jump in. Markos will pull off quickly. You'll have to run."

Pavlos bundled Bill out of the car into the long grass in the shallow ditch at the roadside, and cut the ropes round his wrists and ankles. Then he pulled me out at the other side and did the same for me.

"One scream from you," said Despoina, "and——"

She made a sign. Markos had kept the engine running, and now he began to glide away. Pavlos snatched the gag away and gave me a hard push. I didn't disappoint them. I screamed like a steam-engine; but the car was already some twenty yards away, and Pavlos ran like a hare after it. I was left alone, with a dead man, or at least an unconscious one, on my hands.

Bill sat up and said coolly:

"Shut up, Clorinda. You'll need all your breath for walking. Besides, you give me a headache."

"Good lord!" I said. "Were you awake all the time?"

"Of course," he said, getting up and shaking himself. "If I hadn't shammed dead, they'd have beaten me up properly. As it is I'm as sound as a football. How are you?"

"I'm all right," I said, "except that I'm bursting with epigrams, having been gagged for the past two hours. Where are we?"

I gazed round, but the night was black.

"Don't worry," Bill was beginning, "I've got a pocket compass somewhere." He fumbled in his waistcoat pocket.

"Look!" I said.

Below us, the dark lane was suddenly aglow with a huge sheet of flame. There was a terrific explosion, then a roaring. We began to run downhill in the direction in which the two cars had gone. But there was only one now—and that one was unapproachable. I heard a shriek that will haunt me for ever; then the hideous roaring of the flames overcame everything. . . . I can't bear to remember what I saw. I turned my head away. There was nothing anyone could do about it.

We walked for nearly an hour before we regained the nearest village with a telephone box and called the police. Bill by that time was completely done in; he spent the night in the constable's house. They sent me home by car, and I reached here at three this morning.

I needn't repeat what Barbara said. I didn't particularly listen. All I cared about was that I had failed—failed to get to the source of things. The gang who killed Kostopoulos have wiped out Kostas too. What does it matter if the Stavros's are caught? What does it matter, even, that there will be a most unpleasant business of questioning and so forth for Bill and me? The real criminal has escaped, and with her the power to do whatever harm her evil mind is planning. . . . But I must get some sleep now.

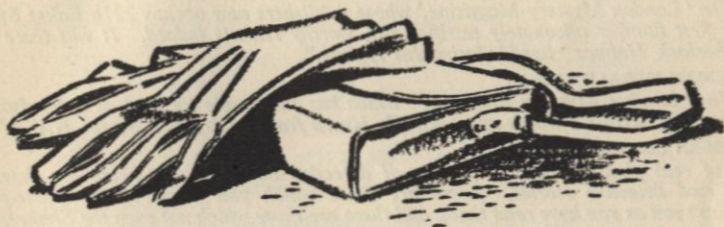
This is the end of an episode—but not the end of the story.

Sunday.—I am up again, rather shaky, but quite able to deal with the detectives. I shall tell them as little as possible. So far the Stavros's have not been caught. The car was found abandoned outside the Brompton Hospital yesterday morning. It carried an Ambulance sign in front: that was why it passed unnoticed

through the streets and why it was allowed to stand about for so long. The Stavros's have gone to earth. But the search continues.

One last point: on the ground near the burnt-out van in which Kostas died, the police found an ancient silver coin. They brought it to me to see if I recognized it. I was able to tell them that it was a silver drachma of Corinth, the city of Medea.

She has signed her work again.



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