

Murder  
in  
Four Degrees

by J. S. Fletcher

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in the  
Case Book  
of  
Ronald Camberwell.

*A list of Mr. Fletcher's mystery stories will be found  
at the end of this volume.*

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J. S. FLETCHER

# MURDER IN FOUR DEGREES

BEING ENTRY NUMBER TWO IN THE CASE-BOOK OF  
RONALD CAMBERWELL



NEW YORK

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1931

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First Edition

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**MURDER OF MR. HANNINGTON**

## I

I entered into partnership with ex-Inspector William Chaney (late Criminal Investigation Department, Scotland Yard) in November, 1920, some little time after he and I had successfully concluded our (non-official) investigation of the Wrides Park Murder. Our business, under the style of Camberwell and Chaney, was to be that of private enquiry agents. We took offices in Conduit Street, a few doors out of New Bond Street; we had two very good rooms, with a smaller one for our clerk, a sharp-witted London lad named Chippendale, who, before he entered our service, had been a sort of glorified office boy to a solicitor, and had picked up a lot of extremely useful knowledge, especially of the seamy side of the Law. Over these offices there was a small suite of rooms which I took for myself, and fitted up as a bachelor flat: I, therefore, may be said to have lived over the shop, and, like a medical man, to have been available by night as well as by day: Chaney, being a married man, lived elsewhere. But though I was always on the spot, I don't ever remember being called up before regular hours until, early in February, 1921, I was rung up on the telephone one morning at half-past six by somebody who announced himself as Mr. Watson Paley, private secretary to Lord Cheverdale, and who wanted to know if I could see him on most urgent business if he called on me at a quarter to eight? I replied that I was at his service at any moment from that in which I spoke, he answered that the time he had named would do, and that he would be there to the minute. He didn't mention his business, but I thought it best that my partner should be there to hear it, and as Chaney was on the telephone, I summoned him. He came in at half-past seven, and a quarter of an hour later I opened our door to Mr. Watson Paley.

Looking back at things, I realized that I took a curious, not easily explainable dislike to this man from the moment I set eyes on him. So—as he very soon told me—did Chaney. What sort of man did we see?—to give us these impressions? Mr. Paley was a slightly built, medium-sized man of apparently thirty to thirty-five years of age, very correctly and scrupulously attired, even at that early hour of the morning. His black morning coat and vest, his striped trousers, looked as if they had come home from Savile Row the day before; his linen was irreproachable; his neck and foot-wear exactly what they ought to have been; his silk hat and umbrella were—just so: his immaculately gloved hands were as small as his feet. A sort of bandbox



gentleman, as far as clothes and accessories went, and while everything, from the points of view of tailors, haberdashers, and bootmakers was perfection, there was something oppressive in it—yet one couldn't say what. However, I liked Mr. Paley's face less than his clothes, and his manner less than his face. He was a man of pale complexion and his eyes resembled those of a sheep; he had a sharp, rather long nose, a thin beard and moustache, of an indefinite light brown, and there was something about his lips which seemed to indicate that if he did not openly sneer at everybody, he at any rate felt himself vastly superior to the general run of people. Somehow, in some queer way, he gave me a chill.

But Mr. Paley came in the guise of possible employer or client, or as the representative of one, and I hope I was duly polite to him. He took the chair which I offered, deliberately drew off his gloves, and assumed the attitude of a tutor who is about to instruct a class of neophytes in some subject of which they know nothing.

'I told you my name over the 'phone, Mr. Camberwell,' he began, in calm, level tones. 'Mr. Watson Paley, private secretary to Lord Cheverdale. You know all about Lord Cheverdale, of course?'

'I know Lord Cheverdale by name,' I replied. 'Nothing more.'

'I know all about Lord Cheverdale,' said Chaney.

Paley turned to my partner.

'Then you know—Mr. Chaney, I presume?—that Lord Cheverdale, when he is in town, lives at Cheverdale Lodge, Regent's Park?' he said.

'I know,' answered Chaney.

'You also know, no doubt, that Lord Cheverdale is proprietor of the *Morning Sentinel*?'

'I know that, too.'

'And you are perhaps aware that the *Morning Sentinel*, since Lord Cheverdale founded it, a few years ago, has been edited by Mr. Thomas Hannington?'

'I'm aware of that, also.'

Paley drew his gloves through his fingers, looking from Chaney to me, and from me to Chaney, with a curious expression in his pale eyes.

'Well,' he said in his calm, level tones. 'Mr. Hannington was found dead in the grounds of Cheverdale Lodge, late last night. Perhaps I should say very early this morning. The exact time is not quite certain. About midnight.'

'Dead?' exclaimed Chaney.

'As a matter of fact, murdered,' replied Paley. 'I don't think there is the least doubt about that! Beaten to death by repeated blows on the head—by some blunt weapon.'

There was a moment's silence. Chaney and I looked at each other. Paley continued to draw his gloves between his fingers. Then I spoke.

‘Why have you come to us, Mr. Paley?’

He looked from one to the other of us with a slight smile in which there was more than a little of the cynical.

‘For this reason,’ he answered. ‘Lord Cheverdale is one of those men who insist on doing things, everything, after a fashion of their own. The police were called in, of course, as soon as Hannington’s dead body was found, and they have been there, at Cheverdale Lodge, ever since. Probably,’ he went on with a marked sneer, ‘you know more about the police methods than I do. Lord Cheverdale, however, while leaving everything to the police, insists on an absolutely independent investigation. He wishes you—having heard of you—to undertake this. You will be given every facility, at Cheverdale Lodge, and at the *Morning Sentinel* office. And as regards expense—well, you know, of course, that Lord Cheverdale is one of the wealthiest men in England! You are to spare no expense—literally! There is a mystery in this matter which Lord Cheverdale insists on being solved. May I go back and tell Lord Cheverdale that you will undertake the solution?’

‘You may go back and tell Lord Cheverdale that we will do our best, Mr. Paley,’ I said. ‘We will go up to Cheverdale Lodge at once: at least, as soon as we have swallowed a cup of tea. But tell me—is there any clue? do you know of anything \_\_\_\_\_’

Paley rose and slowly drew on his gloves as he turned to the door.

‘There is no clue!’ he answered. ‘No clue whatever!’

## II

We had our cup of tea and a biscuit or two with it, but we wasted little time over that necessary business, and by a quarter-past eight we were in a taxi-cab and on our way to Cheverdale Lodge. Now, I knew nothing, or next to nothing about Lord Cheverdale, or the *Morning Sentinel*, or Mr. Thomas Hannington: Chaney, apparently knew a good deal, so I suggested that he should post me up. This he proceeded to do as we sped through the waking town, still obscure in its February haze.

‘Lord Cheverdale, eh?’ said Chaney. ‘Ah, his story makes what they call a romance of the Peerage. It’s pretty well known, though. He used to be plain John Chever. I’ve heard it said that he was originally a small grocer and Italian Warehouseman at some little town in the Midlands. But whatever he was, he got a notion that there was a fortune to be made in tea. He proceeded to make it, and pretty rapidly, too. Don’t know how he did it—lucky speculations in tea shares, I reckon. Then he started a big tea business here in London—haven’t you heard of Chever’s Tea?’

‘Can’t say that I know the style or title of any particular brand of tea,’ I replied. ‘As long as it’s tea, and good tea.’

‘Oh, well, Chever’s Tea’s known the world over,’ continued Chaney. ‘Great big warehouses, offices, and all that. The old man—though he wasn’t old, then—made the fortune, right enough. Then he became a bit ambitious—as such men always do. Went into Parliament. Got a knighthood—for giving money to hospitals. Got a further lift—a baronetcy, for giving money to sanitoriums. Then the Great War came—he did big things in all sorts of ways. And by two years nice plain John Chever had been transformed into John, first Baron Cheverdale. But previous to that he’d founded the *Morning Sentinel*—to air his views before the British public. He’s a good deal of a crank and a faddist. Social purity—temperance—no betting—all that sort of business. And the man he got as editor, Hannington, who, this Paley fellow says, has been murdered, was a man after his own heart. I’ve come across him once or twice when I was at the Yard and he was a bigger faddist than his employer. Always got some bee in his bonnet—full of enthusiasm for some cause or other. Odd thing he should be found murdered in Lord Cheverdale’s grounds!’

‘And—no clue!’ I remarked.

‘So Paley says,’ replied Chaney, with a sniff. ‘But I reckon little of what Paley says! Our job will be to find a clue. There’s a thing strikes me already—before I know anything of the peculiar facts of the case.’

‘Yes?’ I asked.

‘Hannington,’ continued Chaney, ‘originally a reporter and then sub-editor on the *Milthwaite Observer* was the sort of man who made enemies. Your cranks and faddists always do. He ran full tilt against a good many things—abuses, he called them. Other people call them vested interests. He was a fanatical teetotaler for one thing. He made himself very unpopular during the later stages of the war. Then he attacked the peace settlement—the Treaty. And lately, as you may have noticed, if you read the *Morning Sentinel*——’

‘I don’t!’ I interrupted. ‘Never seen it, except on the bookstalls.’

‘Oh, well, it’s an awful puritanical rag,’ said Chaney, ‘but anyway, Hannington has of late been attacking the Bolshevik movement, tooth and nail. That’s the sort of man he was—couldn’t do anything by halves; must always go to extremes. And, of course, old Lord Cheverdale, being a man of similar views, backed him up. Shouldn’t wonder at all if this is a political murder. But here we are at Cheverdale Lodge.’

Cheverdale Lodge was approached from the Inner Circle of Regent’s Park—a big Georgian Mansion, embowered in tall trees and surrounded by extensive grounds so thickly planted with smaller trees and shrubs that the house itself could not be seen until you were close to it. It was approached by a carriage drive which wound in and out through the grounds, gardens and lawns; from this drive paths went off in various directions through the shrubberies. Chaney and I, after bidding our cabman wait for us in the Inner Circle, walked the length of the drive to the house; as we passed along I caught sight of a policeman’s helmet amongst the undergrowth on the right, and drew his attention to it.

‘Scene of the murder, no doubt,’ he remarked. ‘Got it roped off, I guess, and set a guard over it. We shall see!’

Paley met us at the door of the house, and at sight of us turned and beckoned to someone within the hall. A youthful-looking footman came forward.

‘This,’ said Paley, pointing to him as we came up, ‘is the man who found Mr. Hannington’s dead body—Harris, one of our footmen. Do you wish to question him first, or will you inspect the spot where the body was found?’

‘We’ll see the place first, Mr. Paley, and talk to Harris afterwards,’ replied Chaney. ‘Is Harris free to come with us?’

Paley turned to the footman.

‘Show Mr. Chaney and Mr. Camberwell where you found Mr. Hannington’s body, and tell them all about it,’ he said. Then he turned to us. ‘I can’t give you any time myself,’ he went on. ‘Lord Cheverdale is so much upset by this business that he

can't attend to anything this morning, and I have a great deal to do. But I am to tell you his wishes. You are to make any enquiries you like here—of anybody. But when you have done here, Lord Cheverdale wishes you to go straight to the *Morning Sentinel* office and begin exhaustive enquiries there, for he feels sure that it is there, and not here, that relevant facts will be established. Here is a stock of Lord Cheverdale's cards—on presentation of his card, anywhere at the office, you will have every facility given you. And, later in the day, if Lord Cheverdale feels equal to it, he would like to hold a consultation with you and the official police about the whole thing, as it presents itself to you and to them. I think that's all I have to say, at present.'

He dismissed us with a wave of his hand which began at us and terminated at the footman, and Harris politely bidding us to follow him, we walked away from the door, in silence—cowed, I think, by the private secretary's somewhat dictatorial manner. And we kept silence, all three, until the footman, turning out of the carriage drive along an asphalted sidepath, narrow and winding, which traversed the shrubberies, led us to where a policeman stood, idly contemplating a roped-off enclosure, some two yards square. There he paused.

'This is the place, gentlemen!' he said, pointing to within the ropes. 'He was lying just there!'

We looked, of course, and, of course, there was nothing to see but a square yard or two of asphalted surface. Chaney glanced at the policeman, who was regarding us with speculative glances.

'What's it roped off for?' he asked.

The policeman shook his helmeted head.

'Orders!' he said. 'Want to examine it for footprints, I reckon.'

'Likely to find them, aren't they, on that surface!' said Chaney, ironically. 'Might as well expect to find the footprint of a bee or a bluebottle! Well?' he went on, turning to the footman. 'You found him, eh?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Tell about it. How came you to find him?'

'It was like this, sir. It was my night out, last night. I'd been to the theatre. I walked home, sir. I came along this path——'

'Stop there,' said Chaney. 'This path, now? Where do you get into it?—I mean, from outside the grounds?'

'From the Inner Circle, sir. There's a little gate in the fence. This path, sir, is a short cut from the Inner Circle to the house.'

'Much used?'

‘Most people who come here on foot use it, sir.’

‘This Mr. Hannington, now—would he know it?’

‘Oh, yes, sir—Mr. Hannington knew it well enough.’

‘Well,’ continued Chaney, ‘go on.’

‘I came along this path,’ repeated Harris, ‘and when I got just there I saw it—the body, sir—lying in front of me. It—it was face downwards. I just touched the cheek—it was not exactly cold, but getting that way. Then—well, I ran to the house, sir, and roused them.’

‘Roused—who?’ asked Chaney.

‘Mr. Paley was the only person who was up, sir. He was reading, in the library. I told him. He told me to rouse Walker, the butler, and Smithson, the second footman. When they came down we all came back here. I didn’t know whose body it was until we came back—then I saw it was Mr. Hannington.’

‘Well, what happened then?’ asked Chaney.

‘Mr. Paley telephoned for the police, sir. They weren’t long, and when they came they took charge of everything.’

Chaney glanced at the policeman, who had been listening quietly.

‘Were you one of ’em?’ he asked.

‘No, sir—I only came on duty this morning,’ replied the policeman. ‘Nothing to be seen when I was posted here but—this!’

He pointed to the ropes and stakes, and Chaney turned once more to Harris.

‘What time was it when you found the body?’ he enquired.

‘A little after twelve o’clock, sir. Between twelve and ten minutes past, anyway.’

‘Do you know if Mr. Hannington had been visiting Lord Cheverdale?’

‘Yes, sir, I do know that. He had not. Mr. Walker, the butler, remarked on that point, sir. He said Mr. Hannington hadn’t called, but must have been on his way to the house when he was attacked.’

‘Were you present when the police came, Harris? You were, eh? Well, did you hear anything said?’

‘Yes, sir, I heard one of them—an inspector, I think—say it certainly hadn’t been done for robbery, for Mr. Hannington had his watch and chain, a valuable ring that Lord Cheverdale had given him, and a considerable sum of ready money on him, sir. But there were no papers of any sort in his pockets, and I heard Mr. Paley say to the police that that was a very suspicious thing, for Mr. Hannington always had his pockets bulging with papers.’

‘I suppose none of your people heard anything?’ asked Chaney.

‘No, sir—nobody had heard anything. This is a good way from the house.’

We turned, mechanically, to look at the house, which could just be seen through the trees. As we did so we were conscious of the approach of a lady, who came along in the company of two or three dogs. As she drew nearer, and we made room for her to pass, I took a good look at her. She was a tallish, rather angular woman of probably thirty-five to forty years of age, somewhat vacant of look, and chiefly remarkable for a high nose and very prominent teeth, not to mention a couple of staring light blue eyes. Dressed in rather mannish fashion, in a tailor-made gown of very large checks, she sported a hunting-stock, and carried a dog-whip, and looked altogether more fitted to a rural setting than to Regent's Park. As she came up she stared hard from me to the others of us, and spoke—to the policeman.

‘Anything new—anything new?’ she demanded. ‘What?—what?’

‘Nothing new, miss,’ replied the policeman.

‘Most extraordinary—most extraordinary!’ said the lady. ‘Extra-ordinary!’

She passed on, and Chaney turned towards the house. He looked at Harris.

‘Lord Cheverdale's daughter, eh?’ he said. ‘Honourable Miss Chever?’

‘That's right, sir,’ said the footman. ‘His Lordship's only child, sir.’

Chaney asked no further questions. He walked slowly back along the asphalted path until we came to the carriage drive immediately in front of the house. Then he turned to me.

‘I think we'll drive down to the *Morning Sentinel* office,’ he said. ‘There's nothing more to be looked into here—at present. Much obliged to you, Harris.’

As we turned away, a window in the house was thrown open. Paley leaned out.

‘Mr. Camberwell! Mr. Chaney!’ he called out. ‘I omitted to tell you—when you get to the *Morning Sentinel* office, ask for Miss Hetherley! Miss Hetherley—first!’

### III

We went back to our taxi-cab, awaiting us in the Inner Circle, and bade its driver go down to the *Morning Sentinel* office. As we moved off Chaney leant back in his corner with a sigh of satisfaction.

‘Miss Hetherley, eh?’ he remarked. ‘That’s all right. Good smart business woman—we shall get on with her.’

‘Who is Miss Hetherley?’ I enquired.

‘Hannington’s private secretary,’ he answered. ‘His right hand! I’ve met her more than once.’

‘You seem to know a good deal about these people, Chaney,’ I said. ‘How does that come?’

‘Well, the fact is,’ he replied, ‘my brother-in-law is a departmental manager at Chever’s Tea place, so I hear a good deal. Yes, I know a fair lot about Lord Cheverdale and his affairs—hear things, you know. Now, you saw Miss Chever—the Honourable Miss Chever, to give her her correct designation, just now. From what bit you saw of her, what should you say of her?’

‘I should say she wasn’t possessed of the brains her father is credited with,’ I answered. ‘Bit—eh?’

‘Bit wanting there—not much, but a bit,’ he said. ‘Just so. Well, the Honourable Miss Chever is about to be married—the announcement was in *The Times* and the *Morning Post*—fashionable intelligence, you know—not so long since. The man she’s going to marry is her father’s right-hand business man, Mr. Francis Craye. Craye, really, is Chever—at least, Chever’s Tea. The old gentleman leaves everything relating to the business in Craye’s hands, so my brother-in-law tells me. Been there some years, Craye—went as a departmental manager and very soon came to be absolute boss. Now he’s going to marry Lord Cheverdale’s only child—and she’ll have all the old man’s money! Lucky chap—but my brother-in-law says there’s a reason for it. I should say there is—emphatically!’

‘What reason?’ I asked.

‘Why—obvious! It isn’t everybody would marry a woman who’s a bit mentally weak, even if it is a mere bit, and especially when she’s no great shakes to look at, and is nearly, if not quite, forty. But Craye will!—and Lord Cheverdale trusts Craye to look after her and the big fortune. See?’

‘I see—marriage of arrangement?’

‘Just that! Craye, they say, is a financial genius—he’ll look after the Cheverdale millions. The lady is—the price! They say the only thing she cares about is dog-



fancying. Well—it's harmless.'

That subject dropped—we turned back to the murder.

'Any ideas, Chaney?' I asked.

'None, so far,' he said. 'I conclude that Hannington was on his way to call on Lord Cheverdale, late though it was, and that he was either followed or laid in wait for. Important to find out which. If he was laid in wait for, somebody knew he was coming. If he was followed—but it's idle to speculate at present. What we want to know first of all is—what were Hannington's movements last night? We start out, of course, from the *Morning Sentinel* office. And here we are—or nearly. Stop the man at the corner—we can walk down.'

We were then in Fleet Street, and when we had left the cab, Chaney turned down one of the side streets, and made for the new buildings which have gone up of recent years between the eastern edge of Temple Gardens and Blackfrairs. In a few moments we were confronting a commissionaire at the door of the *Morning Sentinel* office. We sent in our professional cards, accompanied by one of Lord Cheverdale's. Presently a boy came and conducted us by a lift to the first floor, where he showed us into a luxuriously furnished room, the chief feature of which was a three-quarter length of a somewhat solemn-faced gentleman who appeared to be regarding the world with stern disapproval. Chaney jerked a thumb at it.

'Lord Cheverdale!' he said. 'That was in the Academy two or three years ago. Cheerful looking chap, isn't he? And that's Hannington.'

He pointed to a photogravure on the opposite side of the room, and I crossed over and looked at it with interest. It required no more than a glance to see that Hannington had been just what Chaney had said—crank, faddist, enthusiast. The eyes were those of a visionary: the whole expression that of a man who could be a fanatic.

A door opened; a lady entered. I looked at her with more interest than I had felt for the pictures; she was obviously very much alive—a good-looking, smartly-dressed woman of thirty-five or thereabouts, alert, businesslike. She held our cards and Lord Cheverdale's, in one hand; with the other she pointed us to chairs on either side of a big desk that stood in the centre of the room.

'Good morning, Mr. Chaney,' she said in a brisk voice. 'We've met before. This, I suppose, is your partner?—how do you do, Mr. Camberwell? So you've already been up to Cheverdale Lodge? Mr. Paley 'phoned me that Lord Cheverdale was employing you as well as the regular police. I've only just got rid of two Scotland Yard men—they've been questioning me for the last three-quarters of an hour. Now I suppose I shall have to go over the whole thing again, with you? What is it you

want to know, now?'

She sat down at the desk, Chaney on one side of her, I on the other, and glanced from one to the other of us. Following my usual course, I let Chaney do the talking.

'We want to know a lot Miss Hetherley,' said Chaney. 'All we know, so far, is that Mr. Hannington was—presumably—attacked and murdered, beaten to death by blows on the head, we understand, about midnight, last night, in Lord Cheverdale's grounds, and that as far as is known there's no clue to the murderer or murderers. Now I want to go back and to learn what went before this. And I'd like you to tell me something to start with. What were Mr. Hannington's regular hours of attendance at this office?'

Miss Hetherley replied promptly.

'Two o'clock in the afternoon until two o'clock in the morning.'

'Stayed here all the time?'

'As a rule. Sometimes—but very rarely—he went out to dine. But as a rule, a strict rule, dinner was sent in to him at half-past seven.'

'What were your hours—as his secretary?'

'Two o'clock in the afternoon until nine in the evening.'

'What about last night?'

'Last night there was a departure from the rule—his rule, anyway. He left at nine o'clock—when I did.'

'Any reason?'

'None that I know of. No reason I can give, you know—unless it was because of something that occurred yesterday afternoon.'

'What was that?' asked Chaney.

'Well, it was something that may turn out to be of the vastest importance,' replied Miss Hetherley. 'I've already told it to the Scotland Yard men: now, I suppose, I must tell it to you. I'd better explain things in full detail. This room we're sitting in is Lord Cheverdale's private room—when he comes here. That door admits to the editor's room—Mr. Hannington's. Beyond that is a smaller room which is my office. Nobody could get at Mr. Hannington—I mean in the way of callers—except through me. You understand that?'

'We understand that,' said Chaney.

'Very well! Now follow this. At about five o'clock yesterday afternoon, a boy brought up to me a note addressed to Thomas Hannington, Esq., and marked *Private* in the top left-hand corner. The handwriting was a woman's. I took the note in to Mr. Hannington, and waited while he read it. As soon as he opened it, I saw

him glance at the signature; I saw, too, that whatever it was, the signature occasioned him surprise. He read the note hastily: I saw him frown over it. He suddenly thrust it and the envelope into his pocket and turned to me. "Bring this lady in, Miss Hetherley," he said. "See that we're not disturbed." I went back to my room where the boy was waiting and sent him down to fetch the lady. In a few minutes he came back with her.'

'You can describe her?' suggested Chaney.

'Everything but her face,' replied Miss Hetherley, coolly. 'I can't tell you or anybody else anything whatever about that! She was closely veiled—so closely that I couldn't tell you if she was a blonde or a brunette or if she had green eyes or yellow ones. But from her walk and figure—a very good one—I should say she was a woman of perhaps thirty or thirty-two years of age. One thing I am absolutely certain of. She hadn't got her clothes in England!'

'Where then?' asked Chaney.

'Paris! I know Paris frocks—and Paris everything—at sight! She was dressed as only a Frenchwoman can dress—or as women can only be dressed by a French modiste. I set her down at once—as a Frenchwoman.'

'You heard her speak?' suggested Chaney.

'I never heard her speak! Not a syllable—from her coming in to her going out. As soon as the boy showed her into my room, I showed her into Mr. Hannington's. And now I think you should take note of two very unusual things. First, it was most unusual for Mr. Hannington to see anybody—anybody!—at that hour of the afternoon: second, it was still more unusual that he should allow anyone to take up his time for more than a very few minutes. But this woman, whoever she was, remained with him until six o'clock—nearly an hour!'

'Did you enter the room during that time?' enquired Chaney.

'Not once! If Mr. Hannington said "Don't let anything interrupt me," or "don't let us be disturbed" he meant what he said. No, I never went near them. And I kept Mr. Hannington from being disturbed—while she was there.'

'Well—I suppose she left, eventually?' said Chaney.

'At six o'clock Mr. Hannington opened the door of his room and they came out. He took her straight across mine and opened the door on to the corridor. I didn't hear a word exchanged between them. He gave her a nod—a sort of smiling nod, as if they understood each other very well, and she gave him a bow—that, again, made me think she was a Frenchwoman—it wasn't an Englishwoman's bow. But they didn't exchange a word—in my hearing. However—do you consider me at all observant, Mr. Chaney?'

‘I think you’ll pass, Miss Hetherley,’ responded Chaney, with a grin. ‘You show great promise!’

‘Well, I noticed something, anyway, that may be of interest—and, perhaps, of importance,’ continued Miss Hetherley, smiling. ‘This! When the veiled lady entered my room, and subsequently, Mr. Hannington’s, she carried, in her right hand—beautifully gloved, by the way—a packet of papers, tied up with a bit of green ribbon. When Mr. Hannington showed her out, *he* had this packet, still tied up with the green ribbon, in *his* hand, and when she’d gone, and as he crossed my room to go back to his own, I saw him thrust it into the inner breast pocket of his coat. Is that of moment?’

‘I should say it was!’ exclaimed Chaney. ‘Good! All you’re telling us is most valuable, Miss Hetherley. Tell us more!’

‘But there’s little more to tell,’ responded Miss Hetherley. ‘As soon as the woman had left things went on as usual.’

‘Did Mr. Hannington make any remark about his caller?’ asked Chaney.

‘No!—not a word. There were matters requiring his attention, and he turned to them at once.’

‘What about the rest of the evening?’ enquired Chaney. ‘You say that the woman left at six and Mr. Hannington left at nine? Did he have his dinner here?’

‘He did—but he had it rather earlier than usual.’

‘And you say he left at nine o’clock?’

‘Yes. I know he did, for the simple reason that he went down in the lift with me. I had just entered the lift when he came hurrying along the corridor and got in, too. We went down together, walked across the entrance hall, and went out into the street together. I turned up towards Fleet Street, to get my ‘bus home, but Mr. Hannington turned down towards the Embankment. And now,’ continued Miss Hetherley, for the first time showing some slight hesitation or uncertainty in her speech and manner, ‘now comes in something about which I’m a little doubtful—I mean, I’m doubtful about telling it, because it may have been pure fancy on my part, or it may have been the merest coincidence.’

‘Never mind—let’s know what it is,’ said Chaney. ‘Don’t omit anything!—You don’t know how the smallest things help.’

‘Well, it’s this,’ responded Miss Hetherley. ‘When Mr. Hannington and I walked out of the front door downstairs there was a man—a foreigner, by his appearance—hanging about on the opposite side of the street; I thought he was watching the door. When I had turned up the street a few yards, I looked round, and the man I speak of was following Mr. Hannington! Anyway, whether he was following him or not, he

was walking down the street, in the direction of the Embankment, immediately in Mr. Hannington's wake.'

'Well, that's a bit of highly important information,' remarked Chaney. 'Could you recognize the man?'

'Ah, I doubt it!' replied Miss Hetherley. 'I only saw him in the light of the street-lamps, you know. The general impression I got was that he was a foreigner—he wore a cloak, instead of an overcoat, and a large hat. He stood right opposite the office door.'

'Did you draw Mr. Hannington's attention to him?'

'No—Mr. Hannington wouldn't even have glanced at him, if I had.'

'You knew Hannington well, Miss Hetherley?'

'I'd been his private secretary, or right-hand, Mr. Chaney, ever since this paper was founded, six or seven years ago.'

'What was your opinion of him?'

'He was a fine man, a fine character, but eccentric: if anybody came to him with a really genuine grievance he'd take the matter up as if his very life depended on it. But then, you know what a reputation the *Morning Sentinel* has——'

'Do you know if Hannington had enemies, Miss Hetherley?'

Miss Hetherley shook her head.

'Ah!' she said. 'I don't believe he'd an enemy in the world, as a man! But as a force, a political and social force, I've no doubt he'd lots—bitter ones!'

It was at this point that I took a share in the process of question and answer.

'What particular windmill was it that Mr. Hannington was last tilting at?' I enquired.

Miss Hetherley turned on me with a smile.

'It's quite evident that you don't read the *Morning Sentinel*, Mr. Camberwell!' she said. 'You don't?—well, if you did, you'd know that of late Mr. Hannington has been denouncing the doings of the Bolsheviks in Russia. Although he and Lord Cheverdale, as editor and proprietor, were Radicals of the deepest dye (of the old Manchester school, you know) and of democratic sympathies all round, they'd no belief in the present movement in Russia, and Mr. Hannington wrote some very fierce things about it.'

'Did the man you noticed outside, last night, look like a Russian?' I asked.

'I don't know what he looked like—except that he gave me the impression that he was a foreigner.'

I went off on another track.

'What about that note that the woman of French appearance sent in to Mr.

Hannington?’ I said. ‘Did he happen to leave it lying about?’

‘No,’ she answered. ‘The Scotland Yard men asked me that, too. He put it in his pocket when he read it and I suppose he kept it in his pocket, with the papers tied up with green ribbon. You have been up to Cheverdale Lodge, haven’t you? Well, is it true that he hadn’t a paper or document on him when the police were fetched to his dead body?’

‘So we were informed.’

‘Well, to anyone who knew him well, that’s most remarkable—and suggestive. Mr. Hannington was a truly awful man for carrying papers about with him. His pockets were usually stuffed with papers: breast pockets, tail pockets, side-pockets; he carried papers in every pocket. The odd thing was that amongst all that litter, he could produce any paper, document, scrap of newspaper cutting, anything, at a second’s notice. And—is it true that his valuables were left untouched?’

‘We were told that, too.’

‘Doesn’t that look as though the murderers were after him for something in the way of papers or documents?’ suggested Miss Hetherley. ‘Evidently, they were not common thieves!’

‘There’s no question about that,’ said Chaney. ‘We may take it that Mr. Hannington was murdered by somebody for one of two reasons. One—before he could reveal some secret to Lord Cheverdale. Two—to secure possession of some secret contained in a document which he had on him. The two reasons, really, merge into one. And it seems pretty evident that the visit of the mysterious lady has something to do with it. Perhaps—everything! Pity you didn’t hear her speak, Miss Hetherley. Wasn’t there even one word?’

‘Not one word!’ declared Miss Hetherley. ‘The Scotland Yard men wanted to know that, too, and they went downstairs and made careful enquiries. All she did, on arriving in the entrance hall, was to hand the note to the commissionaire. He gave it to the boy who brought it up. Nobody ever heard her speak—except Mr. Hannington.’

‘But your convinced impression is that she was a Frenchwoman?’ I said.

‘My convinced belief is that she had bought her clothes, her shoes, her stockings, her gloves, in Paris!’ asserted Miss Hetherley. ‘And I think she was a Frenchwoman, from the way she wore them. Although I’m an Englishwoman myself, I’m not such a fool as not to know that a Frenchwoman knows *how* to put her things on and an Englishwoman does *not*! My opinion is that this was a Frenchwoman.’

There was a longer silence: we were, I suppose, wondering about things. Then

Chaney began again.

‘Those Scotland Yard chaps?’ he said. ‘What’s their idea?’

‘Oh, well!’ replied Miss Hetherley. ‘They think it’s a political murder—they think....’

At this point a clerk entered and whispered to Miss Hetherley. She turned to us.

‘They’re back here,’ she said. ‘Inspector Doxford and Detective-Sergeant Windover. We’d better have them up. Then you can ask them a direct question.’

## IV

The messenger went away to fetch in the two Scotland Yard men, and Chaney looked after him with a smile.

‘Old pals of mine, those two!’ he remarked. ‘Doxford entered the force when I did, and Windover not so long after. Good, safe, capable men, Miss Hetherley—amongst us, we ought to be able to hammer something out. Perhaps these chaps have made a discovery by now and will have some news for us?’

The two detectives, entering, looked as if they had no news for us or for anybody. Two more stolid, unconcerned, phlegmatic individuals I had never seen. Each was on the further side of forty; each looked eminently respectable; neither looked like what people who know nothing about it think a detective should look like. And neither showed the faintest surprise on finding Chaney and myself in company with Miss Hetherley.

‘Hullo!’ said the leading man, Doxford, glancing calmly at his former associate, ‘So you’re here, are you? Partner?’ he added, glancing at me. ‘Heard you’d got something of the sort.’

‘Mr. Camberwell—as you say, my partner,’ replied Chaney. ‘Yes, we’re here, my lad, as you see. Lord Cheverdale’s desire—wants a bit of purely private help as well as your official labours.’

‘More the merrier,’ said Doxford. ‘Multitude of counsellors, eh?’ He sat down and indulged himself in a keen inspection of me. ‘Well,’ he went on, again turning his attention to Chaney. ‘Got any ideas?’

‘Not in this case!’ answered Chaney. ‘So far, anyway. Have you?’

Doxford yawned.

‘Should say it’s a political business,’ he replied. ‘That’s what we think—at present.’

‘At present,’ echoed Windover. He, too, was taking a good look at me. Suddenly he smiled. ‘For a good reason, too,’ he went on. ‘Nothing else to think!’

‘Just that!’ agreed Doxford. He yawned again, and turned apologetically to Miss Hetherley. ‘Been up since midnight,’ he said. ‘Getting a bit sleepy. Nothing more transpired here, I suppose?’

‘Nothing!’ replied Miss Hetherley.

Doxford nodded, as if to imply that he didn’t expect anything had transpired. He looked at me again.

‘You two been up to Cheverdale Lodge?’ he asked. ‘Yes? Find anything out there?’



‘Nothing but what I’ll bet you’d already found out,’ answered Chaney. ‘We saw the place where the body was found, and we talked to Harris, the footman, a bit, and we got some orders from Mr. Watson Paley and came here. And here we’ve heard Miss Hetherley’s story of the mysterious woman. What more do you know?’

‘Oh, you’re welcome to all we know!’ replied Doxford. ‘It doesn’t amount to much. This is only the start out. We’ve been trying, since we left this office, to find out something about Hannington’s movements after he left here at nine o’clock last night. It was just about midnight when the footman found his dead body in Lord Cheverdale’s grounds, so there were three hours to account for. Where had he been? We’ve been trying to find that out.’

‘Any luck?’ enquired Chaney.

‘Not a scrap! We went first to his flat——’

‘By-the-bye, was Hannington a married man?’

‘He was not. Bachelor. Had a small flat in Mount Street and a manservant there. He hadn’t been there last night—after he left here, I mean. Well, then, he was a member of two clubs—the National Liberal, one; the Savage, the other. He wasn’t at either last night. Then we tried the House of Commons, because we heard he went there sometimes.’

‘Not often,’ interrupted Miss Hetherley.

‘But sometimes,’ continued Doxford. ‘However, last night wasn’t one of ’em. He was well known by sight there, of course, and this paper has a man in the Lobby and another in the Press Gallery. Neither of ’em saw him last night. So—we don’t know what he did with himself after Miss Hetherley saw him go down the street towards the Embankment. One thing’s certain—he didn’t go straight from here to Cheverdale Lodge. He went somewhere in between. Of course, when Miss Hetherley told us that she saw him go off in the direction of the Embankment, my idea was that he was going on the Underground to either Charing Cross or Westminster Bridge—Charing Cross for the National Liberal Club; Westminster for the House of Commons. But he went to neither. And if he’d walked all the way from here to Regent’s Park it wouldn’t have taken him three hours. No!—he went to see somebody. But who it was, Heaven knows! We’ve issued a request to drivers of taxi-cabs—some one or other of ’em must have driven him up to Cheverdale Lodge. If we can find the man who did—and I’ve no doubt that we shall—he’ll be able to tell us where he picked him up.’

‘There’s something I particularly want to know,’ remarked Chaney. ‘Do you know at what time Hannington was killed?’

Doxford fumbled in his breast pocket and brought out a note-book. He began to

turn its pages.

‘I know what the doctors said who were on the spot when Windover and I got there at one o’clock in the morning,’ he answered. ‘I wrote it down, and you’re welcome to it if you like. I’ll read it:

‘Dr. Henry John Price-Webb, of Hanover Terrace, N.W., says he was called to Cheverdale Lodge almost half-an-hour after midnight on February 8th. Arrived there he was taken into the grounds by Mr. Watson Paley, Lord Cheverdale’s private secretary, and shown the dead body of a gentleman, who, Mr. Paley said, was Mr. Thomas Hannington, editor of the *Morning Sentinel*. Dr. Price-Webb says he immediately examined the body. In this he was assisted by Dr. Hyderson, who arrived just after he himself got to Cheverdale Lodge. He found that Mr. Hannington had been killed, almost instantaneously, by blows on the head from some blunt instrument. He will give a detailed technical account of the injuries at the inquest. Dr. Price-Webb is of opinion that Mr. Hannington had been dead about from thirty to forty minutes when he examined the body.’

‘That would fix the time at just before twelve o’clock,’ remarked Chaney. ‘It was just after twelve when the footman found Hannington.’

‘Here’s a note, too, of what the other doctor said,’ continued Doxford. ‘Nothing much, though——

‘Dr. Charles James Hyderson, of Albany Street, says he agrees with Dr. Price-Webb as to the cause of death, nature of injuries, and time of murder.’

‘Did you take statements from anybody else?’ asked Chaney. ‘But you would, of course. Harris, no doubt.’

‘Oh, we got one from Harris,’ replied Doxford. ‘He found the body. Want to hear it?’

‘No—we’ve heard Harris’s account from his own lips,’ said Chaney. ‘But if you’ve made a note of it, we’d like to know what Mr. Watson Paley had to say. Because we heard from Harris that when he ran to the house to give the alarm he found Mr. Paley up, reading in the library, and it strikes me as a rather queer thing that Mr. Paley heard nothing. You’d think that Hannington would have let out one cry, at any rate—and the grounds, after all, are not so big as all that.’

‘Ah, I don’t know,’ replied Doxford, shaking his head. ‘From what the two doctors said, I gathered that in their opinion Hannington may have been killed outright by the very first blow. At any rate, the first blow would render him instantly unconscious. He might let out a groan, as he fell—but I don’t think there’d be any cry or scream. However, here’s my note of what Mr. Paley told us:

‘Mr. Watson Paley, private secretary to Lord Cheverdale at Cheverdale Lodge, Regent’s Park, and resident there, says that last night, February 8th, Lord Cheverdale had a small dinner-party of intimate friends. There were present Sir Robert Kellington, Mr. James McCallum, Mr. Alfred Stack, all business friends, and Mr. Francis Craye, who is Lord Cheverdale’s business manager and is the fiancé of his daughter, the Honourable Miss Chever. Of these guests the first-named three left together in Sir Robert Kellington’s car at 10 o’clock. Mr. Craye left on foot about 10.30. After Mr. Craye had gone, Lord Cheverdale and Mr. Paley had a game of piquet in the library. At 11.15 Lord Cheverdale retired. Mr. Paley remained up, reading. Shortly after 12 o’clock, the first footman, Harris, came hurriedly into the library and told Mr. Paley that a man was lying on one of the paths in the shrubberies, and that he appeared to be dead. Mr. Paley immediately went back with Harris to the place spoken of, and found the man to be Mr. Thomas Hannington, editor of the *Morning Sentinel*, of which paper Lord Cheverdale is proprietor: he also found that Mr. Hannington was dead. Mr. Paley at once telephoned for the police and for medical assistance. Mr. Paley heard no cry for assistance nor any sound of a struggle during the time which elapsed between Lord Cheverdale leaving him and Harris entering the room.

‘Mr. Hannington had not been to the house, nor was he expected. He had not ’phoned to say he was coming. It was most unusual for Mr. Hannington to visit Cheverdale Lodge. He never came there unless asked to a dinner or garden party. Lord Cheverdale was in the habit of visiting the *Morning Sentinel* office three or four times a week.

‘Mr. Paley, as private secretary to Lord Cheverdale, and intimately familiar with his business affairs and correspondence, has not the remotest idea as to the cause of Mr. Hannington’s presence in the grounds of Cheverdale Lodge. He can only surmise that Mr. Hannington had some very urgent reason for visiting Lord Cheverdale at that late hour.’

Chaney, after a moment's reflection on these communications, turned to Miss Hetherley.

'I suppose you know Mr. Watson Paley?' he asked.

'Very well indeed!' replied Miss Hetherley.

'Comes here with Lord Cheverdale, I suppose?'

'Regularly!'

'Is he the sort to be trusted? Straight?'

Miss Hetherley glanced from one to the other of us and shrugged her shoulders. She made no verbal reply.

'Ah!' said Chaney. 'You don't like him!'

'Frankly, I don't!' assented Miss Hetherley. 'Never did!'

'Well,' said Chaney, slowly. 'I don't either. Don't know why—but I don't.'

'Yes—but Lord Cheverdale does,' remarked Miss Hetherley. 'Paley's the power behind the throne, there. Whatever Paley does or says, goes!'

'Did Paley shove his oar in here?' asked Chaney. 'Interfere with—what do you call it?—policy of the paper?'

'He made his opinions and influence felt—sometimes,' admitted Miss Hetherley. 'There were occasions when suggestions—or orders—came from him rather than from Lord Cheverdale.'

'Did Hannington like him?' persisted Chaney.

'I don't think he did.'

'Ever know of any quarrel between 'em? Bad blood, you know?'

'No, I can't say that, Mr. Chaney. Not to my knowledge.'

Chaney became silent and sat twiddling his thumbs—a habit of his when he was thinking hard. Doxford spoke.

'What are you getting at? Are you suggesting—best to be plain-spoken amongst each other—are you suggesting that Paley killed Hannington?'

'Somebody killed Hannington in Lord Cheverdale's grounds last night,' said Chaney, waking up with alert look. 'Paley was on the spot!'

'But—motive?' retorted Doxford. 'What motive?'

'Got to be sought for,' replied Chaney. 'Secret! Paley looks to me the sort of chap who's got secrets. Lots of secrets. Deep 'uns, too. Born like that—if you ask me. Wire puller!'

'You're a psychologist, Mr. Chaney,' remarked Miss Hetherley. 'However—I agree with your last word. Mr. Paley is—a wire-puller.'

Windover, who had been showing signs of impatience, raised his voice into prominence.

‘This is all speculation!’ he said. ‘I see no reason to suspect Mr. Paley—he gave us a straightforward account of things. Might as well suspect the footman. I think the thing’s plain enough. That woman who came here with some political secret. She was followed here. When she went away, a man remained hereabouts to watch Hannington when he left. Hannington was followed—wherever he went after leaving this place, he was followed to Regent’s Park, and attacked and finished off in Lord Cheverdale’s grounds. What did they want—these people who attacked him? Those papers that the woman left with him. Well, they got ’em! That’s my line, anyhow—I reckon it’s as straight as a length of railway metal. Obvious!’

Doxford yawned again. He nodded at Chaney.

‘Don’t think Windover’s far out,’ he said, sleepily. ‘Obvious is a good word.’

‘Um!’ muttered Chaney. ‘I’ve no great belief in the obvious. Strikes me——’

Before he could say more the telephone bell rang at the desk at which Miss Hetherley was sitting, and she picked up the receiver. In a minute or two she turned to the rest of us.

‘That’s from Mr. Paley,’ she said. ‘Lord Cheverdale wishes Mr. Chaney, Mr. Camberwell, Inspector Doxford and Sergeant Windover to go up there at once. I’m to go, too.’

This announcement was received by the two detectives with anything but favour: Windover made a face expressive of dislike to the news; Doxford once more made no effort to restrain a prodigious yawn.

‘I was just going home, to get a good sleep!’ he grumbled. ‘Now I suppose we shall have to trail up there!’

‘No trailing!’ said Miss Hetherley. ‘Lord Cheverdale is sending a car for us—it’ll be at the door in a few minutes.’

‘Oh, well——’ said Doxford. ‘All in the day’s work, I suppose.’ He got lazily out of his chair and turned to Chaney. ‘There’s a certain thing we ought to do, in my opinion, when we get there,’ he continued. ‘Lord Cheverdale, no doubt, will have this right-hand man of his, Paley, with him. Now I should like to have a word or two with his lordship in private.—No Paley! What d’ye say, Chaney?’

‘I agree,’ replied Chaney. ‘We should ask for it. Your idea’s—what?’

‘To know—from Lord Cheverdale himself—if there was anything between Paley and Hannington,’ answered Doxford. ‘There may have been.’

‘I’m with you!’ said Chaney. ‘Very well—we ask to see his lordship alone?’

‘You’ll be lucky—or exceptional—if he grants your request,’ observed Miss Hetherley, ‘Lord Cheverdale never sees anybody unless Paley’s present!’

‘Oh?’ exclaimed Doxford. ‘Um! We’ll see about that, Miss Hetherley. But—your meaning is that Paley’s all powerful there—is that it?’

‘Didn’t I say that Mr. Paley is the power behind the throne?’ retorted Miss Hetherley. ‘You’ll see—as things progress. But let’s go down, if you please—the car will be there, and Lord Cheverdale doesn’t like to be kept waiting. He’s—you may as well know it—he’s a good deal of an autocrat.’

We left the luxurious room in which this conversation had taken place, and went down to the front entrance where a magnificent car with a couple of liveried servants stood ready for us. Rolling away from the *Morning Sentinel* office in great style, in twenty minutes we were set down at the door of Cheverdale Lodge, to be received—with obvious condescension—by a very solemn-looking butler.

‘His lordship awaits you in the morning room,’ announced this functionary, motioning a couple of footmen to take our hats and coats. ‘Be pleased to follow me.’

Led by Miss Hetherley we trooped across a big entrance hall, across an inner and smaller one, and were duly marshalled—as if, Chaney whispered, we had been prisoners ushered into the dock at Quarter Sessions—into a somewhat sombre and

depressing apartment, wherein, at the head of a long centre table, with three persons in attendance upon him, sat Lord Cheverdale, looking more formidable than a Lord Chief Justice. Pausing within the threshold, awaiting speech from this portentous figure, we had time to consider and appraise him and his *entourage*. Paley we had already seen; Miss Chever we had also seen, but Lord Cheverdale was new to us—to me, at any rate—and there was a man sitting by him who was also a stranger, so far as I was concerned, though I had a dim notion that I had once or twice seen him in Bond Street or Piccadilly.

I took a good look at Lord Cheverdale first. He was an elderly man of a solid figure and a heavy solemn face: I could see at once that he had been born without any sense of humour, and that Puritanism in its worst forms had flourished mightily in him. He was the sort of man you see in churches and chapels, habited in black broadcloth and going round with the plate, mouth drawn and eyes veiled; he gave you the instant impression of disapproval of almost everything, and if he had been a judge in wig and robe, and I a miserable prisoner put in the dock before him, I should have pleaded guilty at the mere sight of his eyes turned on me. Indeed, there was something in what Chaney afterwards said—that it looked, and felt, as if the five of us, one woman and four men, were convicts, coming up for deferred sentence. What was most impressive was the silence with which our entrance was greeted; Lord Cheverdale regarded us with pursed lips and penetrating eyes; the others followed his lead. And as a slight relief, and while the pompous butler was marshalling us into chairs at the lower end of the long table, I made an inspection of the man whom I didn't know.

This was a man of, apparently, thirty-five to forty years of age, of slim build, middle height, and pleasant appearance—that is to say he had a frank, open countenance, smiling eyes (I could see that he was secretly much amused by our entrance and reception) and, I guessed, cordial manner. He was a very good-looking man, dark hair, dark moustache and carefully trimmed beard, and he knew how to dress himself in the height of fashion without appearing foppish or conspicuous. He sat on Lord Cheverdale's left-hand side; Miss Chever sat on her father's right; Paley, with a lot of writing material before him, sat at a corner of the big table. And when we had taken our seats, it was Paley who opened the proceedings; Lord Cheverdale, beyond giving us a general and comprehensive inclination of his head, had scarcely acknowledged our presence. He turned to us pretty much as if—I repeat—we had been prisoners in the dock, and he a Clerk of Assize, asking us to plead to the indictment.

‘Lord Cheverdale has sent for you so that you may give him an account of what

you have done so far,' he said. 'It will be best, perhaps, if Inspector Doxford, as representing the police authorities, speaks first.'

But Doxford showed himself in no hurry to speak. He turned to Chaney, and after exchanging a few words with him in whispers, looked direct at Lord Cheverdale, ignoring Paley.

'Before we say anything,' he said, 'we should like a few minutes private conversation with your lordship.'

Had Doxford asked for one-half of his lordship's kingdom, his request could scarcely have produced more surprise. Lord Cheverdale palpably started; his daughter stared; the man I did not know smiled, and Paley turned to the detective with an unpleasant look.

'There is no need——' he began.

'We are the best judges of that, sir!' interrupted Doxford. 'We wish for a brief conversation with Lord Cheverdale in private. Otherwise——'

'Well—what of otherwise?' asked Paley, with something very like a sneer. 'What do you mean?'

'That—otherwise—we shall not make any report, at present, except to our superiors,' replied Doxford, quietly.

'You appear to be——' began Paley.

But Lord Cheverdale had been stirred out of his aloofness. He motioned his secretary to silence and turned to Doxford.

'What is it you want, Mr.—er, I don't know your name?' he said, testily. 'What is it, eh?'

'My name is Doxford, my lord—Inspector Doxford. We wish—my colleague, Detective-Sergeant Windover, and these two gentlemen, Mr. Chaney and Mr. Camberwell, whom you are employing privately—to have a few minutes talk with your lordship, in private. Your lordship will appreciate our reason when you hear what we have to say. All we have to say is that we consider it necessary to make this request.'

There was a slight sneering sibilation from Paley as Doxford spoke his last word. But Lord Cheverdale suddenly rose from his chair. Without a word, and with one or two impatient movements of his hand and arm, he motioned us to leave our seats and precede him to a door at the lower end of the room. Driving us before him like sheep, he pointed one of us to throw the door open; again he shepherded us into a small room beyond it, and when the door was closed on us, turned to Doxford with a petulant look.

'Now, now, what is it?' he demanded. 'Not used to being ordered about, you



know, in this way——don't see any need for secrecy, you know——'

'My lord!' said Doxford. 'This is a case of murder! We are policemen. It is for us to judge as to the necessity of asking you certain questions. We wish to put a plain question to your lordship. Does your lordship know if there was any quarrel between the dead man, Mr. Hannington, and your private secretary, Mr. Paley? We want to know!'

It was easy to see that the very idea of this came to Lord Cheverdale as an intense surprise. He threw up his hands and head, shaking head and shoulders vigorously.

'Oh, no, no, no, no!' he declared. 'No, no, no! Utterly ridiculous! Nothing whatever. No dissension, no cause of dissension, no reason for dissension! Besides that my secretary is a man of the utmost probity—as Miss Hetherley there is well aware—most excellent man. Ridiculous!'

Doxford glanced at Chaney; Chaney glanced at Doxford. And Doxford turned towards the door.

'Very good, my lord,' he said quietly. 'Sorry to have troubled your lordship. Your lordship, I understand, wishes some account of how things are going?'

Lord Cheverdale, restored to equanimity by his victory, again shepherded us back to the morning room, and resumed his seat.

'Yes, yes!' he said. 'I want to know how you're getting on, and what you're doing, and what you think, and so on. Also, I wanted you to come here on purpose to hear something that this gentleman, my business manager'—here he turned and indicated the man who up till then had been a stranger to us—'Mr. Francis Craye, can tell you—something that in my opinion is very important. But let us know what you have to tell, first, Mr.—eh?—Doxford, perhaps——'

Doxford, thus admonished, set out, clearly and swiftly, all he had to tell. His statement introduced Miss Hetherley, who for the third time that morning had to repeat her story of the visit of this mysterious woman—a narrative which obviously surprised its new audience. Eventually, with all the known facts up to that moment before him, Lord Cheverdale asked Doxford a straight question.

'Do you think, now, do you think, Mr. Inspector, that Mr. Hannington was followed?'

'Followed—or waylaid, my lord.'

'Waylaid?—in my grounds?'

'That is possible, my lord. He was found dead in your grounds.'

Lord Cheverdale turned to Mr. Craye.

'I think it is here that you should tell these gentlemen what you have told us,' he

said. 'Mr. Craye,' he continued, looking at Doxford, 'was here last night as one of my guests at a little dinner-party. He left the house on foot—but Mr. Craye will tell you himself what he came to tell me as soon as he heard of the murder.'

Mr. Craye smiled, as if deprecating his own importance as a witness.

'There is really very little to tell,' he said. 'Still it may have some relation to the crime you're investigating. It is simply this—Lord Cheverdale has already heard the story. Last night, as his lordship has told you, I was one of his guests here, at dinner. My fellow guests left together in a car belonging to one of their number. As it was a fine, moonlit night I thought I would walk home——'

'You live—where, Mr. Craye?' asked Doxford.

'I have a flat in Whitehall Gardens,' replied Craye. He paused, as if awaiting a further question; as none came, he went on. 'Well, I walked down the drive to the gates leading into the Inner Circle when I left the house——'

'You were quite alone?' interrupted Doxford. 'No fellow guest with you?'

'No one was with me. When I turned into the Inner Circle, I saw two men, close by the entrance to these grounds. They were there between the gates, Lord Cheverdale's gates, and the gates of Bedford College. They were walking up and down, evidently in conversation. When I first saw them they were about twenty yards from me, walking away from me. They turned suddenly and came towards me. Just as they were close to me they turned again and walked away from me. They were walking slowly—sauntering: I was walking sharply—it was a cold night. I passed close to them: they were talking rapidly in some foreign tongue. What language it was, I don't know—I am familiar with several foreign languages—French, German, Spanish, Italian. It was none of these. From what little I heard, spoken very rapidly, it seemed to me to be of Slavonic type: perhaps Russian.'

Lord Cheverdale nodded his head and sighed deeply. He looked fixedly at Doxford: Doxford showed no sign of anything: he was watching Mr. Craye.

'Yes?' said Doxford. 'Well?'

'That is about all,' replied Craye. 'I passed on. After going a little distance I looked round. The two men were still pacing up and down.'

'Where you had left them?'

'Where I had left them—yes.'

'Fairly close to the gate of Lord Cheverdale's grounds?'

'Quite close to the gates.'

'Didn't it strike you as being rather a strange thing that two men—you evidently took them to be foreigners——'

'I did take them to be foreigners!'

‘Well—strange that they should be pacing up and down in the Inner Circle in Regent’s Park at that time of a cold night in winter?’

‘It did, certainly. That was why I looked back.’

‘Was there anybody else about?’

‘I saw no one.’

‘No policeman?’

‘I saw no policeman until I turned into the Outer Circle near York Gate. Then I saw one.’

‘Did you mention what you had seen to him?’

‘No, I didn’t—it didn’t seem of importance. You see,’ continued Craye, ‘I knew that foreigners are to be found in the districts on each side of Regent’s Park, and I thought that one of these men lived east, the other west, that they were talking a little before taking to their different directions, and that it had nothing in it. In fact, I had almost forgotten the matter until I heard of what had happened at Cheverdale Lodge last night. Then I came here and told Lord Cheverdale.’

‘Can you describe the men, Mr. Craye?’ enquired Chaney.

‘To a certain extent—yes. They were about—perhaps a little below—middle height; sparsely built. Each wore the dark clothes which a certain type of foreigner \_\_\_\_\_,’

‘What type of foreigner?’ asked Doxford.

‘Oh, well, perhaps I was thinking of the alien population in the East End. Anyway, you know what I mean—the black-coated sort. Both these men had rather long dark overcoats—longer, I mean, than the present fashion. Each was a good deal wrapped up about the throat and chin.’

‘Could you identify them, or either of them?’ asked Chaney.

But Craye shook his head with a decided negative.

‘No!’ he said. ‘That I certainly could not do! As I told you, they turned sharply as I got near them; they turned sharply again in the very act of my passing them. I had just a mere impression of their faces. I think they were dark, sallow men. But I couldn’t swear to them. Impossible!’

Doxford rubbed his chin, and shook his head.

‘Unfortunate, that!’ he remarked. ‘We’ve no luck! Miss Hetherley saw a man, and she can’t swear to him if she saw him again; Mr. Craye saw two men and is sure he couldn’t recognize them——’

‘I said I couldn’t swear to them—couldn’t positively identify them,’ interrupted Craye. ‘I might have a very good idea, if I saw two men——’

‘Um!’ said, Doxford. He turned towards Lord Cheverdale. ‘Is there anything

more your lordship wants to know?’ he asked. ‘Because, if not——’

‘I want to know what conclusion you have come to,’ replied Lord Cheverdale with some asperity. ‘You have now heard——’

‘If your lordship will excuse me for saying so,’ broke in Doxford, ‘we’ve not heard anything, so far, that justifies us in coming to any conclusion, and I should say that it will probably be some time before we do. All we can say at present is that Mr. Hannington was murdered by somebody in your lordship’s grounds last night. Why? For what reason? What was the murderer’s motive? We can’t say anything. We know—nothing!’

‘Of course, we have ideas,’ remarked Windover. ‘I’ve a theory, at any rate.’

‘Yes, yes!’ exclaimed Lord Cheverdale. ‘Your theory, now? What is it?’

‘Well, I understand that Mr. Hannington had been going for these Bolshevik chaps in the *Morning Sentinel*,’ replied Windover. ‘Now, I take it, my lord, that the woman who went to see Hannington yesterday took him some important papers about that matter. I think she was followed. I think Hannington was followed, or, more likely, waylaid. I think the people concerned would guess that he’d bring those papers here, to your lordship——’

‘Very ingenious, very ingenious!’ muttered Lord Cheverdale. ‘Highly probable. Continue!’

‘And that they—two of ’em, probably the two Mr. Craye saw hanging about—waited for him here,’ Windover went on, ‘and in your lordship’s grounds, killed him for the sake of the papers. That, to me, appears certain. All his valuables were there, untouched—but he had no papers on him. And we understand he was accustomed to stuff his pockets with papers. Well—what can one think?’

‘Very admirable reasoning!’ said Lord Cheverdale. ‘Excellent! Don’t you agree with your colleague?’ he asked, suddenly turning on Doxford. ‘Very good argument—I quite agree with it myself.’

‘I neither quite agree, nor quite disagree, my lord,’ replied Doxford. ‘I say it’s extremely likely that he’s right. But—it’s a little soon to say that truth’s here, or there, or anywhere.’

‘And you—you?’ asked Lord Cheverdale, fixing his gaze on Chaney. ‘What do you say? Mr. Chaney, eh?—I’ve heard of you.’

‘I say, my lord, that I prefer, at present, to say nothing,’ answered Chaney. ‘This story only began twelve hours ago. We’re not half-way through the first chapter!’

‘But—but—something must be done!’ declared his lordship. ‘We must do something! We must be active! Can’t somebody suggest——’

‘I suggest that we find the woman,’ said Chaney. ‘If that can be——’

At that juncture the pompous butler entered the room.

‘Person on the telephone desiring to speak with Inspector Doxford, my lord,’ he announced. ‘From Scotland Yard, my lord.’

Doxford left the room without ceremony, and within three minutes was back again.

‘First bit of information, through the newspapers,’ he said as he resumed his seat. ‘A taxi-cab driver has come forward who says that he drove a gentleman from Whitehall to Regent’s Park last night. I’ve told them to bring him here, my lord—I thought your lordship would like to hear what he’s got to say.’

‘Quite proper, quite proper!’ murmured Lord Cheverdale. ‘It will be a relief to hear something definite.’

The conversation became general while we waited—general, that is, between Lord Cheverdale, Doxford, Windover, and Chaney. As for Paley, he drew figures or sketches on a blotting pad, occasionally exchanging a whispered word with Craye: as for Miss Chever she did nothing but stare from one to the other of us—her vacant expression, prominent eyes, and parted lips made me convinced that her father’s brain-power had not descended to her. And yet, Craye, obviously a smart, clever, polished man, was going to marry her! Then I remembered that Lord Cheverdale had the reputation of being a multi-millionaire.

Ushered in by the footman, Harris, who had shown Chaney and myself the scene of the murder, there presently appeared before us a young detective officer who introduced a taxi-cab driver. Doxford took him in hand.

‘You’ve been to the Yard with some information?’ he asked.

‘I have, sir! Along o’ this here piece what I reads in the papers—larst edition. ‘Cos I drove a gentleman up here last night.’

‘To—whereabouts up here?’

‘Between this here Cheverdale Lodge, sir, and the College, bit lower down. That was where he pulled me up, anyhow.’

‘What sort of man was he?’

‘Well, I should say the gentleman might be about forty years, sir. Bearded gentleman—dark overcoat—one o’ these here grey hats.’

‘Could you identify him if you saw him—dead or alive?’

‘I could, sir! Alive—or dead.’

‘Where did he engage you?’

‘Whitehall, sir—right opposite the Horse Guards.’

‘Did you see where he came from?’

‘I did not, sir. He was standing on the kerb when I see him a-waving to me to

come over.’

‘What time was that?’

‘Just fairly about ten o’clock, sir.’

‘And he told you to drive up here?’

‘He told me, sir, to go up to this here Inner Circle, through York Gate, and he’d tell me where to pull up. He pulled me up as I’ve said.’

‘And you’d get up here about—what time?’

‘Oh, in about quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, sir.’

‘Did you see anybody about in the Inner Circle when you were in it? Any men?’

‘I did not, sir. Never see a soul!’

‘What did the gentleman do when he left your cab? Did you see?’

‘I did, sir. He walked sharp towards these here gates.’

‘Did you see him turn in?’

‘No, sir, can’t say as I did. I was turning my cab round.’

At this point Doxford was once more summoned to the telephone. This time he was away several minutes, and when he came back his yawniness seemed to have vanished and his face looked alert and at the same time very grave. He addressed the lot of us.

‘Here’s some very serious news!’ he said. ‘It’s just reached headquarters. A woman has been found murdered in a flat in the West End. And from such information as has come to hand I don’t think that there’s much doubt that she’s the woman who called on Mr. Hannington!’

## MURDER OF THE UNKNOWN WOMAN

## I

Startled though I was at this sudden announcement, my first instinct was to notice its effect upon the people sitting around me. Chaney caught his breath with a sharp click. Windover half started to his feet, as if to make for the door, which Doxford had left half-open. Lord Cheverdale threw up his hands with a groan of dismay: his daughter's already prominent eyes seemed to protrude more than ever. Craye frowned incredulously, staring at Doxford. The only person who showed nothing whatever was Paley. Paley, who had been making (what I supposed to be) notes, on a pad in front of him, went calmly on with his work and did not even look up.

Lord Cheverdale's voice, agitated, shaking, broke the silence.

'Impossible!' he exclaimed. 'That woman? Surely——'

'From the hurried description given me, I should say it is that woman, my lord,' said Doxford. 'A double murder! The same motive, no doubt, to cover up the secret! Or, perhaps, to obtain possession of it. First, Mr. Hannington—now, the woman.'

'Where is this place—Little Custom Street?' asked Lord Cheverdale.

'Near Great Portland Street,' replied Doxford. 'There are various new buildings there—flats, I fancy. Probably this woman occupied a flat.'

'You had better go there at once,' interrupted Lord Cheverdale. 'All of you! Let me know what you discover. Murder—double murder! Dear, dear——!'

He broke off and hurried away from the room, followed by his daughter and Craye. Paley looked up from his writing—at me and Chaney.

'You had better accompany the detectives,' he said calmly. 'Lord Cheverdale will want to know everything. And one thing he'll want to know at once—and that's if it really is the woman who called on Hannington.'

'Who's to identify her?—I mean, to prove that?' asked Windover.

Paley pointed the end of his pen towards Miss Hetherley.

'Miss Hetherley will go with you,' he answered. 'She saw the woman.'

Miss Hetherley made a grimace indicative of her dislike to the commission.

'I told you she was very heavily veiled,' she said. 'I haven't the remotest idea of her features, hair, eyes, colour, anything! I——'

'General appearance—clothes—so on,' broke in Paley. 'You can identify her

quite well. Telephone me if it is the woman,' he went on, turning to Doxford. 'The various details can wait. The car will take you there.'

We went out to the big car, still waiting at the door, and climbed into it.

'Cool hand, that!' remarked Windover, nodding his head at the windows of the room we had just left. 'That secretary chap, I mean. Murder don't seem anything out of the way to him!'

'Human iceberg!' declared Miss Hetherley, who was obviously ruffled. 'However, I am not going to be ordered about by him. And how can I identify this woman when I never saw her face and——'

'Oh, well, Paley was right there, though,' said Doxford. 'General appearance, you know, Miss Hetherley. You can remember how the woman was dressed, for instance? Also her height, build, and so on. Unpleasant business, of course, but—as I've had occasion to remark before—this is murder! And—double murder! If the thing was serious before it's ten times as serious now.'

'Why ten times?' asked Miss Hetherley.

'Well, twenty times, then!' retorted Doxford. 'Fifty times—hundred times—a thousand times! Why? Why, because it shows that the murderer would stop at nothing! One life—two lives—we may hear of three lives yet.'

'You don't know that this is the work of the same hand,' said Miss Hetherley. 'There may have been two or three men at work.'

'We don't know anything,' admitted Doxford, good-humouredly. 'But we soon shall know something. Here's Little Custom Street.'

The big car swung out of Great Portland Street into a labyrinth of small streets lying to its eastward. Little Custom Street was one of the smallest. Whatever sort of houses or shops or anything else had been in it, originally, had disappeared—each side of its short extent was now filled up by blocks of brand-new flats. And at the entrance of one of these—Minerva House—presided over by two or three policemen, was a group of inquisitives; men, women, children, all open-eyed and wide-mouthed with excitement.

A plain-clothes man, emerging from the door as we approached it, recognized Inspector Doxford and saluted.

'Top flat—No. 12,' he said. 'There are two or three of our people up there—I'm seeing about the removal of the body.'

He hurried off, and we entered the lobby, guarded by two more policemen, in uniform. Chaney gave my elbow a nudge.

'Take particular notice of all you see as we go up,' he whispered. 'You notice one thing at once: there's no lift here. Flight of stone steps—nothing but that. That's a



matter to be noted—but look carefully at everything.’

I obeyed his orders, knowing that he would have some reason. And what I noted, in the course of our progress to the top of the building was as follows: Within the door of the main entrance was a hall, or lobby, some nine feet square. On the left of this, facing the door, was the beginning of the stone staircase which Chaney had indicated. On the right, a similar stair led downwards to—presumably—the basement. At the top of the first flight of steps we were faced by two doors, one left, one right; the one on the left was lettered No. 1, that on the right, No. 2. Then came another short flight of steps, terminating in a landing on which there was a window looking out on the street. Then another flight, at the head of which were two more doors—No. 3, No. 4. This arrangement of flats and steps and windows went on till we came to the very top of the house and confronted No. 11 and No. 12. It was a long and toilsome way up, but there was one significant thing about our progress: every door we passed, from 1 to 11 was closed—not a single one of the occupants of these eleven flats had his or her head out. I have often wondered since, if, at that moment, any of those flat-holders knew what had happened in the top story?

The door of flat No. 12 stood wide open, and we crowded in. I say crowded, for the place was limited in space—probably the flats had been designed for single persons or for married couples without children. There was a little entrance lobby, a kitchen behind it, a bedroom and a sitting-room. And in the bedroom, on the bed, lay the dead woman. The detectives who were already there took us in to see her, after hearing from Doxford that Miss Hetherley would probably be able to identify the body. And Miss Hetherley was swift in what she did. One quick but searching look gave satisfaction.

‘That is the woman who came to see Mr. Hannington yesterday afternoon!’ she said. ‘I am certain of it! I have no doubt whatever!’

‘You can point to something, Miss Hetherley?’ asked Doxford.

‘Yes! I could not identify her by her face or features, because, as I’ve told you, she was heavily veiled,’ replied Miss Hetherley. ‘But I recognize the ear-rings and the dress—and also that coat,’ she added, pointing to a garment thrown aside on the chair. ‘The ear-rings, you see, are of an unusually large and heavy pattern; the dress is, well, Parisian; the coat is foreign, too.’

‘You’ve no doubt?’ said Doxford.

‘None whatever!’ declared Miss Hetherley. ‘None! And—may I go now?’

But Chaney begged her to stay—awhile, anyway: there might be something he wanted to ask her about or to which he wished to draw her attention. We went into the sitting-room with her: the police-surgeon who had been fetched was there, with

another medical man; they were telling the results of their examination to one of Doxford's fellow inspectors. We listened.

'This woman,' one of the doctors was saying, 'was killed by blows on the head inflicted by some heavy blunt instrument. Death——'

'Pardon me, sir,' interrupted Chaney, 'but have you formed any opinion as to what particular sort of blunt instrument?'

The doctor reflected a moment.

'Well!' he said, 'I hadn't thought too closely on that matter, but I can tell you what sort of instrument would have caused the injuries. An old-fashioned life-preserver!—probably covered at the thick end with wash-leather.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Chaney. 'Exactly my own opinion. You were about to say ——?'

'I was about to say that death was instantaneous. And in my opinion, and that of my colleague here, it probably took place—this murder, I mean—about one o'clock this morning. Sometime, anyway, between midnight and one o'clock. It was about noon when we were fetched here, and we are of opinion that the woman had then been dead at least eleven hours, and perhaps a little longer. That opinion may be of use to you.'

We turned to the work of examining the flat. And here I may say at once that it needed no more than one comprehensive glance to suggest the murderer's real object—search!—search—and the discovery of ... something. Whether the search had been successful; whether the something had been found, who could tell? But there was the fact—the tiny place had been turned upside down, ransacked from top to bottom; anything in the shape of cupboard, receptacle of any sort had been searched, perhaps rapidly, but without doubt, thoroughly. It seemed to us—the detectives, Chaney, and myself—that the woman had been struck down and silenced for ever, immediately after her assailant's entrance, and that he had then set to work, swiftly and methodically, to search for what he wanted: he had even gone so far as to turn up carpets and hearthrugs and look behind every cushion in the place.

'The woman's personal belongings?' suggested somebody. 'Her luggage?'

What she had of this sort was in the little bedroom, where her dead body still lay. There were three articles; a medium-sized, square trunk, of foreign manufacture; a small suit-case; a hand-bag (not of the vanity-bag variety, but a substantial, useful article); these two last-named articles were also of foreign origin. The trunk contained clothing; gowns, linen and the like—it was obvious that its contents, probably neatly packed when the murderer began to search, had been taken out,

examined, rammed in again any way: the same remark applied to the suit-case. The hand-bag contained various small feminine matters, toilet articles, a French novel or two; a Paris newspaper the date of which was some fourteen days previously. But it also contained something else: an old-fashioned capacious purse. In this purse we found a sum of about thirty thousand francs, in notes of various value (the franc was at that time in a very feeble stage of its post-war history) and some £25 in English notes: in one compartment, folded in tissue paper, were five English sovereigns—Chaney at once pointed out their dates, and the fact that each bore the image and superscription of Queen Victoria; evidently they had been hoarded. And as if to prove that the murderer had had no wish to acquire ready money by the death of his victim, there lay, on the mantelpiece of the bedroom, another, a more modern purse, in which we found two £5 Bank of England notes, seventeen pounds in twenty-shilling and ten-shilling Treasury notes, and nine shillings and sixpence in silver. Also, by the side of this second purse lay a very pretty gold watch and a couple of solid gold bracelets; we had already noticed that the dead woman's rings, good, valuable rings, were still on her fingers.

At the end of this—a merely preliminary examination of surroundings, Chaney turned to Miss Hetherley who, unwillingly enough, and being impressed by the horror of the thing, had remained with us.

‘Run your eye over that, Miss Hetherley,’ he whispered, pointing to the clothing in the trunk. ‘You know all about women's stuff. Is that foreign—taking it altogether?’

We stood by, watching, while Miss Hetherley examined the various articles. She gave us her reply in one word.

‘All!’

Chaney turned to Doxford.

‘Let's go down to the basement,’ he said. ‘The next person to see is the caretaker.’

## II

At that point, Miss Hetherley went away, declaring that she had had her fill of horrors and could do no good by staying longer. Four of us, Chaney, myself, Doxford and one of the Scotland Yard men whom we had found in the flat on our arrival, went down to the basement. Outside the flat occupied by the dead woman, the Scotland Yard man pointed to its neighbour.

‘That’s empty,’ he said. ‘Consequently there was nobody in there to overhear anything. And the people in these two flats immediately underneath,’ he continued, as we went down the stone staircase, ‘they never heard anything, either. Nobody in the whole place heard anything. Nor, for the matter of that, saw anything. Whoever the man was, he must have come in and got out absolutely unobserved.’

‘If it was a man,’ remarked Chaney.

The Scotland Yard man looked his surprise.

‘Doesn’t look like a woman’s work, I think,’ he said. ‘A woman! Come!’

‘There are women and women,’ retorted Chaney. ‘It’s a woman we want to see now. Caretaker—in the basement.’

We pursued our way to the basement. That was arranged pretty much like the flats above. A sitting-room, a bedroom, a kitchen. And in the sitting-room we found the caretaker, refreshing herself, in company with an awe-struck and inquisitive neighbour, by means of a teapot. The Scotland Yard man had already possessed himself of her name. He addressed her.

‘Mrs. Goodge?’

Mrs. Goodge stood up. She was a slightly-built, middle-aged woman, who looked as if she was perpetually fighting the battle of life without much hope of coming out on top; there was a certain patient acquiescence about her which suggested that whatever came she would see things out.

‘That’s me, sir,’ she answered quietly.

‘We’re police-officers, Mrs. Goodge,’ said the Scotland Yard man. He glanced at the neighbour. ‘Friend of yours?’

‘Next door neighbour, sir, Mrs. Marrable. Which Mrs. Marrable is caretaker of the next house, sir.’

‘Does Mrs. Marrable know anything of this affair?’ asked the Scotland Yard man.

‘Not me, sir!’ replied Mrs. Marrable, promptly. ‘No more than the child unborn, ‘cept what Mrs. Goodge here——’

‘Then you can go, Mrs. Marrable,’ interrupted our spokesman. ‘We want to talk

to Mrs. Goodge.’

Mrs. Marrable went—obviously more inquisitive than before. The Scotland Yard man shut the door after her and whispered to Doxford. And Doxford, motioning Mrs. Goodge to be seated, proceeded to question her.

‘Sit down and go on with your tea,’ he said. ‘We only want to ask you a few questions. What do you know about this affair in Number 12, Mrs. Goodge?’

‘Me, sir? Nothing, sir! No more than——’

‘What do you know about the dead woman? Just tell us all you know.’

‘All I know, sir, is this. Two or three of these flats are furnished flats—let furnished, you understand. About a fortnight ago, or it might be between a fortnight and three weeks, Mr. Morty, the agent what lets these flats, brought this here poor lady here and showed her Number 12, which was unlet. He come downstairs with her after, and tells me she’d taken it. She said she’d come in that afternoon, and she come, with her luggage. Not much luggage she had—a trunk and a suit-case, mainly. And settled in there and then, sir, which is all I can tell you.’

‘You must know a lot more than that, Mrs. Goodge. What was her name, now?’

‘Mrs. Clayton, sir, was the name she give me. But I never see nothing of her, or as you might say, next to nothing, from the day she come in to yesterday. Kept herself to herself, she did.’

‘Did you do no cooking for her?’

‘I did not, sir. There’s a gas cooker in the kitchens in all these here flats, and what meals she had in she did herself. But I believe she always went out to her lunch and her dinner.’

‘Didn’t you clean up for her?’

‘Once a week, sir, she had me in to do her rooms out. Otherwise she did all for herself, which, of course, there was very little to do.’

‘Didn’t she talk to you?’

‘Not much, sir. Just a bit—when I cleaned up for her.’

‘Well, now, what was she—an Englishwoman, or a Frenchwoman?’

‘She talked English to me, sir, just like you and me might be talking. But it wasn’t London English.’

‘Not London English, eh? What sort of English, then? What do you mean, exactly?’

‘Well, sir, she talked like people do who come from the North of England—Yorkshire and Lancashire people, sir. I’ve heard a many of them talk in my time.’

‘A North-country woman, eh? She never told you where she came from?’

‘She never told me anything about herself, sir, nothing at all.’

‘You’ve no idea where she came from when she came here?’

‘Oh, well, I’ve an idea of my own, sir. I’ve got eyes, same as other people, and I noticed there was French labels on her trunk and her suit-case. So I came to the conclusion that she’s come from France, recent.’

‘You never heard her speak French?’

‘I did not, sir, because I never heard her speak to anybody but myself, and it would have been no use her speaking French to me ‘cause I don’t know one word of that language.’

‘Well, did she ever have any visitors?’

‘That I can’t say, sir. The people as lives in these flats could have visitors and callers by the dozen, sir, without me knowing of it. The front door’s always open, and people have nothing to do but walk in and go up the stairs to whichever number they want. I never knew of her having visitors, but she may have had several.’

‘What about letters? What’s the arrangement about that?’

‘Just the same as regards visitors, sir. The postman, he delivers the letters at each flat. And so does the telegraph boys, if there’s telegrams.’

‘Then it really comes to this, Mrs. Goodge—you practically know nothing of this dead woman, except what you’ve told us?’

‘That’s it, sir, I know nothing about her—nothing!’

Doxford looked at Chaney. And Chaney, who had been listening carefully to Mrs. Goodge, responded to the glance by taking a hand in the game.

‘Do you know anything about last night, Mrs. Goodge?’ he asked. ‘Can you tell us anything about last night? Not necessarily about the dead woman, you know. But do you know of anything that occurred last night that you regarded as a bit out of the ordinary? Anything! Any strange persons about, you know, or—eh?’

Mrs. Goodge turned a sharp eye on her new questioner. She looked Chaney fair and square in the face, and when she answered his question there was a new inflection in her voice and a change in her manner.

‘Well, there was something!’ she said.

‘To be sure!’ responded Chaney, cheerfully. ‘There was something! And what might it be, Mrs. Goodge?’

Mrs. Goodge regarded us comprehensively; her glance round had an element of coyness in it.

‘Well, you see, mister,’ she replied, fixing the wandering glance on Chaney. ‘Last night I had what you might call a night out! Which such a thing don’t happen too often to me, I can tell you. Still, as they say, it’s a poor heart that never rejoices.’

‘Quite true, Mrs. Goodge, quite true!’ agreed Chaney. ‘A night out, eh? You

weren't here, then?'

'Not till what you might call late last night or very early this morning I wasn't,' replied Mrs. Goodge. 'You see, mister, my daughter, as is married very respectable and lives up Hampstead Road way, she asked me to go to the play with her, which it was a piece at the Marlborough Theatre what she was very desirous of seeing, her having a partiality for the stage though her husband is, of course, in the oil-and-colour line. And of course I went to tea with her before we went to the play and was out of this here house from five o'clock in the afternoon.'

'Yes—and till when, Mrs. Goodge?' asked Chaney, patiently.

Mrs. Goodge considered matters.

'Well, I can't rightly say, mister, to the minute,' she answered. 'But it would be nearer two o'clock this morning than one, which is, of course, uncommon late hours for me but only occurring once in a while, and as I said before, it's a poor heart \_\_\_\_'

'Let's say between one and two o'clock this morning,' interrupted Chaney, 'or getting towards two o'clock——'

'Which would be nearer the mark, mister,' said Mrs. Goodge. 'A quarter to two it would be at any rate. 'Cause you see, after we come out of the theatre, my daughter she would have me go home and take a bit of supper with her, and of course there was a neighbour or two of hers there and one gets talking and such like, and it was after one o'clock when her husband he see me into a late 'bus what comes this way—which this house is in Hamilton Street and not so far——'

'A quarter to two, then, Mrs. Goodge,' said Chaney, 'when you got in here, you know. And—it was then that something happened, eh?'

Mrs. Goodge gave her questioner a look which seemed to signify admiration for his penetrative powers.

'Well, that's just when it was, mister!' she replied frankly. 'You see, I was half-way down the stairs that leads to this basement—just round the corner from the first flight—when I hears somebody coming soft and quick down the stairs from the flats. So I just looked round the corner.'

'Yes?' said Chaney. 'And you saw——'

'I saw a man!' replied Mrs. Goodge. 'Leastway I saw the back of a man! He was just passing out of the street door. And, of course, next instant he was gone.'

'Dear, dear!' exclaimed Chaney. 'You only saw—just his back?'

'Just his back, mister, and no more,' assented Mrs. Goodge. 'Not one bit more.'

'Well—what sort of man was he?' enquired Chaney, resignedly. 'Tall, short, fat,

thin—what?’

‘I should call him one of these here middle-sized ones,’ replied Mrs. Goodge. ‘Neither high nor low, stout nor starved—judging by his build. But I see more of his clothes than of him.’

‘His clothes, eh?’ said Chaney. ‘How was he dressed, then?’

‘Black!’ replied Mrs. Goodge, with emphasis. ‘He’d a black overcoat, and one o’ them black slouch hats what actors and musicians is partial to, and a big white muffler round his neck. And of course that was all I see of him. Back view!’

‘You’d never seen him about the flats before, Mrs. Goodge?’ asked Chaney.

‘No, I’ll take my solemn ‘davit I never had, mister!’ asserted Mrs. Goodge. ‘I can speak confident about that!’

Doxford intervened.

‘Weren’t you surprised to see a man leaving the place at that hour?’ he asked. ‘Nearly two o’clock in the morning!’

‘Which I was nothing of the sort, sir,’ replied Mrs. Goodge, promptly. ‘There’s twelve separate flats in this here house, though one of ’em, Number 11, is at this present unlet. Well, there’s all sorts in them eleven flats. There’s an artist gentleman in Number 5—he ain’t particular what hours him and his friends keeps. Then there’s one or two young actress ladies—they ain’t early birds, and if, as often happens, they brings friends home with ’em, why, of course they turns night into day, as the saying is. Then there’s others as is——’

‘Then there was nothing unusual in your seeing a man leave the place at a quarter to two in the morning?’ interrupted Doxford.

‘Nothing at all, sir!’ replied Mrs. Goodge. ‘I never said there was, did I? What I said was that something happened. Well, that happened. But I didn’t consider it at all unusual. It didn’t keep me awake, I can tell you! The only unusual thing was that I didn’t know the looks of this here man in black at all—his appearance was a stranger to me. Some of the people that comes visiting and calling here I do know by sight. There’s young gentlemen drops in sometimes to see some of our ladies—well, I know them, by sight, d’ye see, though I couldn’t put a name to ’em, and——’

‘But this particular man, with his black coat, black slouch hat, and white muffler, you’d never seen before?’ said Doxford. ‘That it?’

‘That’s it, mister,’ agreed Mrs. Goodge. ‘He may ha’ been in these flats before, but if he had I’d never seen him.’

Doxford looked at Chaney, who was making notes in his memorandum book. They began whispering. The Scotland Yard man, who had quietly followed all that Mrs. Goodge had said, turned to her.



‘There’s a matter I’d like to know something about, Mrs. Goodge,’ he said. ‘That street door—through which you saw the man disappearing. Is it never fastened at night?’

Mrs. Goodge pursed up her thin lips, and made no reply.

‘Oughtn’t it to be?’ continued the Scotland Yard man. ‘Come, now?’

Mrs. Goodge spoke then, shaking her head.

‘Well, mister, it did!’ she admitted. ‘My orders was to fasten it at twelve o’clock, ‘cause every flat-holder has a latch-key to it. But you see, they was all of ’em, ‘specially them young actress ladies, a-forgetting of this latch-key, and rousing me out of bed down here at all hours of the night, so that it’s been left open for I don’t know how long. ‘Taint worth my while to lock it!’

Doxford and Chaney got up. Doxford turned to Mrs. Goodge.

‘Well, we want to see this Mr. Morty, the agent, next,’ he said. ‘What’s his address?’

### III

Mrs. Goodge obliged us with Mr. Morty's address, which was a certain number in Great Portland Street, and Doxford, Chaney, and myself went round there at once to see him, the Scotland Yard man remaining at Little Custom Street to carry out some further investigations. Although he was, relatively, within a stone's throw of its scene, Mr. Morty, an innocuous and colourless sort of person, had not heard of the murder, and was properly shocked when we told him of it. But when we asked him what he knew of the dead woman, he spread his hands and shook his head.

'Nothing, my dear sirs!' he exclaimed. 'Absolutely nothing! No more than you do!'

'Just a bit more, I think,' suggested Doxford. 'You let the flat to her.'

Mr. Morty spread his hands again.

'Oh, in the way of business, yes, just a bit more, as you say,' he admitted. 'But what's it amount to? Just nothing—as I say. She came in here one morning and said she wanted to take a furnished flat. Well, I let her a furnished flat—see?'

'Not without some preliminaries, I suppose,' said Doxford. 'You took her to see Number 12 at 39 Little Custom Street, I believe.'

'I did, of course,' assented Mr. Morty. 'In the way of business, I did. I took her round there myself. She saw the place: she said it would suit her: she came back here and paid a month's rent in advance. Which, of course,' he concluded, with more spreading of his hands, 'was all business.'

'She gave you her name, I suppose?' suggested Doxford.

Mr. Morty turned to a book which lay on his desk. He turned certain of its pages over.

'Mrs. Clayton—that's the name she gave,' he answered. 'Shouldn't have remembered it, if you hadn't asked me. These people are tenants to me—just tenants. I can't think of all their names!'

'Did she tell you where she came from?' asked Doxford.

'She did not—in particular,' replied Mr. Morty. 'Runs in my mind, though, that she said she'd come over from the Continent on business. That wasn't my affair of course, you know.'

'Didn't you ask for any reference?' enquired Doxford.

Mr. Morty looked squarely at his questioner as if wondering where he had been brought up.

'Don't I tell you she paid a month's rent in advance?' he answered. 'I don't want any reference after that. Money down on the nail is the best reference.'

‘Have you ever seen her since she took the flat?’ persisted Doxford. ‘Either there or here at your office?’

‘Neither here nor there, my dear sir,’ replied Mr. Morty. ‘But I did see her one night not so long ago. Not in a business way, though.’

‘How, then?’ asked Doxford.

‘It was at Riccasoli’s, down the street,’ answered Mr. Morty. ‘Restaurant, you know. I went in there to have my dinner, being obliged to stay late at my office. She was there.’

‘What doing?’ enquired Doxford.

‘Having her dinner,’ replied Mr. Morty.

‘Alone?’

‘Alone so far as I know.’

‘Did you speak to her?’

‘I did not! She gave me a bow as I passed her, and I gave her one. What should I speak to her for? I hadn’t any business with her. Our business was done—till the month was up.’

Doxford glanced at Chaney as if inviting him to take up the running, and Chaney stepped in.

‘About those flats at Little Custom Street, Mr. Morty,’ he said. ‘Are you responsible for the management?’

‘I am not, my dear sir,’ replied Mr. Morty. ‘All I am responsible for is the letting of ’em, and the collection of the rents.’

‘Who is responsible for them, then?’ asked Chaney.

‘The caretaker woman, Mrs. Goodge, is responsible,’ said Mr. Morty. ‘They’re in her charge, not mine.’

‘But I suppose Mrs. Goodge was given certain orders, wasn’t she?’ asked Chaney. ‘About that front door, now—the street door——’

Mr. Morty spread his hands abroad again: it was remarkable what a variety of emotions he could express with those white, fat hands.

‘Mrs. Goodge has been warned about that front door a dozen of times!’ he exclaimed, testily. ‘Her orders are to close it at a certain hour every night, because every flat-holder in the place has a latch-key for it. But Mrs. Goodge says that they’re always forgetting their keys, or losing ’em, or leaving ’em lying about somewhere, and then they ring her up, and—well, of course, the woman naturally leaves it open. I suppose she left it open last night, and the murderer walked in and upstairs and did his job? Just so—well, sorry I can’t be of any use to you, gentlemen. Has he made much mess of that flat?—we’d only just had it done up, so

nice and fresh!’

We left Mr. Morty and went out into Great Portland Street. Doxford looked at his watch. Nearly two o’clock.

‘I’ve got over my yawniness,’ he said, ‘but I’m famishing for something to eat. Let’s turn into Riccasoli’s and get some lunch. Perhaps we may hear something about this woman there. She may have gone there regularly.’

We went down the street to Riccasoli’s—a typical Italian café-restaurant. We had lunch; we felt justified, having lunched, in trifling a little over our coffee and cigars—and in due time we got the manager to our table and told him in confidence what we wanted. He was a sharp-eyed, observant fellow, and became of use to us at once.

‘Ah, I knew the lady you speak of!’ he said. ‘A pleasant, rather handsome woman that has come here every night for her dinner for the last two or three weeks. I have not talked to her myself beyond a mere polite word, you understand, but she always sat at the same table, over there, in the alcove, and—Marco!’

He summoned a waiter with a wave of his hand, and again turned to us.

‘Marco here always waited on that lady,’ he said. ‘Perhaps you will explain \_\_\_\_\_’

We explained to Marco, an olive-skinned, black-eyed product of Tuscany: Marco comprehended perfectly.

‘She was in here last night, gentlemen,’ said Marco. ‘Last night she was a little late; half-past seven it would be; usually it was seven.’

‘Did she talk to you at all?’ enquired Chaney.

‘As a customer will,’ answered Marco. ‘Now and then, you understand. At intervals.’

‘What did she talk?’ asked Chaney. ‘English?’

‘No—she spoke French, to me. But,’ added Marco, with a knowing shake of his sleek head, ‘with an English accent. Not as a Frenchwoman would speak it. Plenty of words, yes, what you call a good vocabulary, but accent—no! English.’

‘Why did she speak French to you?’

Marco shrugged his shoulders.

‘She thought, at first, I was a Frenchman—a Provençal.’

‘And you weren’t, eh?’

‘I am from Florence, gentlemen.’

‘Then she went on speaking French to you—why?’

‘I speak French, too, as well as English. Perhaps she wanted to practise. Many people do.’

Chaney went off on another tack.

‘Well, now, you remember this lady very well,’ he said. ‘She’s been coming here regularly for her dinner every night for the last two or three weeks. Now did she always come alone?’

Marco answered that question promptly.

‘Always alone but just once! Once she came with a gentleman.’

‘A gentleman, eh? When was that?’

‘About a week ago.’

‘Can you describe him?’

‘He was a Frenchman—they talked in French all the time. I heard them mention Nice, Monte Carlo, Mentone.’

‘But, if you can, describe him. Tell us what he was like.’

‘A man of about forty years. About medium height. Dark—moustache and imperial. Good-looking man.’

‘Well dressed?’

‘Oh, nicely! Black coat and vest; striped trousers. Dark, perhaps black overcoat. Nothing conspicuous, you understand. Well-mannered man. Perhaps—a merchant.’

‘Did they seem to be great friends?’

‘Oh, yes. Old friends, perhaps.’

‘Any love-making?’

‘Oh, no, no! Good old—what you call pals, you know.’

‘Who paid for the dinner, that night?’

‘He did.’

‘Did they leave together?’

‘Yes. They sat some time after dinner, smoking and talking. Then—yes, they went away together.’

‘Had you ever seen the man before?’

‘Never! Stranger.’

‘Has he ever been here since?’

‘Oh, no, no! Only that time.’

‘Did she mention him to you when she came again, by herself?’

‘No—nothing.’

There seemed nothing more to ask after that, but Doxford put a further question.

‘Did this lady ever happen to tell you where she came from?’ he asked.

Marco hesitated, evidently searching his memory.

‘Not that exactly,’ he answered. ‘But she knew Paris. And she knew Monte

Carlo. You see, I have been a waiter at hotels in both places. So——’

‘Common ground between you,’ said Doxford.

He rose and we rose with him, and presently went out into the street again. And there, after a brief discussion we all three got into a taxi-cab and went back to Cheverdale Lodge.

## IV

As our taxi-cab drew up at the entrance gates of Cheverdale Lodge a private car, driven by a chauffeur in livery, came alongside it, and from it stepped Mr. Francis Craye, looking very grave and carrying a bundle of papers. He came straight to Doxford, with a single sharp word.

‘Well?’

‘Well—what, sir?’ asked Doxford, staring at the questioner.

‘Is that the same woman—the woman who called on Hannington?’ asked Craye. ‘Have you ascertained anything?’

‘There’s no doubt about it, sir! Miss Hetherley identified her at once.’

‘But I understood that Miss Hetherley said she couldn’t identify her! Miss Hetherley, you may remember, said that the woman was so closely veiled when she called on Hannington that she never saw her face!’

‘Exactly, sir—but Miss Hetherley identified her by other means and circumstances. She recognized certain things the woman wore—her gown, her coat, her ear-rings. Miss Hetherley is positive on the point. I don’t think there’s the least possible doubt that it’s the same woman. And, according to the medical men, she’d been killed in exactly the same way that Hannington was.’

‘Anything to show by whom?’

‘We’ve evidence that a strange man was seen leaving the flats about two o’clock this morning. Whether he was the murderer we don’t know. Only one person saw him—the caretaker—and she only got a glimpse of his back as he vanished through the front door, and couldn’t possibly identify him from the bit she saw of him.’

Craye looked from one to the other of us as if in perplexity.

‘Is that the only clue you’ve got?’ he asked. ‘What the caretaker saw?’

‘If you can call it a clue,’ replied Doxford, ‘yes.’

‘Nothing to show any motive?’

‘Whatever motive there was, sir, it wasn’t robbery,’ said Doxford. ‘The woman had a lot of money, French and English, lying about, all untouched; she’d some fairly valuable jewellery, too. But we came up to make a report to Lord Cheverdale, sir—hadn’t you better come in and hear it.’

Craye nodded, and moved towards the house: we walked alongside him.

‘I’ve got some fresh information myself,’ he remarked as we neared the front door. ‘About Hannington’s movements, last night. You shall hear it when you’ve reported to Lord Cheverdale. By-the-way, did you ascertain anything about the woman—who she was, where she came from, what she called herself?’

‘No more than that she took a furnished flat in Little Custom Street two or three weeks ago, was believed to have come from abroad, and called herself Mrs. Clayton,’ replied Doxford. ‘But you’ll hear all details—they’re few enough!—in what we say to his lordship. Then, Mr. Craye, we’ll be glad to hear your news. News is scarce enough, so far!’

‘Mine’s not much, Inspector,’ said Craye. ‘A mere detail—but it suggests something to me.’

We found Lord Cheverdale in his business room: Paley was with him. He listened eagerly and with a sort of queer impatience while Chaney, at Doxford’s invitation, gave him a concise but exact account of everything that had happened to us from our leaving Cheverdale Lodge to our return. As the story went on his eagerness and impatience seemed to increase.

‘Now, what, what, what do you make of this?’ he burst out at the end. ‘Haven’t you found any clue? Haven’t you any explanation? Haven’t you anything to suggest? What do you say about it—all of you, any of you?’

‘It’s scarcely time yet to say anything, my lord,’ replied Doxford. ‘We can only give your lordship the bare facts, so far. Our people down there are, of course, carrying out the most careful investigations—finger-prints, and all that sort of thing, and later on——’

‘Yes, yes, yes, but meanwhile—dear me!’ continued Lord Cheverdale, interrupting himself. ‘I never knew such a business! My editor murdered in my own grounds, within a stone’s throw of my front door—this unfortunate woman similarly murdered, the same night, in her own room—good God! how do I know that I may not be the next victim? But tell me—are you sure, positively sure, that the woman you have seen dead is the woman who called on Hannington yesterday afternoon?’

‘Miss Hetherley is certain of it, my lord,’ replied Doxford. ‘Miss Hetherley identified her at once—without any hesitation.’

Lord Cheverdale sat bolt upright in his chair, staring from one to the other of us and drumming the tips of his fingers on the table before him.

‘What’s it all mean?’ he exclaimed. ‘What does it all mean?’

Doxford motioned to Craye, who had been whispering to Paley.

‘I understand that Mr. Craye has something to tell, my lord,’ he said. ‘Perhaps he’ll tell it now.’

Lord Cheverdale turned on his business manager.

‘Yes, yes, let me have it, Craye!’ he said hastily. ‘Anything that will throw some light on this ghastly business! Like living in a thick fog, and not a gleam of light anywhere. What is it—what is it?’



‘Not very much,’ replied Craye, quietly. ‘But as I have said already to these gentlemen, it suggests something to me. It’s just this—I told you, this morning,’ he went on, turning to Doxford, Chaney and myself, ‘that I have a flat in Whitehall Gardens. It is, of course, a bachelor establishment. I keep one man-servant, a sort of valet and general utility man. I mention this in order to explain that last night, when I was out, dining here with Lord Cheverdale, my man was out, too—it was his weekly night out. Now, at these particular flats in Whitehall Gardens we have just got a new hall-porter, who is as yet unfamiliar with people who call there. This man told me this afternoon, just before I came up here, that at about ten o’clock last night a gentleman, who, from his description, I feel certain was Hannington, called and went up in the lift to the floor—second—in which my flat is situated. He came down again in a few minutes and asked the hall-porter if he knew where I was?—he wanted, he said, to see me particularly, and must find me, if possible. The hall-porter told him that he had seen me go out, had, in fact, got a cab for me at seven o’clock, but had no idea where I had gone, though he believed, to dine out somewhere. The gentleman then asked if the hall-porter knew anything of the whereabouts of my valet? All the hall-porter could say on that point was that he knew my valet had gone out, too. On that the gentleman went away. Now, as I have already said, I have no doubt whatever that this gentleman the hall-porter spoke of was Hannington. And I have formed a certain opinion.’

‘Yes?’ said Doxford. ‘And—it’s what, Mr. Craye?’

‘Yes, yes!’ echoed Lord Cheverdale. ‘Let’s have it—let’s have it by all means, Craye! Anything that will throw light——’

‘I don’t know that it will throw any light,’ said Craye, quietly. ‘But it’s this: Putting all the facts together as we now know them, I think that the woman who called herself Mrs. Clayton, when she called on Hannington yesterday afternoon, communicated some intensely important political information to him and at the same time placed in his hands papers of equal importance—in brief, I think she was a political agent of some sort. I think that Hannington, after considering the information he had received, and knowing that I am Lord Cheverdale’s business manager, and also knowing that his lordship, unfortunately, is not in the best of health just now, determined to see me first, and set off to my flat for that purpose. Failing to find me, he came along here to see Lord Cheverdale. And the rest—you know.’

‘And—all this is akin to my colleague, Windover’s theory—you think he was waylaid in the grounds here, Mr. Craye?’ said Doxford. ‘All a planned job?’

‘That’s more for you than for me,’ replied Craye. ‘My private opinion is that the woman had been carefully watched and followed, probably from abroad; that she

was followed to the *Sentinel* office, and that from the moment he left the *Sentinel* office Hannington was watched, too. But I think more than that—I think that these people took no chances. They not only followed Hannington, but, having a very good idea of where he would turn with his secret and the papers the woman had entrusted to him, they posted men to be in readiness for him in Lord Cheverdale’s grounds. Also, they took no chance about the woman. From what you have just told Lord Cheverdale,’ he continued, turning to Doxford, ‘can there be any doubt as to what these people were after, in both cases? I am not a detective. I know nothing about your methods or your way of looking at things; I am merely a business man, accustomed to dealing with matters in, I hope, a business-like and common-sense way. Now, can any man doubt what the motive, the object, in both these murders was? I take it it was a two-fold object—first, to silence the possessors of a secret; second, to obtain possession of documents in which that secret was revealed. I understand that Hannington went about with his pockets stuffed with papers; he hadn’t a paper on him when the police examined his clothing after his death. You tell me, too, that the dead woman’s flat had been searched from top to bottom—for what? Not for money—for papers, documents! To me the thing seems absolutely clear! What do you say, Paley?’

The private secretary looked up from the blotting-pad on which he had been drawing scrolls and figures while Craye talked.

‘I can’t think of anything that could be clearer,’ he said in his usual cool tones. ‘We are face to face with the agents of one of these secret political organizations. I have no doubt of that—never had any doubt, from the beginning.’

Lord Cheverdale, still drumming his fingers on the table, looked anxiously from one to the other of us.

‘What’s to be done?’ he asked anxiously. ‘What can be done?’

Doxford got up: Chaney and I followed his example.

‘You can rely on me, my lord, to do all that men in my position can do,’ said Doxford. ‘The case is difficult.’

Chaney added a similar assurance on behalf of me and himself, and he, Doxford and I went out. It may give some indication of what we were thinking when I say that we drove away and eventually separated without one further reference to the case.

Leaving our official colleagues of Scotland Yard to pursue the conventional method of investigation and to occupy themselves with enquiries, taking of—or looking vainly for—finger-prints, search for the man who had dined with the murdered woman at Riccasoli's, endeavours to find out where she came from last and if anybody in London knew anything about her, Chaney and I spent the next two or three days in cudgelling our brains for a possible theory. That there was a good deal to be said for what had now been adopted as the police theory—that the two murders were of a political nature—no one could doubt from the evidence already in hand. But neither Chaney nor I had any firm belief in it: each had an uneasy suspicion that there was something as yet unguessed at. And suddenly we got a new illumination. About the third or fourth evening after the murders, as I was sitting in my rooms above the office, alone, reading the last accounts of the police investigations in that day's papers, a ring came from the street door. Going down to see who was calling at that late hour I found myself confronted by the footman from Cheverdale Lodge, Harris.

Harris looked at me with an apologetic, half-doubtful expression: I could see that he was not sure of himself, not certain that he was doing the right thing. But after his glance he plucked up courage.

'Can I have a word or two with you, Mr. Camberwell?' he said. 'In private, sir.'

'Come in,' I replied, and bringing him inside, shut the door again. 'Come up to my rooms, Harris,' I continued. 'You can rely on absolute privacy.'

He followed me up to my sitting-room, and I gave him a chair and offered him a cigarette. I knew he had something to tell—but I was not going to hurry him.

'It's my night out, sir,' he said suddenly. 'I—I thought I'd call round and see you. There's something that's on my mind, Mr. Camberwell.'

'You needn't be afraid of confiding in me, Harris,' I answered. 'Anything that you want to tell me, and like to tell me, will be safe enough. The only person I might repeat it to would be my partner, Mr. Chaney, and he's as safe as I am.'

He nodded his head thoughtfully, and then sat bolt upright in his chair with a look of decision.

'Well, sir, I will tell you!' he said. 'It's about the murders! I'm not satisfied in my mind, Mr. Camberwell. And I daren't speak to anybody—I mean anybody at our place, Cheverdale Lodge.'

'Yes?' I replied encouragingly. 'What about the murders, Harris?'

He glanced at the door, as people do, unconsciously, when they have secrets,

and he lowered his voice.

‘It’s my belief that Mr. Paley knows something, sir!’ he said. ‘I honestly believe he knows something.’

‘What are your grounds, Harris?’ I asked. ‘You’ve reason for believing that, of course.’

‘I have, sir—in my opinion,’ he replied. ‘I shouldn’t say what I have said if I hadn’t. You remember, sir, what I told you and Mr. Chaney about finding Mr. Hannington’s dead body?’

‘I do!’

‘I told you that as soon as I found it I made straight for the house, and found Mr. Paley sitting reading in the library, all alone?’

‘You did.’

‘And that he went back with me to the shrubberies, saw the body, and then returned to the house and ’phoned the police?’

‘Yes—you told us all that.’

‘Yes, sir—but I didn’t tell you this. As soon as Mr. Paley had ’phoned the police he left me and the butler to receive them and so on, and went away! I didn’t tell you that, sir—it escaped me, at the time.’

‘Went away!’ I exclaimed. ‘Where?’

‘I don’t know, sir. He said he must go and tell Mr. Hannington’s relatives, or something of that sort—family was the word he used, I think—and he went straight off. And he never came back till half-past three o’clock, Mr. Camberwell!’

I made no answer for the moment: I was thinking. Paley away from Cheverdale Lodge from about twelve o’clock till half-past three! That required some thinking about.

‘You’re absolutely sure of this, Harris?’ I asked.

‘Positive, sir, positive! Ask Mr. Giles, our butler. He could tell you.’

Again I thought for a while: a long while.

‘Well, Harris,’ I said at last. ‘What are your ideas?’

Before replying he pulled a newspaper out of his pocket and turned to a marked passage.

‘There’s an account of the late Mr. Hannington in this paper, sir,’ he said. ‘It tells all about him. Listen to this, sir. “The deceased gentleman was unmarried, and his only relation is a sister, Mrs. Trenholme, who resides in the North of England!” So—there wasn’t any relation in London that Mr. Paley could go to break the news to, Mr. Camberwell.’

‘That would seem so, Harris, certainly. But—you’ve some other idea?’

He folded up the paper and returned it to his pocket.

‘I have, sir!’ he answered, deliberately. ‘That woman was murdered in Little Custom Street, between twelve and two o’clock. What do you make of that, sir?’

Whatever I made of it, I made no reply to this direct question, and he went on talking.

‘Mr. Paley, sir, was away from Cheverdale Lodge from about a quarter-past or, at the outside, half-past twelve till half-past three that morning. He said he was going to break the news to Mr. Hannington’s family. Mr. Hannington hadn’t any family. That was all a lie! Where did Mr. Paley go?’

Once more I said nothing. I wanted to know all that was in Harris’s mind: he was now talking freely, and I let him go on.

‘I’ve taken the trouble to ascertain one or two things for myself, sir. I’d an hour or two off day before yesterday, and I just made certain as to how long it would take anybody to walk from Cheverdale Lodge to Little Custom Street. I did it in exactly twenty-one minutes—fair average pace. That was in the daytime with traffic and foot-passengers about. At night, I’ll bet I could have done it in less.’

I had to speak, then—plainly.

‘Look here, Harris,’ I said. ‘Are you suggesting that Paley committed these murders? Both of them?’

‘I don’t know that I’m suggesting anything, Mr. Camberwell,’ he answered. ‘I said at the beginning that I believe he knows something. Look here, sir!—I’ve made a few guarded enquiries of my own, amongst our people. From the time Lord Cheverdale left him and retired for the night, nobody knows where Paley was! I found him reading in the library—yes, but a good while had elapsed between then and the end of his game of piquet with his lordship. And during that time Hannington was murdered. And where was Paley between half-past twelve and half-past three? During that time the woman was murdered. And—in just the same fashion! There’s something to think about, Mr. Camberwell.’

‘You’re quite right, Harris,’ I agreed, ‘quite right. There is a great deal to think about. But—you can keep a still tongue in your head?’

‘Trust me, Mr. Camberwell,’ he said. ‘Not a word, sir—if you say so.’

‘I do say so! Don’t you say a word to anybody—not even to your biggest crony. And especially not to anybody at Cheverdale Lodge. You won’t mind my discussing this with my partner? He’s as safe as they make ’em—and he’s experienced in these matters and will know what to do. Very well, trust what you’ve said to me, and leave me to deal with it. You’ve got it off your mind, now—just wait.’

He went away satisfied, and I sat for some time wondering over his story. And the more I wondered the more things came back to the same point—where did Paley go when he left Cheverdale Lodge immediately after the discovery of the murder of Hannington, and why? To say the least of it, it seemed a most extraordinary thing that Paley should have so hurriedly quitted the house and there was the further significant fact that Hannington, as far as we knew, had no relatives whom Paley could acquaint with the news of his tragic death. Still—were these relations of Hannington's of whom Paley knew and nobody else knew? That was possible—but none of them had come forward. The sister in the North of England turned out to be an invalid and unable to travel: nobody related to Hannington had presented himself or herself so far. The presumption therefore, was that Paley's remark to the Cheverdale Lodge servants was an excuse, a subterfuge. But—where did he go? And what was his reason for going anywhere?

I told Chaney all this as soon as he came to the office next morning: Chaney sniffed, and shook his head.

'I've had a notion—instinct, intuition, call it by any swell word you like—all along that that chap knew something,' he said 'I'll lay all I've got in the world that he knows something! He knew something when he came here that morning: he knew it when he sat, listening and holding his tongue—he's a swell hand at the silent man business—while we talked to his master. However, they all give 'emself away, and I reckon he's given himself away.'

'How, Chaney?' I asked, in surprise.

'By clearing out as he did,' answered Chaney.

'I don't understand,' said I.

'He can be traced! It may take time, a long time, but it can be done. We can find out where he went, where he spent the time between leaving Cheverdale Lodge and returning there,' replied Chaney. 'However long a time it takes, we can do it! And we will!'

'I suppose it wouldn't do to tax him straight out with the direct question?' I suggested.

'At this stage that's just what we won't do,' replied Chaney. 'We'll keep that in reserve—it'll keep, and in very good condition. No—I know a better trick than that. Call that clerk of ours up here.'

I wondered what he was after but I summoned Chippendale. Chaney motioned him to a seat and looked him carefully over.

'Look here, young fellow,' he said suddenly, 'you're a pretty smart 'un, aren't you?'

Chippendale's mouth, an unusually large one, spread itself all over his face. His small eyes twinkled.

'I'm not exactly a dull one, Mr. Chaney,' he answered. 'I know enough to come out of the rain.'

'I'll bet!' said Chaney, laconically. 'And which side your bread's buttered too. Ever done any shadowing, my lad?'

Chippendale grinned again—maliciously, this time.

'Should think I have, sir!' he replied. 'Did a deal of that, my last place. Once shadowed a West End swell for forty-eight hours with scarcely a mouthful to eat—led me a pretty dance, he did! Wanted to serve a writ on him.'

'Get him?' demanded Chaney.

'I got him!' said Chippendale.

'Ever done any enquiry work?' continued Chaney. 'On the quiet, eh?'

'Lots!' answered Chippendale. '*Sub rosa!*'

'Oh, you know a bit of lingo, eh?' said Chaney. 'All right, my lad! Now there's going to be a nice job for you. You've read all about this murder at Cheverdale Lodge, and the other at Little Custom Street?'

'Everything that's been in the papers,' replied Chippendale.

'All right,' repeated Chaney. 'Now listen! You're going to take a hand. A big hand! I'm going—or, rather, Mr. Camberwell's going—to introduce you to a footman at Cheverdale Lodge, one Harris——'

'Chap that found the body,' interrupted Chippendale, with new interest. 'I know!'

'Exactly—the chap that found the body,' continued Chaney. 'Very decent young fellow, too. You'll make friends with Harris. Through Harris you'll cultivate the other servants at Cheverdale Lodge—especially the women. Make love to 'em, if you like, but keep your ears open. Well, you want to know what the idea is?—the object? The object is to find out all you can about Mr. Paley—Lord Cheverdale's private secretary. And you're to use the most particular care about everything you do, my lad!—no false steps. Slow and sure—no undue haste. Got it?'

'I've got it, sir,' replied Chippendale. 'You can trust me. Take my time, eh?—so long as I get there?'

'Take your time—so long as you get there,' assented Chaney. 'And whatever conclusions you come to, keep 'em to yourself—till you tell them to us.'

I put Chippendale in touch with Harris at our office an evening or two later. I was obliged of course, to bring Harris into the plot. Harris entered into it with zest—he'd introduce Chippendale into the domestic circle at Cheverdale Lodge, he said,

as his bosom friend: there was a parlour-maid there that would just suit him. He himself was already engaged to Miss Chever's maid. And if the two of 'em, said Harris, couldn't unearth something about Paley, well...

'Don't forget that you'll be well paid for whatever services you render,' I said. 'The great thing is secrecy—and next to secrecy, caution.'

So that was in trim—but Chaney wanted help in another quarter. One morning soon after we had fixed the Harris-Chippendale combination he came into my room and said we would go down to the *Sentinel* office and see Miss Hetherley. I asked why?

'We want her help,' he answered. 'Come on!'

We gained ready admittance to Miss Hetherley, and Chaney took care that we were secure from eavesdroppers. Then, first pledging her to secrecy, he told her what Harris had told me of Paley's doings on the night of the murders.

'Now,' he concluded, 'I want you to tell me something, Miss Hetherley. Has Paley been here since the murders?'

'Yes!' replied Miss Hetherley. 'Once. He came here a few days ago, with what he called an order from Lord Cheverdale to me. I am to go through Mr. Hannington's desk and a cabinet in which he kept papers, and any private documents or papers that I find I am to separate from papers and documents relating to the *Sentinel* or the office and hand over to Mr. Paley.'

'Have you begun that job?' asked Chaney.

'Yes—I've done a bit of it,' replied Miss Hetherley. 'So far I've found nothing. Mr. Hannington wasn't in the habit of leaving private papers here.'

'What about that flat of his, in Mount Street?' suggested Chaney.

'Mr. Paley told me that he was seeing to that. Whatever private papers there are,' continued Miss Hetherley, 'will, I should say, be there.'

'All the same, there may be some here,' said Chaney. 'Now, Miss Hetherley, you must see, from what I've told you, that we've grounds for suspecting Paley of some complicity in these murders. What can we think of his quitting Cheverdale Lodge immediately after the murder of Hannington and being away for three hours?—during which time the murder in Little Custom Street took place? What do you think?'

'I think Paley's a bad lot, in any case,' replied Miss Hetherley, frankly. 'I always have thought so. He's a schemer.'

'Very well, then, you'll help us,' said Chaney. 'It's not much I want you to do, but it's highly important.'

'What is it?' asked Miss Hetherley.



‘Just this! If you do find any private papers or documents here, in Hannington’s desk or cabinet, which seem to you to have reference to his murder or to the visit Mrs. Clayton paid to him, do not hand them over to Paley! Don’t even show them to the Scotland Yard people. Let Mr. Camberwell and myself see them. Can you promise this? It’s of the utmost importance.’

Miss Hetherley considered matters during a moment’s silence. Then she nodded.

‘All right,’ she said. ‘I give you my word. But—you think I may find something?’

‘I’ll tell you frankly what I do think,’ replied Chaney. ‘You told us that Mrs. Clayton came here with a handful of papers, and that when Hannington saw her out of that door the papers were in his hand, not hers. Now I think it highly probable that there was something amongst those papers which he wouldn’t carry about with him, but would at once put in a place of safety—here!’

Miss Hetherley reflected.

‘Possible!’ she said. ‘Very well, Mr. Chaney. It’s a bargain. I’ll look most carefully. And if I find anything, I’ll come straight to your office.’

Chaney sighed with relief when we went away.

‘That’s another valuable aid!’ he said. ‘What that woman says she’ll do, she will do! And I thoroughly believe what I said to her just now—there may be something there.’

Two days later Miss Hetherley was shown into us by the admiring Chippendale. She carried a small despatch case, and from it she extracted a foolscap envelope.

‘I’ve found something!’ she said quietly. ‘In Hannington’s cabinet. Now look—an ordinary foolscap envelope—sealed. There’s something inside—a mere sheet of paper, by the feel. Here, outside, you see two initials, A.C. Is that Mrs. Clayton’s? Here again are two more initials—T.H. That’s Hannington’s. And here’s a date—the exact date of her call on him. Now—what’s inside?’

**GO NORTH, GO SOUTH!**

## I

Before Miss Hetherley could slit the envelope which she now showed us, Chaney held out a hand and took it from her.

‘Let’s be exact and careful, Miss Hetherley,’ he said. ‘Now, you’re certain that these initials are in the late Mr. Hannington’s handwriting?’

‘No doubt of that!’ replied Miss Hetherley. ‘Of course they are!’

‘And this date is the precise date on which the mysterious lady, whom we know as Mrs. Clayton, called on him?’

‘No doubt of that, either, Mr. Chaney.’

‘Very well,’ continued Chaney. ‘Now we’ll see what’s inside the envelope.’ He took out his penknife, slipped it through the flap, and drew out a paper, folded in three. One quick glance at it, and he laid it before us. ‘A certificate of marriage!’ he exclaimed. ‘Look!’

Miss Hetherley and myself bent over his shoulders and inspected the document. It was exactly what he said—a certificate of marriage between one Frank Crowther and one Alice Holroyd, celebrated before the Registrar at Milthwaite, in Yorkshire, some twelve years previously.

‘There!’ said Chaney. ‘Now, my idea is that this is what’s commonly called the marriage lines of the dead woman who gave her name—a fictitious one, no doubt—as Mrs. Clayton. Note certain things about it. Alice Holroyd, full age, is described as a spinster, and her address is given as the Angel Hotel, Milthwaite—perhaps she was the proprietor’s daughter. Frank Crowther, aged twenty-nine, is described as a salesman—his address is given at 21, Laburnum Grove, Milthwaite. Very well!—let’s conclude that Alice Holroyd, or Mrs. Crowther, and Mrs. Clayton are identical. But who’s Frank Crowther—and where is he? And why did Mrs. Clayton or Crowther deposit this document with Mr. Thomas Hannington?’

Miss Hetherley had picked up the marriage certificate and was carefully re-reading it. She put it back on the desk before Chaney.

‘There’s something strikes me at once,’ she said. ‘Now and then, Mr. Hannington used to talk to me about his experiences as a journalist. He was at one time, but I don’t know exactly when, a sub-editor on the *Milthwaite Observer*.’

‘Ah!’ exclaimed Chaney, triumphantly. ‘There you are! Mrs. Clayton, or Crowther, and Hannington were old friends, or acquaintances. That’s why she came

to him. But—what did she come for? Why did she leave this marriage certificate with him? Camberwell!’ he went on. ‘The political-crime theory is vanishing! This has been a sordid murder—couple of ’em, rather—arising out of a private matter. My opinion, anyhow!—now that I’ve seen this.’

‘What are you going to do?’ asked Miss Hetherley.

‘Do?’ said Chaney. ‘Well, for the present, Miss Hetherley, you, Camberwell there, and I are going to enter into conspiracy of silence—dead silence! Not a word to anybody—police, Lord Cheverdale, Paley, anybody at all—about this certificate. We’ll lock it up in that safe—after making a careful copy of it—and no one is to know you found it until—until the right moment comes. We can rely on you?’

‘You can rely on me, Mr. Chaney,’ replied Miss Hetherley. ‘You know me!’

She went away presently, and after we had made a careful copy of it, I locked up the marriage certificate in our office safe.

‘What next?’ I asked, turning to Chaney.

‘The next thing, Camberwell, is that you and I go down to Milthwaite,’ he said. ‘Milthwaite, my lad, is the spot where we start out on this particular voyage of discovery! We want to know who Alice Holroyd was, who Frank Crowther was—if Alice Holroyd, or Crowther, is identical with Mrs. Clayton, murdered in Little Customs Street, and where her husband has got to. Milthwaite, certainly—and at once! But first we must see Lord Cheverdale. And mind you, we’re to be very particular what we say to him. Leave that to me. And now let’s go and see him at once.’

We got a taxi-cab and drove up to Cheverdale Lodge. And there we were in luck: we found Lord Cheverdale alone: Paley, for once, was not in evidence. Lord Cheverdale seemed pleased—or relieved—to see us.

‘Any news, any news?’ he demanded. ‘Those Scotland Yard men have none!—none at all, so far. Slow—slow! Have you any?’

‘Well, my lord, these things take time,’ replied Chaney. ‘And your lordship will understand that one can’t always speak definitely. But Mr. Camberwell and myself have come to say that we have got an idea, a slight clue, which we wish to keep to ourselves, and should like to follow up, with your lordship’s approval and permission.’

‘Oh, take my approval and permission for granted!’ replied Lord Cheverdale, hurriedly. ‘Yes, yes—to be sure. Do anything you think necessary. *Carte blanche*, you know.’

‘Much obliged to your lordship,’ said Chaney. ‘The plan we propose will necessitate some travelling—we may have to cross the Channel. Your lordship will

remember that the dead woman is believed to have come from France.'

Lord Cheverdale threw out his arms with a sweeping gesture.

'Go north—go south!' he exclaimed. 'Go anywhere you like!—east, west, north, south! Only get at something—that's what I want!'

'We shall leave no stone unturned, my lord,' said Chaney. 'Your lordship understands, of course, that there will be expense——'

Again Lord Cheverdale shot out his arms.

'Spare no expense!' he commanded. 'Expense is neither here nor there. If you want money, tell Paley. He'll give you——'

'We're not wanting any money, my lord,' replied Chaney. 'All that can be settled when we've done our job. We will now get to work on our present idea, and we shall hope to report to your lordship in due course.'

'Very good, very good—business-like!' muttered Lord Cheverdale. 'Yes, yes—get to work; work is the thing. Clear everything up—everything! Make it well worth your while, then!'

We left Cheverdale Lodge at that and went back to our office. There were things to clear up before we could leave for Milthwaite. But Chippendale had already proved himself to be an excellent and capable right-hand man, and we had every confidence in his ability to look after the matters left in his charge. We were able to set out on our journey North early that evening, and by ten o'clock were safely housed in the Midland Hotel, at Milthwaite. At breakfast next morning we discussed our procedure—Chaney's great desire was to keep everything as secret and private as possible. At his suggestion we first visited the Registrar. And there, as soon as we obtained an interview, we saw that we were in luck. The Registrar was an elderly gentleman, and was, therefore, in all probability, the official who had officiated at the civil marriage of Alice Holroyd and Frank Crowther twelve years before.

## II

The Registrar listened with polite attention to the explanation of our presence which Chaney gave him, and looked with interest at the copy of the marriage certificate which we had made from the original.

‘Oh, yes, yes!’ he said at once. ‘I remember those people. Pretty young woman, and a smart young fellow. You’ve noticed, no doubt, that her address is given as the Angel Hotel in this town. She was a barmaid there—I think she’d a good many admirers. If you want information there, you’d no doubt get it from Mr. Milford, the proprietor—he’s an old man now, but I believe his memory is quite good. And then there are other people you can apply to. The two people who witnessed the ceremony, for instance. There they are—Mr. John Halstead; he’s now a well-known manufacturer in the town. Miss Milford—she’s Milford’s daughter, and still unmarried. You see I’m pretty well up in local knowledge!’

‘Much obliged to you, sir,’ said Chaney. ‘But as regards your own recollection, now? Can you give us any idea of what this man, Frank Crowther, was like?’

But the Registrar smiled and lifted a deprecating hand.

‘No, no!’ he said. ‘I can’t do that!—can’t remember now if he was tall or short, dark or light. All I remember is that he struck me as a smart young fellow, and that they seemed a well-matched couple.’

‘Do you know anything of what became of them again after you’d married them?’ enquired Chaney.

‘I heard that they left the town, immediately, after the wedding,’ replied the Registrar. ‘But beyond that I know nothing. They probably know more at the Angel. You haven’t been there yet?’

‘Not yet!’ replied Chaney. ‘We came to you first.’

‘The Angel is in White Market Street,’ said the Registrar. ‘An old-fashioned house, very strictly conducted—Milford, the proprietor, is a bit of what we call a character. Go and see him—but you’ll get more information out of his daughter, who, nowadays, is the real manager of the place. She probably knows a good deal about the matter you’re enquiring into.’

We went off to the Angel—a big, rambling, old-world hostelry, reminiscent of Tudor days outside and full of old oak within. And presently we were in the presence of its proprietor, a fairly ancient gentleman who sat, a cigar between his lips, and a comforting glass in front of him, by a bright fire in his own parlour. He was a little deaf, and we had some difficulty in explaining our presence and object.

‘You want to know about—who?’ he demanded at last. ‘What name?’

‘Alice Holroyd, sir—formerly barmaid in your employ,’ replied Chaney.

‘Alice? Left me ten or twelve years ago. Got wed. What do you want to know about her?’

‘We want to trace her and her husband, sir.’

‘Don’t know anything about ’em. Left here when she got wed. What do you want to know for?’

‘It’s a very important matter, sir—very important.’

‘Umph!’ Mr. Milford looked us both over carefully, from head to foot. ‘Lawyers, I reckon, what?’

‘Something of that sort, sir. We’re very anxious to trace Alice Holroyd and the man she married. We’ve come all the way from London for that purpose.’

Mr. Milford said ‘Umph!’ once more, and then, raising the stout stick he carried, thumped it heavily against the oak panelling by which he sat, and vociferated loudly ‘Sophia!’

A door opened in the panelling, and from a room behind it stepped out a sharp-eyed middle-aged woman, who glanced enquiringly from the landlord to ourselves. Mr. Milford pointed his stick at us.

‘These gentlemen want to know if you can tell them anything about Alice—that lass we had about ten or twelve years since, Sophia,’ he said. ‘Her that got wed to some chap or other and went away. I can’t tell ’em aught.’

Miss Milford looked at us again. She was evidently sizing us up.

‘Oh, well, of course, I could tell a good deal about Alice Holroyd,’ she said, hesitatingly. ‘Is it—perhaps you’d say what business it is?’

Chaney, mentioning the Registrar, gave Miss Milford some idea of what we were after. She became communicative at once, and sat down; Mr. Milford, lifting himself from his easy chair by means of his stout stick, went out of the room; his daughter closed the door after him.

‘Well,’ she said, resuming her seat, ‘of course, Alice Holroyd was a barmaid here for three years before she was married, so I knew her well. She was a very nice, clever, managing girl. Her father and mother were dead, and she’d no brothers or sisters. She had a bit of money of her own; about £2,000 or so, invested in a building society here in the town, and she’d a very nice salary here—quite a well-off young woman, you might say, and very well-conducted and respectable. She’d a good many offers of marriage, I can tell you—there were lots of steady young fellows in the town that would have been only too ready to marry her. But she never had any affairs till this Frank Crowther came along. And then—well, it was pretty sudden.’

‘Who was he, ma’am?’ enquired Chaney. ‘Did you know him?’

‘Not till then,’ replied Miss Milford. ‘He wasn’t a Milthwaite man. He came to the town on business, though what his exact business was I never could make out. He seemed to be nicely off—always smartly dressed and plenty of money to spend and so on. Anyway, Alice took a strong fancy to him—he used to come here a good deal when he was in the town—and the next thing I heard was that they were going to be married. And married they were, very soon, at the Registrar’s office. And I was a witness, for Alice, and I remember that I thought it a very queer thing that Crowther had no relations or friends there—not even a friend! His witness was a Milthwaite gentleman, Mr. John Halstead—I think Crowther used to do a bit of business with him and got him to attend. Of course, Alice, being an orphan, had no relations, to speak of.’

‘What happened after the wedding, ma’am?’ asked Chaney.

‘Oh, well, we had a bit of a wedding-breakfast here,’ replied Miss Milford, ‘and in the afternoon they went off to London. I’ve never seen either of them since.’

‘Nor heard of them?’ enquired Chaney.

‘Ah, well, that’s a different matter!’ said Miss Milford, shaking her head. ‘Yes, I heard two things: one, almost at once; the other, about a year afterwards. The first was—I got it from a solicitor in the town whom she’d employed, unknown to me—that two or three days before the marriage she drew all her money out of the building society—as I said before, about £2,000. The second was a letter I got from her—the first she’d written me since the wedding. It was from Mentone, in the South of France. She said that she and her husband were in business there, but she didn’t say what business. And why she wrote at all, in my opinion, was because she wanted me to send her a box of clothing that she’d left here. I sent it, and I never replied to her letter, and that’s all I know about her.’

‘Never heard from her since, ma’am?’ suggested Chaney. ‘Nor of her?’

‘Neither from nor of her,’ replied Miss Milford. ‘I’ve told you all I know. If you want to know anything about Crowther, perhaps Mr. John Halstead may know something—I don’t.’

Mr. Halstead, in quest of whom we set off without further delay, turned out to be one of the leading manufacturers of the town. We were fortunate enough to find him in his office—a big, burly, shrewd, outspoken Yorkshireman, who eyed us over carefully as Chaney made explanation of our mission. He said nothing until Chaney had finished; then he motioned us to chairs, and taking a seat at his desk, put his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat and looked quizzically from one to the other of us.

‘Now what are you chaps really after?’ he asked, with a twinkle of his sharp eyes. ‘There’s more behind what you’ve told me! What is it?’

Chaney looked at me.

‘I think we can take Mr. Halstead into our full confidence, eh, Camberwell?’ he said. ‘The fullest confidence!’

Halstead laughed.

‘You’ll get nothing out of me if you don’t!’ he said. ‘No half-measures with a Yorkshireman, my lads! All or nothing!’

‘Very well, sir,’ responded Chaney. ‘Then it’s all! You’ve read the newspaper accounts of the murder of Mr. Thomas Hannington at Lord Cheverdale’s place in Regent’s Park?’

‘I have! Queer business.’

‘And of the murder, the same night, of a woman, in Little Custom Street—a woman known there as Mrs. Clayton?’

‘I’ve read that, too. Still queerer business.’

‘Very well! We believe Mrs. Clayton to be identical with one Alice Holroyd, whose marriage to a man named Frank Crowther you witnessed, in this town, some twelve years ago.’

Halstead jumped in his seat.

‘The devil you do!’ he exclaimed. ‘Alice Holroyd! Why, what grounds——’

‘I’m going to tell you,’ said Chaney. He went on to give Halstead further explanations. ‘Now,’ he concluded, ‘what can you tell us, Mr. Halstead, about Alice Holroyd and Frank Crowther, especially about Crowther? You were his best man, or witness, at the ceremony, before the registrar. What did you know of him then?—what have you known of him since?’

‘Since—nothing!’ replied Halstead. ‘Before—very little. I never did know much of Crowther. Of course, this is all twelve years since—we were young men then. I got to know Crowther in this way—he came to Milthwaite occasionally on business, and used to stop a few weeks in the town, whenever he came. He was some sort of a commercial traveller, or commission agent—I never knew exactly what—he wasn’t in my line of business, anyway. But he was a bit of a sport, and a good bit of an athlete, and he joined an athletic club of which I was a member, and we became pretty friendly. And that was how it was he asked me to be a witness at his wedding at the registry office—he didn’t know many other men, and I think he’d a fancy for me.’

‘Can you describe him as he was then?’ asked Chaney.

‘I can. He was what you’d call a littlish chap. Middle height—spare, but sinewy.



As a matter of fact he was a man of more than usual strength and fine physique: every inch of him trained. He could do things on parallel bars and trapeze that only a thoroughly trained man could do—always at it, do you see. I've seen him swing Indian clubs——'

'I meant his personal appearance,' interrupted Chaney.

'Oh, well, I tell you he was of medium height, darkish hair, clean-shaven, good-looking, very ready and pleasant smile, and a way with him, as we say in Yorkshire—very ingratiating, especially where the women were concerned. That girl, Alice Holroyd, was madly in love with him.'

'And you say you've never heard anything of them since the wedding, Mr. Halstead? Nothing whatever, at any time?'

'Nothing whatever, at any time! They left Milthwaite the afternoon of their wedding day, and I've never heard of 'em since. Of course, I expected to hear—Crowther had made a friend of me. But I've heard not one word—from them, at any rate. But I did hear something in the town. The girl had a bit of money invested in a building society here. I heard that a day or two before the marriage she drew it all out, every penny. About a couple of thousand pounds. I suppose he got it. Maybe that was what he married her for. After all, except for what I've told you, I couldn't say I really knew Crowther.'

'Miss Milford, of the Angel, tells me that she heard from Mrs. Crowther, about a year after the marriage,' remarked Chaney. 'They were then living at Mentone——'

Halstead laughed.

'Bit close to Monte Carlo, eh?' he said. 'I'll bet, from what I remember of Crowther, that if he was within twenty miles of Monte Carlo he'd be at the Casino pretty regularly! Well, I can't tell more—except one thing. You want to find Crowther?'

'If he's alive! Yes!' replied Chaney. 'We do!'

'Well, I can tell you one very important thing, then,' continued Halstead. 'Crowther, in addition to his love of gymnastics and athletics, was passionately fond of swimming. We'd a fine swimming pool at the athletic club I mentioned, and he used to swim there a lot. Now then I can tell you, if you ever find him, how you can positively identify Crowther—positively, with no mistake!'

'Good, good!' said Chaney. 'How, how?'

'Crowther,' replied Halstead, 'has a remarkable specimen of elaborate tattooing on his left arm, just above the elbow. It's a sort of bracelet—a black serpent or dragon that goes completely round the fleshy part of the arm. He told me it had been done when he was somewhere in the East. Anyhow, it's a most beautiful bit of work,

and he'll never get rid of it as long as he lives—he'll not rub that off! So, if you ever do come across him, you'll know him by that—it's something exceptional. But really, now, do you honestly think this poor woman, murdered in Little Custom Street, is Mrs. Crowther? And if so——'

We remained discussing the two murders with Mr. Halstead for some time; then, at his suggestion, we went round to the office of the *Milthwaite Observer*, gave in an advertisement for insertion in the next morning's issue in which we asked anybody who could give any information about Alice Crowther, née Holroyd, to communicate with us at the Midland Hotel, Milthwaite, immediately. Before noon next day we were informed that Mr. Charles Perkins, solicitor, had called to see us: we had been out when he called, so he had left a message—would we go round to see him at his office in Exchange Buildings?

We went round to Mr. Perkins there and then: Mr. Perkins turned out to be an elderly gentleman of a questioning manner who wanted to know all we could tell him before he told anything to us. As in the case of Mr. Halstead we had to take him into our confidence before we could get further. But then, as he said, you can tell anything to a doctor, a priest, and a lawyer. And he did not show any considerable surprise at what we told him.

'I know nothing about Crowther,' he said. 'I knew Alice Holroyd. She employed my professional services in realizing her holding in the Third Equitable Building Society in this town. She'd something over £2,000 invested there—left her by her father. She drew the whole amount out just before she married. It was against my advice, but she said she and her husband were going into business together and wanted capital.'

'Did she tell you where the business was to be, sir?' asked Chaney.

'She didn't,' replied Mr. Perkins. 'But—two years later—I had to seek Mrs. Crowther out. A distant relation of hers left her a legacy of £1,500. It was in my hands. I made enquiry at the Angel Hotel, where she'd been engaged before her marriage, and Miss Milford told me she believed Mrs. Crowther was at Mentone. So I advertised for her in a Mentone paper—one printed in English, a sort of visitors' list. And I heard from her. She was there—at Mentone.'

'Did she say what she was doing, sir?' enquired Chaney.

'No! She just told me she'd seen the advertisement, and, in consequence, sent me her address. Of course, all I wanted was proof that she was the identical Alice Holroyd, now Crowther, that I'd known in Milthwaite. I got that in due course, and the £1,500 was paid over to her. Here,' continued Mr. Perkins, opening a drawer in his desk, and extricating some papers, 'is my correspondence with her—purely

formal—and her final acknowledgment of the receipt of the money.’

‘The address is what we should like to have,’ said Chaney. ‘We may be able to trace her subsequent movements from that.’

‘The address,’ said Mr. Perkins, glancing at the papers in his hand, ‘is simply Promenade St. Louis. No number.’

He held out the papers to Chaney, but Chaney shook his head.

‘I don’t know that there’s anything pertinent in that, sir,’ he said. ‘The address will be useful. But in that correspondence is there any mention of the husband—Crowther?’

‘None,’ replied Mr. Perkins. ‘Never mentioned at all.’

‘Did you, yourself, ever see Crowther, about the time of the marriage?’ asked Chaney.

‘No, I never saw him. She never brought him here. She spoke of him as a very clever young fellow—I should say she was infatuated with him. Now,’ concluded Mr. Perkins, ‘do you really think the murdered woman was Mrs. Crowther?—really?’

‘I think so!’ replied Chaney. ‘Everything is pointing to it.’

‘Then,’ said Mr. Perkins, ‘I lay anything her husband is at the bottom of it! Good-morning.’

We left Mr. Perkins and went out on the street. Chaney spoke.

‘Camberwell!’ he said. ‘We’ll have to go to the South of France.’

### III

Chaney was always so scrupulously careful in his arrangement of procedure that I felt a sly and almost malicious pleasure in giving him a gentle reminder that he was overlooking what I considered to be somewhat important matter.

‘No doubt,’ I replied to his last suggestion. ‘But you’re forgetting something that’s on the present spot.’

‘Forgetting?—what?’ he demanded.

‘Hannington used to be on the *Milthwaite Observer*,’ I said. ‘Wasn’t he editor or sub-editor? Here we are in Milthwaite—aren’t we going to ask a few questions at the *Observer* office?’

‘By Jove, you’re right!’ he exclaimed. ‘Of course! Hannington was first a reporter and then a sub-editor here. Now where is the *Observer* office?’

The *Observer* office turned out to be in a court at the rear of the Angel Hotel, and going there and sending in our professional cards we were presently escorted into the presence of the editor who listened to our story with that weary, pre-occupied air which for some strange reason or other, never to be explained, is characteristic of his kind.

‘I was not here in Hannington’s time,’ he said when Chaney had told him as much as it was proper for him to know. ‘He’d been gone two or three years before I came. I heard of him, of course. There’s been a complete change of staff since his day. However, we have a man here who was here when Hannington was, and I’ll introduce him to you.’ He rang a bell and a boy appeared. ‘See if Mr. Macpherson is in the reporters’ room,’ he said. ‘If he is, ask him to come here.’

Mr. Macpherson appeared quickly. He was, as his name suggested, a Scotsman. He had a grizzled moustache and beard, a red nose, and a watery blue eye, and he regarded Chaney and myself with a sort of suspicious enquiry.

‘Mr. Macpherson,’ said the editor, ‘these gentlemen, Mr. Chaney and Mr. Camberwell, are making some enquiries about the late Mr. Hannington, who, you know, was——’

‘Mur-r-r-der-r-r-ed in London the other day!’ muttered Mr. Macpherson. ‘Aye, aye, I knew Tom Hannington well, ‘deed I did!’

‘Perhaps you could have a talk with them, Mr. Macpherson?’ concluded the editor. ‘You knew Mr. Hannington when he was here.’

Mr. Macpherson lost no time. Without a word he motioned us out of the editorial presence and carefully closed the door. Then he turned on us with an earnest look. ‘D’ye ken the Angel?’ he asked.

‘We do!’ replied Chaney.

Mr. Macpherson pointed down the stair at the head of which we stood.

‘Go there and into the little snug at the left-hand side as ye go in,’ he commanded. ‘I’ll be with you in ten minutes—and maybe less.’

We obeyed Mr. Macpherson’s instructions. The snug he spoke of was a small parlour; untenanted; there was a bright fire and every opportunity for comfort. A waiter appeared: we bade him await Mr. Macpherson’s coming. And in less than ten minutes Mr. Macpherson came—the waiter appeared to know him intimately.

‘Mine’s as usual, Alfred,’ said Mr. Macpherson. ‘Take these gentlemen’s pleasures.’

Mr. Macpherson’s usual was a liberal dose of the wine of his country, with a very little admixture of water: he seemed more at home when he had sampled it once or twice.

‘And yer wantin’ to know about poor Tom Hannington?’ he said, confidentially. ‘Aye, many’s the glass Tom and myself have taken in this very room! I mind——’

‘I thought Mr. Hannington was a rabid teetotaller,’ interrupted Chaney.

Mr. Macpherson made a face expressive of disgust.

‘Aye, man, so he was in his later, degenerate day!’ he said. ‘But he was no’ a teetotaller when he was here on the Obsairver! He used to come here to the Angel a good deal—with me and the other boys. He was a good fellow, then. He fell from grace, poor Tom, when he got in with that damned old tea-merchant in London!’

‘Lord Cheverdale?’ said Chaney.

‘Who else?—a damned old Puritan!’ retorted Mr. Macpherson. ‘Wae’s me!—the change there was in Tom! I called to see him last time I was ever in that Babylon, and where once he’d ha’ gone out with me to a Fleet Street hostelry, he would have me to a bun-and-cocoa shop! Faugh!—Alfred, recharge the glasses!’

It was plain that Mr. Macpherson was an irrepressible, and we let him babble on. But we quickly ascertained a certain pertinent fact. Thomas Hannington, as a member of the editorial staff of the *Milthwaite Observer*, some twelve or fourteen years previously, had been in the habit of visiting the Angel Hotel for refreshment, liquid and otherwise, and consequently had opportunities of knowing Alice Holroyd. The mention of her name aroused other memories in Mr. Macpherson.

‘Aye, I remember the lass well enough!’ he said. ‘A fine, soncy young woman she was—married some fellow that caught her fancy and went off with him. We gave her a wedding present from the *Observer*—those of us that used this house. More by token, Hannington got it up—a tea and coffee service, best silver. Oh, yes, I mind Alice very well—Hannington was a bit sweet on her himself. But he was a dour and

gloomy chiel, Tom, at times, though a good fellow at others, and when the damned old tea-merchant got hold of him—faugh! An' we'll just tak' the other glass to his memory! Alfred!

We left Mr. Macpherson a little later, Alfred still in attendance on him, and going back to our hotel, proceeded to make ready for departure by the afternoon train. And we were no sooner in than that Chaney returned to his suggestion about the Riviera.

'We'll have to go down there, Camberwell,' he said. 'Our line now is to trace Mrs. Crowther—and Mr. Crowther. Mentone is the last place we've heard of in connection with them and to Mentone we must go. Probably she came from Mentone to London: if so, there'll be people at Mentone who know her and all about her.'

'If so, why haven't they come forward, then?' I asked.

'Oh, I don't know. Our domestic news doesn't get into the Continental papers,' he answered. 'At any rate, not into the smaller, provincial ones. No—we must go there. And why not?—pleasant trip, at Lord Cheverdale's expense.'

'That's one way of looking at it, certainly,' I remarked, laughing.

'Very practical way,' he retorted. 'It's his wish. Got a passport?'

'I have!'

'So've I. We're all right, then. I suggest we go on to-morrow. I've been that way two or three times. I know Mentone. There's a pretty fairly numerous English colony there. We'll go by the 3.50 train from Victoria—Folkestone, Boulogne, Paris. Be there in about twenty-six hours. And then——'

'Yes, then?' I said. 'What then?'

'There must be some trace of her at Mentone,' he answered. 'She *was* there, anyway, we know that for a fact. And if you've once established a fact like that, you can work onward from it. What we want is to trace her from the time she was at Mentone—wherever she's been since.'

We left London next day, as Chaney had suggested: by the evening of the following day we were in Mentone. And next morning, under a blue sky that contrasted sharply with the grey clouds we had left in England we set out on our first excursion of discovery.

'Promenade St. Louis?' said Chaney, as we left our hotel. 'That's on the other side of the harbour—the Garavan side.'

We went along through the streets at the foot of the old town to the Promenade St. Louis, which runs by the north side of the harbour on the road leading to the Italian frontier. To me, who had never been in Mentone before, the whole scene was

full of interest; Chaney was in his element in pointing things out as we went along—the hills rising above the hotels and villas in the background; the glimpses of the Italian coast to the east, and of Cap Martin to the west: the old church of St. Michel towering above the narrow streets and alleys behind us; the Rochers Rouges immediately in front, just behind the narrow stream which separates France from Italy; the hundred and one bits of life and colour strange to English eyes. Yet, observant as Chaney was, it was I who suddenly spotted what we had come so far to seek. Within a score of yards of the tramway terminus at the end of the Promenade, I seized his arm, pointing down the road.

‘Chaney!’ I exclaimed. ‘Look there!’

What I had seen was this. Across the road, on the land side, facing the bay and harbour was what had once, evidently, been a café, and was now, as far as one could see, an odds-and-ends shop. It had once been gaily and artistically painted, as to its exterior; tubs, in which trees and shrubs had stood, still stood, forlorn and desolate, on the pavement in front of it; a battered sun-awning in once bright colours, still half-projected above the windows. And on the facade, in bold lettering I had detected the words, faded though the gilt was:

## CHEZ CROWTHER

and beneath them, in smaller letters:

ENGLISH TEA ROOMS.

Chaney drew a long breath.

‘Struck it in one!’ he muttered. ‘But—it seems to be closed. Come across! A tea-shop, eh? Well, well——’

We went across the road and looked in at the dirty windows. The some-time café appeared to be now used as a repository for old furniture. It was deplorably dirty and its contents were decrepit when they weren’t disreputable. And there was no one about, and the door was fast. But there were the words above us, in their tarnished gilt.

There was another little café, a going concern, next door, and its proprietress, a good-natured looking woman, came to its front, amongst her tables and chairs and looked enquiringly at us. Chaney was just then trying the door of the derelict establishment: she shook her head at him. Now Chaney, amongst his other many accomplishments, spoke very passable French and pretty glibly. While I continued to peer into the deserted café he went over to her with a question to which she made a voluble reply. After listening he came back to me.

‘She says that this place hasn’t been a café for some years,’ he said. ‘The people to whom it belonged left it, and it became what we see it. Camberwell!—I bet this woman knows something—let’s sit down, have some coffee, and talk to her.’

Madame got us the coffee and was only too willing to talk—Chaney always knew how to draw people out, especially women. Yes, it was some years since that next door had been closed—that is, as a café, messieurs would understand. They were English people that had it; they had an idea that the English would patronize them, and perhaps the Americans, and they offered English cakes and the like. But, said madame with a shrug of her shoulders, the English appeared to prefer the confectionery of Mentone. And, in fine, the place did not pay.

‘You knew the people, madame?’ suggested Chaney.

Madame knew them well—were they not next-door-neighbours? Mrs. Crowther—madame had some difficulty in pronouncing the name, and Mr. Crowther. Three years they were there, and then—oh, well, there was the end. They retired from the battle, as one would say. The Chez Crowther closed its doors.

‘And where did Mr. and Mrs. Crowther go, madame?’ enquired Chaney. ‘To England, perhaps?’

But no, said madame. Not at all, but quite close by—to Monte Carlo. She knew that well, for Mrs. Crowther left certain things in her charge, and afterwards sent for them from Monte Carlo. Did messieurs wish for the address in Monte Carlo?—she had it somewhere—an old letter or two ... she disappeared into a room at the back of her café.

‘We’re in luck, Camberwell,’ said Chaney. ‘Link by link, we’re making a chain. Monte Carlo, eh? But—all these years ago!’

Madame came back, with a crumpled sheet of flimsy note-paper. In silence she handed it to Chaney—we both looked it over. It was merely a note asking madame to send on to Monte Carlo a certain box which had been left in her care. But it was signed Alice Crowther, and it bore an address Pension Hagill, Rue Antoinette, La Condamine.

I pointed out the date—nine years before.

‘Yes,’ said Chaney. ‘Still...’

We thanked madame for her courtesy, and went away.

‘Camberwell,’ observed Chaney as we strolled back to our hotel, ‘as I said just now, we’re making a chain, link by link. We’ve established the fact that Crowther and his wife came here, to Mentone, after their marriage, and set up an English tea-shop. It didn’t pay, and they left and went to Monte Carlo. Very well!—now we go



to Monte Carlo. But at Monte Carlo we want to know something about Crowther! So far, we know next to nothing. Where is Crowther, nowadays? Is he alive? Certainly, the war's intervened in everybody's fortunes—perhaps Crowther went under. But if Crowther's alive, then, as that old limb of the law said at Milthwaite, very likely Crowther is behind these murders. Anyhow, when we get to Monte Carlo, we want to have some news of *him!*—not so much of her. Let's think, now—according to what Perkins told us, Mrs. Crowther got that legacy while they were at Mentone. Perhaps they'd some of her original £2,000 left: perhaps they put what was left to the £1,500 legacy and went to Monte Carlo to try their luck at the tables, eh?

‘Surmise, Chaney, pure surmise?’ I said, smiling.

‘Very likely—but I think it possible,’ he retorted. ‘Anyhow, we must get more information about the man. We know what's happened to the woman.’

We went along to Monte Carlo that afternoon, and after putting ourselves up at a quiet hotel in the Pereira district, walked down to La Condamine to find the Pension Hagill. And there again we were in luck; the Pension Hagill was run by two Englishwomen, the Misses Wakeman, sisters, elderly, one of whom we presently interviewed. She was a sharp-witted, business-like woman, who was quick to understand our explanations, and who smiled shrewdly when we mentioned the Crowthers.

‘Ah!’ she exclaimed. ‘I always felt that there would be enquiries sooner or later! You want to know—what?’

‘All that we can learn, ma'am, about them during their stay here,’ replied Chaney.

Miss Wakeman considered matters.

‘Come in this evening, after dinner,’ she said. ‘Come about nine o'clock. My sister and I will be free, then. Then we can tell you all we know. It's—it's a good deal.’

We went back to the Pension Hagill at the appointed time; the sisters Wakeman received us in their private parlour. The one we had not previously seen proved to be, if anything, even more shrewd and business-like than her sister, and in the conversation that followed it was she who did most of the talking—after she had first made herself sufficiently acquainted with our credentials and our object.

‘We get the English papers here, of course,’ she said. ‘And we read about the murders at Cheverdale Lodge and in Little Custom Street, but we never connected Mrs. Clayton with poor Mrs. Crowther. Do you really believe they're identical?’

‘I don't think there's the least doubt about it, ma'am,’ replied Chaney. ‘There's

no doubt at all in my mind!’

‘We knew Mrs. Crowther very well indeed for a year or two—nine years ago,’ said Miss Wakeman. ‘And we used to hear of her—from her, I mean—for a year or two after she left here. Then we heard no more, and we’ve often wondered what had become of her, poor thing.’

‘You appear to commiserate her,’ said Chaney. ‘Why?’

‘You’ll know why when you’ve heard what I’m going to tell you,’ replied Miss Wakeman. ‘You want, now, to know what we know about Mr. and Mrs. Crowther? Very well—what we know is this. They came here, to this Pension, from Mentone. Mrs. Crowther told me and my sister—when we’d got to know them better—that they had had an English tea-shop there, thinking that it would attract English and American visitors; they had found, however, that it had no such particular attraction, and they had cleared out of it before suffering further loss. They certainly had money when they came here—but in our opinion it steadily went.’

‘How, ma’am?’ enquired Chaney.

Miss Wakeman smiled cynically.

‘I should say it went at the establishment on top of the hill,’ she said, pointing a forefinger towards the window. ‘Crowther was always there! He had invented a system. Well, my sister and I, having lived here some twenty-five years, have heard of a great many systems, but we have not yet heard of an infallible one! Our impression is that Crowther steadily lost money at the Casino. He did no work—what was there for him to do, here?—and he went to the Casino as soon as it was open and remained there as long as it was kept open. I knew his wife used to get more and more anxious: she confided to me, at last, that she knew he was losing money. What was more, she said it was her money—a recent legacy.’

‘Just so!’ muttered Chaney. ‘She’d had one—£1,500—just before leaving Mentone.’

‘Well,’ continued Miss Wakeman, ‘I said to her—why didn’t she keep a tight hold on it? She answered that Crowther had command over it—he was the sort of man who insisted that what was his wife’s was his, and from the time of their marriage, when, she said, she’d handed over her little fortune of £2,000 to him, he’d always done what he liked with her money. And now, she said, he’d got the gambling fever strong on him, and she didn’t know what would come of it. However, the thing came suddenly to an end—a very sudden end.’

‘How?’ asked Chaney.

‘Crowther disappeared!’ replied Miss Wakeman. ‘He went out of this house one morning, as usual, and never returned. We never heard of him again, and, as long as

we knew her, or heard from her, Mrs. Crowther never did, either. Within twenty-four hours of his disappearance she ascertained that he'd drawn all the money out of the bank here—the Credit Lyonnais—but had said nothing there of where he was going. Anyhow, he'd gone—"clean gone".

'Leaving her without money?' asked Chaney.

'She'd about twenty or thirty pounds in her possession,' replied Miss Wakeman. 'Enough to keep her going for a while. They didn't owe us anything at the time of Crowther's disappearance. However much of a gambler he may have been, he was most scrupulous and punctilious about paying his bills. He didn't owe a penny in the place. But—he went off with all her money!'

'Have you any idea of the amount?' enquired Chaney.

'Yes! Mrs. Crowther told us that he'd drawn at least £1,100 out of the bank. Her money, of course,' said Miss Wakeman. 'Indeed, she told my sister and myself that Crowther had no money when she married him, and had never earned any since. And yet—he always struck me as a singularly smart, able, clever man. He was, of course, an adventurer.'

'Was any attempt made to find him?' asked Chaney.

'Not to our knowledge,' replied Miss Wakeman. 'I believe Mrs. Crowther made some enquiries at the stations at Monte Carlo and at Mentone, but failed to get any news of him. Of course there were lots of ways in which he could have left the town: that was easy enough. However,' she added, laughing, 'he left in what he stood up in!—he didn't carry even a small suit-case away with him. He just—went.'

'Leaving a very good wardrobe behind him,' remarked the other Miss Wakeman. 'He was always a very well-dressed man.'

'I suppose he never sent for anything?' asked Chaney.

'Not he! As I say, we never heard a word more of him,' said Miss Wakeman. 'He completely vanished.'

'And Mrs. Crowther? What did she do?' enquired Chaney.

'Mrs. Crowther was a sensible woman,' replied Miss Wakeman. 'I think she realized at once that he'd gone for good. She was also a practical woman—she began by selling all Crowther's belongings, and realized quite a nice little sum. Then—staying with us in the meantime—she began to look for employment, and it was not long before she got some. She got a post as linen storekeeper at one of the big hotels—the Hotel de l'Empereur—and at a very good salary, and there she went. She stayed there about four years; she used to come to see my sister and me pretty regularly; we liked Mrs. Crowther. But she never had any news of her husband to give us. I think she felt pretty certain, all along, that she'd never hear of him again.'

‘And at the end of the four years, ma’am?’ asked Chaney. ‘What then?’

‘The war had broken out by that time,’ replied Miss Wakeman. ‘Things began to get very difficult for hotel and pension keepers. Staffs were reduced—hotels were commandeered as hospitals. And Mrs. Crowther left the Hotel de l’Empereur and went to Paris—to a similar situation—at the Hotel Mauriac.’

‘That would be—exactly when?’ enquired Chaney.

Miss Wakeman thought a little.

‘About the beginning of 1915,’ she replied. ‘The war had been in progress some six or seven months.’

‘Did she ever write to you from Paris?’

‘Now and then, up to about 1917. Since then, we’ve heard nothing.’

Chaney wrote down the Paris address in his book; we rose to go. The two ladies looked from one to the other of us with enquiring eyes.

‘And you really, really think that the Mrs. Clayton of Little Custom Street is identical with the Mrs. Crowther we knew?’ asked the elder, once more. ‘You really think it?’

‘I do, ma’am!’ replied Chaney. ‘Ugly thing to think of, but——’

‘Then do you know what I think?’ she interrupted, speaking with sudden vehemence. ‘I think she came across Crowther! Find him, gentlemen, find him! Look for him ... in London!’

## IV

‘In London, yes, certainly!’ said Chaney, when we had made our adieux and left the ladies of the Pension Hagill. ‘But Paris is on our way to London, Camberwell, and we’ll see what we can find at the Hotel Mauriac.’

However, we had not yet done with Monte Carlo. We had not been back at our hotel very long, and it was still scarcely ten o’clock, when a card was brought to us, bearing the name *Mr. John Pettlegrew*, and, pencilled beneath it, the words, *Introduced by the Misses Wakeman*. The card was presently followed by a little, elderly, very serious and solemn-looking gentleman chiefly remarkable for a pair of very large round spectacles through which he blinked at us like a wise owl. He made us a very polite and formal bow as he advanced to the corner of the lounge in which we were sitting.

‘Mr. Chaney?—Mr. Camberwell?’ he said in a very precise voice, as solemn as his expression. ‘You will excuse my intrusion, I am sure, when I state that I am waiting upon you at the desire of my friends the Misses Wakeman in whose house I am—and I may say have been for some years—a resident.’

‘Glad to see you, sir,’ responded Chaney. ‘Very kind of you to call, I’m sure.’

Mr. Pettlegrew bowed again, and taking the chair which I drew forward for him, removed his spectacles, and having polished them with a little cloth, taken from a waistcoat pocket, replaced them on his nose and regarded us more solemnly than before.

‘Yes,’ he observed, meditatively. ‘Miss Wakeman the elder thought—and Miss Wakeman, the younger quite agreed—that you might find it profitable to your purposes if I told you a little about Mr. Crowther, of whom you were speaking during your visit to the Pension Hagill—I was not in while you were there. I knew Mr. Crowther—I may say, intimately. I, of course, was a resident at the Pension Hagill all the time Mr. and Mrs. Crowther stayed there.’

‘Indeed, sir?’ said Chaney. ‘And what sort of man was Mr. Crowther?’

Mr. Pettlegrew placed his fat hands on his equally plump knees and bent forward with an impressive look at us.

‘A born—adventurer!’ he said. ‘Born!’

‘Bit of a gambler, eh?’ suggested Chaney.

‘Far more than a bit, my dear sir,’ replied Mr. Pettlegrew. ‘Every inch of him a gambler! The sort of man who was always trying for a big prize in the affairs of life. I, myself,’ he continued, rubbing his knees, ‘am not a gambler—I have a sufficient competence, and I do not care to tempt Fortune. But I am a student, a life-long

student of Human Nature. For that reason I am a constant, a regular attendant at the Casino here. I like to study the types of human nature I see there—most interesting, I assure you. And, of course, I saw Crowther there—every day.’

‘What sort of luck had he, Mr. Pettlegrew?’ asked Chaney.

Mr. Pettlegrew shook his head.

‘He was there too often to have what a gambler would call good luck, my dear sir,’ he answered. ‘A man who haunts the gaming-tables morning, noon, and night, as he did, is bound to come out on the wrong side. I should say, from my own personal observation that Crowther lost a lot of money there. He had a system, invented by himself. Ah!—I have known a great many men who had systems!’

‘Did you ever hear his wife say anything about his losses?’ asked Chaney.

‘She gave me—and the Misses Wakeman—to understand that he had lost a lot of money, and that it was her money,’ replied Mr. Pettlegrew. ‘He was a masterful man—his wife was afraid of him. I feel sure the poor thing was happier when he vanished and left her—in spite of the fact that thenceforward she had to earn her own living.’

‘Do you know anything of the circumstances under which he left her?’ enquired Chaney. ‘Or anything about Crowther himself just at that time?’

Mr. Pettlegrew became more owl-like and solemn than ever. After staring steadily at us for a while, he leaned still nearer, and tapped first Chaney and then me, after which he carefully pronounced two words, very slowly and emphatically.

‘I—do!’

Chaney nodded his understanding of the decisive remark.

‘Just so, sir! You do!’ he said. ‘We should be glad to know, too.’

Mr. Pettlegrew went through the tapping process again: his forefinger, stretched stiffly out, poked itself first into Chaney and then into me.

‘Mark you!’ he said, oracularly, ‘I wish to be exact, correct. When I said “know”, I should perhaps have used another word. “Conjecture” or “surmise”. Or, perhaps, “suspect”. Suspect—yes! That is the better word. I suspect Crowther of—something! And—until now, I have kept my suspicions strictly to myself. But—as I understand you are private enquiry agents—I have no objection to telling them to you.’

‘Anything you tell us, Mr. Pettlegrew, will be regarded as a strictly confidential communication,’ said Chaney.

‘I am assured of it,’ graciously said Mr. Pettlegrew. ‘Well, it is this. You are aware that Crowther left his wife at the Pension Hagill without any notice or warning and completely disappeared, and—as far as I am aware—has never been heard of

again. There was no question of suicide, for Mrs. Crowther quickly ascertained that he had drawn a considerable amount of money from the bank—some hundreds of pounds—and further enquiries proved that he had not visited the Casino after receiving this large amount at the Credit Lyonnais. No!—he just went; where, nobody knew or I believe, ever will know. But—a week or two after his disappearance, the dead body of a man was found in a lonely part of the country, in a gorge between here and La Turbie. Not Crowther’s, no!—the body was that of an elderly man, an eccentric sort of person, an Englishman, who had been staying in the town for some weeks, was a fairly regular attendant at the gaming tables, and who was well known—well known!—to always carry a considerable sum of ready money on his person. His name was Watkinson, Mr. Samuel Watkinson. Now, gentlemen, when Mr. Watkinson’s body was discovered, there was not a penny piece—or shall we say a centime?—on it!’

Mr. Pettlegrew paused and looked from one to the other of us, as much as to say ‘Now, what do you think of that?’

‘What are you suggesting, Mr. Pettlegrew?’ asked Chaney. ‘That Crowther killed this man and robbed the dead body?’

‘I have often wondered if he did!’ exclaimed Mr. Pettlegrew. ‘But I have never put my wonder into words till now.’

‘Was Crowther suspected?’ demanded Chaney.

‘Not by anyone, that I know of!’ replied Mr. Pettlegrew.

‘The police?’ suggested Chaney.

‘I don’t think the police ever suspected Crowther at all,’ replied Mr. Pettlegrew. ‘The police had its own theory.’

‘And what was that?’ asked Chaney.

‘Oh, the obvious one! That Mr. Watkinson had been watched in the Casino; was known to have large sums of ready money at his disposal, and was followed on one of the solitary country rambles he was fond of taking. The matter was never cleared up.’

‘Why did you suspect Crowther?’ demanded Chaney. ‘What grounds had you?’

Again Mr. Pettlegrew poked the admonitory finger into our ribs.

‘I shall tell you!’ he said, solemnly. ‘Let me, however, say first that the unfortunate Watkinson—Samuel—had been slain by a blow, or blows, on the head delivered with some blunt instrument——’

‘Ah!’ exclaimed Chaney, involuntarily. ‘Yes?’

‘Now, when I heard that,’ continued Mr. Pettlegrew, ‘it gave me to think—furiously, as the French would say. One night, during my acquaintanceship with him, I

was with Crowther at the Casino when, for once in a way, he won a large sum of money. We left together, late. Outside, I asked him if he wasn't afraid of going through the streets with all that money on him? For answer, he laughed, and, putting a hand in his outer pocket, pulled out and showed me—what do you think?

‘A revolver?’ suggested Chaney. ‘Or automatic pistol?’

‘No, sir!’ replied Mr. Pettlegrew. ‘An old-fashioned life-preserver! And—I am not a fool, gentlemen—it was with just such a thing as that that Mr. Samuel Watkinson had been ... struck dead!’



The detective instinct in Chaney inclined him to linger in Monte Carlo and to interview the local police with regard to the murder of Mr. Samuel Watkinson, but as several years had elapsed since that took place, and as nobody had connected the missing Crowther's name with it he decided that we should be wasting time in endeavouring to reopen the matter. The obvious next thing to do was to go to Paris and try for more news of Mrs. Crowther at the Hotel Mauriac. Probably, said Chaney, it was from Paris that she had gone direct to London: very well, let us investigate her doings in Paris. So to Paris we set off next day, and as we journeyed along Chaney began to speculate on the identity of Crowther.

'It's useless to pretend that we haven't—both of us—got the same idea, or question, or whatever you like to call it, in our minds, Camberwell,' he observed. 'I put it in the form of a question—Is Paley Crowther? What?'

'I've wondered!' I said.

'Can't help wondering,' he answered. 'But let's do a bit of supposing. Suppose Mrs. Crowther went to London from Paris with the intention of finding Crowther? Suppose she accidentally, if you like—recognized him in Paley?—and found out that Paley was the trusted private secretary of Lord Cheverdale, proprietor of the *Daily Sentinel*? Suppose also, she learns that the editor of the *Daily Sentinel* is her old Milthwaite friend or acquaintance, Mr. Hannington? What more natural than that she should take her troubles—and her papers—to him? Well, Hannington, who was, as we've heard on all sides, a regular enthusiast where he thought anybody had been wronged, determines to see justice done to the woman who'd sought his help. On his advice she leaves her marriage lines with him, and he locks them up. Other papers he puts in his pocket. He sets off, to do something at once. What? Well, we know that he went to Mr. Craye's flat. He probably thought that as he knew Mr. Craye to be Lord Cheverdale's business manager and the prospective husband of Miss Chever, he'd be the man to approach first. But he didn't find Craye in—so he made for Cheverdale Lodge. And now—supposing he met Paley in the grounds? Suppose it, I say!'

'Well?' I said. 'I suppose it. What then?'

'What then—exactly!' he exclaimed. 'We know that Hannington was enthusiastic, quick-tempered, impulsive. Supposing he, at sight of Paley, immediately blurted out his discovery of Paley—or, as we're supposing him to be, Crowther's perfidy?—coupled, of course, with the threat to divulge everything to Lord Cheverdale there and then? And suppose that Paley there and then—killed him?'

‘After all, Chaney, it’s all supposition,’ I suggested. ‘It’s——’

‘It’s not supposition that Paley was away from Cheverdale Lodge from immediately after the discovery of the death of Hannington until half-past three,’ he retorted quickly. ‘That’s a fact! Where was he? What was he doing?’

‘Chippendale’s job!’ I said.

‘Aye, well, I hope Chippendale will make a good job of it,’ he replied. ‘If he hasn’t found something out by the time we get back, I’ll have to take that matter on myself—we must know where Paley was during the time of his absence from Cheverdale Lodge. One thing I do know!—he’d plenty of time, during that time, to go to Little Custom Street, murder that woman, search her room, and get back again! However, let’s see what we can discover at this Hotel Mauriac.’

The Hotel Mauriac turned out to be one of the new *hotels de luxe* which have sprung up of recent years in and about the Champs Elysée. It was, said Chaney, very much too grand for the likes of him, but as we were only likely to spend two or three days in Paris, and were laying out, not our own, but Lord Cheverdale’s money, we booked rooms there and were presently installed in surroundings of great luxury. And within a very short time of our arrival we were in confidential conference with an under-manager who was not only sympathetic but surprisingly helpful.

‘It is not very long since that Mrs. Crowther left us,’ he said, in his very good English. ‘She left here rather suddenly, to go to London on private business. Of course I knew her as one of the staff. But there is a man in the hotel, gentlemen, who can tell you a great deal about Mrs. Crowther. That is Monsieur Labatte, the hairdresser. Labatte in his younger days, lived in England, to learn the language, and he married an Englishwoman. Mrs. Crowther, I know, used to visit Monsieur and Madame Labatte, at their *apartment*, somewhere in the Neuilly quarter. Labatte, I am sure, will be delighted to give you all the information in his power. You will find him, now, in his saloon in the basement of the hotel.’

We descended to the basement and found Monsieur Labatte, a middle-aged artiste who, if his own hair, moustache, and beard were anything to go by, was in the very front rank of his highly useful profession. He was doing nothing just then, and we introduced ourselves and took him into our confidence. He had not heard of the murder of Mrs. Crowther and was horrified: his wife, he assured us, would be desolated.

‘We do not much see the London papers, messieurs,’ he observed. ‘And had we seen this too terrible news we should not have connected the name of Mrs. Clayton with the Mrs. Crowther we knew. But from what you tell me, it is she—oh, yes, I have no doubt of it!’

‘You knew Mrs. Crowther well, Monsieur Labatte?’ asked Chaney.

‘Very well, indeed, monsieur—but my wife, better. You see, I was, as a young man, in an English hair-dressing establishment of the first class, in Harrogate, and I married my wife there,—a Yorkshirewoman, like Mrs. Crowther also was. So—they have many things in common—yes. Mrs. Crowther, she told my wife many of her troubles—secrets, also, I think.’

‘Would it be possible, under the circumstances, to see Madame Labatte?’ enquired Chaney. ‘This is a most serious affair, monsieur!’

Monsieur Labatte reflected. This, yes, was Saturday—to-morrow, as a consequence, would be Sunday. If messieurs would do him the honour to call at his *apartment*—here, then, was the address—to-morrow afternoon, he would prepare his wife....

We went out to Neully the next afternoon and in due course found ourselves in the presence of Madame Labatte. In spite of her smart Paris gown and her generally Frenchified ensemble, there was no mistaking the fact that she was still English, and not merely English but Yorkshire.

‘I never had such a shock in my life as when Henri there came home last night and told me that Mrs. Crowther had been murdered in London!’ she said, as soon as the ceremonies of introduction had been gone through. ‘Why, it’s not so long since she left Paris! Are you gentlemen absolutely sure that this Mrs. Clayton you speak of was the Mrs. Crowther who was here at the Hotel Mauriac?’

‘I’m afraid there’s no doubt about that!’ replied Chaney. ‘We’ve established that as a fact, ma’am, beyond question.’

‘Then I’ll be bound it’s that good-for-nothing husband of hers who’s at the bottom of it!’ exclaimed Madame Labatte, vehemently. ‘I know enough of him to believe him capable of any wickedness!’

‘You were in Mrs. Crowther’s confidence, ma’am?’ suggested Chaney.

‘Mrs. Crowther and me were close friends,’ replied Madame Labatte. ‘I’ve wondered and wondered how it was that I haven’t heard from her since she left Paris for London. Of course, I did notice in the papers that a Mrs. Clayton had been murdered in a flat in some London street, but there wasn’t much about it, and I never for one moment connected it with Mrs. Crowther. Yes, we were very close friends all the time she was at the Hotel Mauriac. You see, she got to know my husband there, and as he’d lived in Harrogate, he knew her for a Yorkshirewoman. Well, I’m a Yorkshirewoman, too, so he brought her to see me. She came from Milthwaite; that’s not so far from my home. And so we became very friendly—she used to come here regularly, and she told me a good deal about her troubles.’

‘Such as—what?’ asked Chaney.

‘Well, she told me all about her married life. How Crowther got round her and persuaded her to marry him. Of course, she soon found out it wasn’t her he wanted at all—it was her bit of money. He’d pretended, before they were married, that he was doing very well, in a good line of business—she found as soon as they were married that he’d no business at all, and no money: he was just one of those fellows that live on their wits. And, you see, she’d been fool enough to draw her money out of a building society in which it was nicely and safely invested, and to hand it over to him—of course, she never saw it again! But she only found everything out by degrees—at first she thought he was a smart young fellow with ideas and notions, and she was taken by the first he had, which was to go to Mentone and start a café or restaurant or something of that sort for the special benefit of English and Americans. Well, they did go there, and it didn’t pay—anybody who knows could have told them it wouldn’t pay——’

‘We’ve just come from Mentone,’ said Chaney. ‘We saw the place.’

‘Then you no doubt know all about that bit,’ replied Madame Labatte. ‘But did you go to Monte Carlo—next door, as it were?’

‘We did—to the Pension Hagill,’ answered Chaney.

‘Then you’d hear about Crowther’s leaving her there! But perhaps they didn’t—two maiden ladies, isn’t it, that keep that place?—perhaps they didn’t tell you all Mrs. Crowther told me? About the money side of it, I mean. When the Crowthers went to Monte Carlo there was still a fair lot of Mrs. Crowther’s money left and she’d also just had a further legacy of some hundreds, but it was all in Crowther’s name at a bank in Monte Carlo. And Crowther started gambling there, of course with her money. But she never knew whether he won much or lost much—he never would tell her. And then, all of a sudden, he went to the bank one morning, drew out nearly every penny of what was left, and clean vanished, leaving her with scarcely anything. But she induced the bank people to tell her what he’d carried off with him. Did you know what that was?’

‘Miss Wakeman mentioned the sum as being about £1,100,’ replied Chaney.

‘Just about that,’ agreed Madame Labatte. ‘Her money, poor thing! And as she never heard another word about him, she had to set to and earn her own living. She was at Monte Carlo for some time; then she came to the Hotel Mauriac as linen-keeper. And she was a careful woman; she saved a nice bit of money. And oh, dear, what a pity she went off to London. But——’

‘That’s just what I wanted you to get to, ma’am,’ interrupted Chaney. ‘You’re probably the only person who can tell us why she went to London! Why did she

go?’

Madame Labatte gave her husband a look.

‘Ah!’ she said, turning to Chaney again. ‘We know! That’s what I was coming to! You see for all that she knew he’d treated her abominably, Mrs. Crowther was always wondering wherever Crowther had got to. It wasn’t that she wanted him back, but she did want to know if he was alive or dead—sometimes she used to wonder if he’d been killed in the War. But she never heard a word of him—never had none since the day he vanished at Monte Carlo. And then, all of a sudden, something happened—my husband and me know what it was!’

‘We should like to know, too, ma’am,’ suggested Chaney.

‘I’m going to tell you,’ said Madame Labatte. ‘One day, not so very long before she left Paris for London, Mrs. Crowther came here, unexpectedly. She was in a very excited state. She said her husband had been at the Hotel Mauriac the night before—she’d seen him! She said he must now be in very affluent circumstances; he’d one of the very best suites in the hotel. And she’d recognized him in a very curious fashion. She happened to be passing the open door of his bedroom—wide open she said—and he was standing just within, in trousers and singlet, doing some gymnastic exercises, while a waiter, who, of course had left the door open, was setting out his coffee. She’d only one glance at him, but she knew him. And do you know why?’

‘No!’ said Chaney. ‘Why?’

Again Madame Labatte glanced knowingly at her husband.

‘She told us!’ she went on. ‘Crowther has a most unusual tattoo mark on his left arm—a mark that goes clean round it, like a bracelet. It’s a Black Dragon! Well—she saw it, and knew!’

‘What did she do?’ asked Chaney.

‘Nothing, then,’ replied Madame Labatte. ‘She was too much taken aback. But during the morning she went and inspected the register, and found that he’d left: he’d only been there for the night. She got the name, of course.’

‘His own name?’ enquired Chaney.

‘No—some other. She wouldn’t tell us what it was,’ said Madame Labatte. ‘That, she said she’d keep to herself—it was very evident that he was now a big man. And she declared, there and then, that she’d now go to England and insist on her rights. And, as you’re aware, she went.’

‘She said,’ remarked Monsieur Labatte, ‘that she had a powerful friend there who would help her.’

Madame Labatte sighed.

‘That must have been the newspaper editor,’ she remarked. ‘Ah, don’t tell me!—that wicked Crowther has been at the bottom of all this. According to what she used to tell me about him, he’d the cleverness of a devil and the hardness of a stone!—a cruel, cold man.’

We talked a little longer to Monsieur and Madame Labatte, and after ascertaining from them the approximate date of Crowther’s visit to the Hotel Mauriac, went back there and made a careful examination of the hotel register. It was fruitless: we could not find a single name that conveyed anything to us. But with the aid of the under-manager we contrived to get an interview with the floor-waiter who had been taking Crowther his coffee at the moment in which Mrs. Crowther chanced to see and recognized him: he was able to furnish us with two particulars. First, he, too, had noticed the extraordinary tattoo mark. Second, he gave us the number of the private suite which Crowther had occupied for one night. Once more we consulted the register and this time found the name. It conveyed nothing at all—to us. *F. Charlesworth, London.*

We went back to England next day by the midday train from the Gare du Nord. Arriving at Dover towards the close of the afternoon we bought evening newspapers as we entered the train for Victoria. The first thing I saw in mine was a great staring announcement in big capitals, running right across the page:—

*The Double Murders in Little Custom Street.*

*Opening of the Inquest.*

## MRS. GOODGE AND THE HINDU STUDENT

## I

I had scarcely read—I ought to say scarcely glanced at—these headlines when a sharp exclamation from Chaney made me aware that some similar announcement confronted him in his newspaper.

‘Good God, Camberwell!’ he said in startled tones. ‘That caretaker woman at Little Custom Street’s been murdered! And, at the same time, a Hindu chap who had a flat there—Number 10. What on earth——’

But I was searching my paper. There it was. Mrs. Goodge—yes. Mr. Mehta—yes. Both killed by blows on the head from some heavy, blunt weapon! Just as Hannington and Mrs. Crowther had been killed.

Chaney and I stared at each other in silence for a moment. Here we were, face to face with murder again. And——

‘No use speculating, Camberwell!’ said Chaney, suddenly. ‘We’d better get the facts into our heads. This is a full report of the coroner’s inquest, held to-day, and I see, eventually adjourned for a fortnight at the request of the police. We’ve got this compartment to ourselves,’ he added, as the train moved off, ‘and two hours before us, ere we reach London, so we’d best get to know what it’s all about. Full account in yours? Get through it, then, carefully, and we’ll discuss it later.’

The report of the proceedings before the coroner was practically *verbatim* in my evening newspaper; later, I cut it out and had it pasted up in our casebook, and I now abbreviate it from that repository of criminal history, as it gives a pretty comprehensive account of what had happened:—

The inquest on the dead bodies of Mrs. Anne Goodge, a caretaker of Minerva House, Little Custom Street, W.1, and Mr. Rao Mehta, a young Hindu gentleman, of the same address, who were found dead under circumstances which point to wilful murder, about midnight, on Thursday last, was opened by Mr. A. B. Cardyke, the coroner for Westminster, at 9.30 this morning. The coroner sat with a jury, and the Home Office was represented by Mr. Meredith Tankersley, and the relatives of Mr. Mehta (a law student) by H. C. Wellerman. There was a crowded attendance of the general public, the interest in the case being heightened by the fact that a previous murder—that of Mrs. Clayton—on similar lines took place at the same address and under similar mysterious circumstances quite recently.

The coroner in addressing the jury referred to this as soon as he took his seat.

There was a little doubt, he said, that the two persons, Mrs. Goodge and Mr. Mehta, into the cause of whose deaths they were about to enquire, were murdered at about the same time and in all probability by the same hand, and it was impossible to avoid remembering that only a short time before a woman, at first unknown, but afterwards believed to be a Mrs. Clayton, had met her death under similar circumstances in the same house. It would also be remembered that on the same night on which Mrs. Clayton met her death, Mr. Hannington, editor of the *Morning Sentinel*, whom she had visited at his office that afternoon, met his in Lord Cheverdale's grounds in Regent's Park. All these four people, Mr. Hannington, Mrs. Clayton, Mrs. Goodge, and Mr. Mehta, had been murdered in the same way—by blows on the head from some heavy, blunt instrument, and it was impossible not to suspect that the murders had been committed by the same hand. As regards the deaths of Mrs. Goodge and Mr. Mehta, the facts appeared to be these: Mrs. Goodge was caretaker of Minerva House, Little Custom Street, which was divided into twelve flats. One of these flats, Number 10, had been for some little time tenanted by two young Hindu gentlemen, Mr. Rao Mehta, and Mr. Ayyar Ghose, who were studying law in London. Last Thursday night Mr. Mehta and Mr. Ghose went to a theatre together, and did not return to the house in Little Custom Street until about half-past-eleven o'clock. For a certain reason, they wanted breakfast at an unusually early hour next morning, so Mr. Mehta, on entering the flats, went down to the basement, where Mrs. Goodge lived, to speak to her about it. Mr. Ghose went upstairs to their flat, Number 10, expecting Mr. Mehta to follow him in a few minutes. Mr. Mehta, however, did not come. Mr. Ghose waited until nearly midnight, and then went down to see what had become of his friend. And at the foot of the stairs leading to the basement, he found Mr. Mehta lying dead, while inside the kitchen, or living-room, he found Mrs. Goodge, also dead. He hurried out of the house, found a policeman, and telephoned for a doctor, who turned out to be the same medical man that had been called to the dead body of Mrs. Clayton. This gentleman would tell them that in each case—these of Mrs. Goodge and Mr. Mehta—the cause of death was precisely that which he had found in the case of Mrs. Clayton: blows on the head from some heavy, blunt weapon and that death, in each instance, had been instantaneous. It would appear impossible, from the evidence which would be called, to avoid coming to the conclusion that Mrs. Goodge had somewhere seen and recognized the man whom she had seen leaving the flats on the night of Mrs. Clayton's murder: that she had accosted and accused him (there would be some evidence on this point): that he had accompanied her to her basement probably on the pretext of buying her silence (there was some evidence on that



point, too): that he had there murdered her, and that Mr. Mehta, coming in as the murderer was still in his victim's living-room, had suffered the same fate. Up to that moment, he concluded, the police had not been able to find any clue and the identity of the murderer was still a matter of mystery.

Evidence of identification having been given, in Mrs. Goodge's case by her daughter, and in Mr. Mehta's case by his brother, Mr. N. P. Mehta, a medical student, of King's College Hospital.

Mr. Ayyar Ghose, in answer to the coroner, said he was a law student, at present reading in the chambers of Mr. Cyril Partmore, Lincoln's Inn. Mr. Rao Mehta was reading in the same chambers. They had both gone to Mr. Partmore at the same time and had become friends. When they first knew each other, each had rooms of his own, but soon after their acquaintance began they decided to share a flat, and for some time before Mr. Mehta's death they had lived in Flat Number 10 at Minerva House, Little Custom Street. They only took breakfast there; all their other meals were taken outside. Mrs. Goodge acted as bedmaker for them and prepared breakfast. They were in residence at their flat when Mrs. Clayton was murdered in Number 12. Number 12 was exactly above Number 10. They never heard any disturbance in Number 12 on the night of Mrs. Clayton's murder; they never knew anything about it until the evening of the next day, when Mrs. Goodge told them of it on their return home. Coming to the murders of Mrs. Goodge and Mr. Mehta, Mr. Ghose said that on the evening of the Thursday previous to the inquest, he and Mr. Mehta after dining at their favourite restaurant went to the Haymarket Theatre. They went straight home after leaving the theatre. The street door of the house in Little Custom Street was open, as usual. He never remembered it being closed. He had heard, since the death of Mrs. Clayton, that it was Mrs. Goodge's duty to close it at a certain time every night; people who lived in the flats, coming in after that, were expected to use their latch-keys. But he had never known Mrs. Goodge to carry out these instructions, either before Mrs. Clayton's death, or since. He and Mr. Mehta were often out till between twelve and one o'clock, and the street-door was always open. Proceeding, Mr. Ghose said that on entering the house, on this particular Thursday night, he and Mr. Mehta went straight up to their flat. They did not hear anything going on downstairs; no sound of a scuffle or anything; the whole place was quite still. Just as they reached the landing of their flat, Mehta suddenly remembered that they had arranged to spend next day in the country; they were going to witness a meet of foxhounds in Buckinghamshire, something they had never seen, and, accordingly should want breakfast earlier than usual. Mehta therefore went downstairs again to see Mrs. Goodge and tell her to let

them have breakfast at half-past seven next morning. He, witness, let himself into the flat. He expected Mehta to return in a few minutes. Mehta, however, did not return. Some time passed. At last, after waiting half-an-hour he went downstairs himself to see what Mehta was doing. Everything was absolutely quiet as he went down. He neither saw nor heard anything between his landing and the entrance hall, and did not meet anyone on the stairs. On descending the two short flights of stairs into the basement, however, he saw Mehta's body lying at the foot of the last one. He hurried to it, called Mehta by name, and shook his shoulder. There was no response, and he saw that Mehta was dead. There was a light—the usual electric light—full on in the lobby at the foot of the stairs leading to the basement, and the door of Mrs. Goodge's living-room was wide open, and the electric light was on there. He went into the living-room and then saw Mrs. Goodge's body. She was lying in front of a cupboard that stood in a recess on one side of the fireplace: the cupboard door was half-open. He saw that she was dead, too. He did not touch her, but he noticed that in one hand, the right hand, stretched out before her, she was holding something that looked like scraps of twisted paper. Feeling certain that she and Mehta were both dead, and had been attacked and murdered, he ran up the stairs and out of the house, to look for a policeman. He found a sergeant and a constable at the corner of Little Custom Street, and they immediately went back with him.

Mr. Tankersley asked Mr. Ghose a few questions.

'You have known Mr. Rao Mehta intimately since you and he first met at Mr. Partmore's chambers, I believe?'

'Yes—very intimately indeed.'

'He gave you his full confidence?'

'Oh, yes, I think so. We were close friends.'

'Do you know if he had any enemies?'

'Oh, no, I think not. I am sure not. He was very quiet—gentle.'

'Do you know if he had much money on him on the night we are dealing with?'

'Oh, I don't think so. Perhaps like myself—a few pounds.'

'Had he been robbed of whatever he had on him?'

'I think not. The police examined his clothing.'

'We will leave that question for the police, then. When you found Mehta, where was he lying?'

'In the little lobby at the foot of the stair leading to the basement.'

'In what attitude?'

'Well, one arm was under his face——'

'He lay face downwards?'

‘Yes—face downwards. One arm was under his face—that is, his head rested on that arm. The other arm, his right arm, was stretched out—so!’

‘Well, now, Mr. Ghose, a most important question. The door of the living-room, you have already told us, was open. Was Mr. Mehta lying with his head towards the door or away from it?’

‘Away from it. His head was towards the foot of the stairs.’

‘Did you deduce anything from that, Mr. Ghose?’

‘Not then—I was too much upset. I did afterwards.’

‘What, now?’

‘That Mehta had gone within the living-room, found Mrs. Goodge just struck down, and the assailant there, had immediately turned to flee, and had been followed and struck down in his turn, in the lobby outside.’

‘Here is a plan of the lobby, Mr. Ghose. Just indicate to the jury exactly where Mr. Mehta’s body lay when you found it.’

The witness made two pencil marks on the plan showing that Mehta’s head lay just beneath the first step of the stairs and that his feet were in the direction of the door of the living-room.

‘Here is another plan—of the living-room, with all the pieces of furniture and their arrangement indicated. Just show us where Mrs. Goodge’s body lay.’

The witness marked this plan, too.

‘Mrs. Goodge, then, lay with her head pointing to the cupboard, and her feet towards this central table?’

‘Yes—as I have indicated.’

‘You felt quite sure, when you found them, that both Mr. Mehta and Mrs. Goodge were dead?’

‘Oh, yes, I was quite sure of that. They were both dead.’

Mr. Wellerman had no questions to ask and the next witness was called.

Charles Arthur Swinford said he was a sergeant of the Metropolitan Police Force. He was in conversation with Police-Constable Knottingley, X.A.C. 55,231, about 12.15 a.m. on the morning of Friday last, at the corner of Little Custom Street and North Pontington Street, when the last witness ran up to them and told them that there had been a double murder at Minerva House, Little Custom Street. He remembered that as the house where the unknown woman, after known as Mrs. Clayton, had been murdered. He and Knottingley immediately went with Mr. Ghose to the house and down to the basement. At the foot of the stair they found Mr. Mehta’s dead body in the position just described by Mr. Ghose: in the living-room, Mrs. Goodge’s. Mr. Ghose hurriedly told them how he had found both. He sent

Knottingly for assistance; it came very quickly. By direction of the inspector he made an examination of the clothing of Mr. Mehta. There was nothing to show that robbery had been a motive. Mr. Mehta had a sum of between six and seven pounds in his pockets: a gold watch and chain and a ring of some value were untouched. As regards Mrs. Goodge, she was holding very tightly in her right hand five five-pound Bank of England notes. He and the inspector after looking round, came to the conclusion that Mrs. Goodge, when she was struck down, was about to put these notes away in the cupboard, the door of which was slightly open.

‘What made you arrive at that conclusion?’ asked the coroner.

‘It was in consequence of a search, sir. Near the dead woman’s left hand we found a bunch of small keys. On the top shelf of the cupboard, thrust far back in a corner, we found an old-fashioned tea-caddy. One of the keys on the bunch fitted the lock. Inside the tea-caddy there were three compartments. In the centre one there were several Treasury notes—pound notes, ten shilling notes: some sixteen or seventeen pounds in all. We came to the conclusion that that was where Mrs. Goodge kept her savings, or her money, and that she was about to put the Bank of England notes, which we had found tightly gripped in her right hand, there, when she was struck down from behind.’

‘You found the body of Mrs. Goodge in the position indicated by the last witness?’

‘Exactly sir. She lay with her head within a foot or two of the cupboard door, and her feet near the centre table. I observed that the attitude in which she lay was almost precisely the same as that in the case of the man outside in the lobby. Each lay with the left arm under the head and the right arm stretched out and up.’

‘They were both dead when you reached them?’

‘Oh, yes, sir. From some experience in these matters I should say they had been dead between half and three-quarters of an hour.’

Mr. Tankersley asked the sergeant a question or two.

‘Were there any signs of a struggle in Mrs. Goodge’s living-room?’

‘None whatever, sir.’

‘No chairs knocked over, or anything of that sort?’

‘Nothing of that sort, sir. The room was in apple-pie order. Neat—tidy.’

‘Did any of you—you, or the inspector, or the detectives who came—examine the room for papers, fingerprints, and so on?’

‘The detectives saw to the finger-print business, sir. By direction of my inspector I examined all the likely places for anything in the shape of documents and letters, but without result.’

‘Now I want you to give me a very careful answer to this question—Have you made any enquiries in the neighbourhood since these murders on this point?—Has Mrs. Goodge, since the murder of Mrs. Clayton, been known to be in possession of more money than had been usual with her?’

‘What is the point, Mr. Tankersley?’ asked the coroner.

‘The point, sir,’ replied Mr. Tankersley, ‘is that there is a rumour in the neighbourhood that Mrs. Goodge, since the murder of Mrs. Clayton, has been receiving hush-money from some interested person. I want to know from the witness if he has collected any evidence to the effect that Mrs. Goodge has of late had more money than usually the case?’

‘I have made a good deal of enquiry,’ said the witness. ‘So have the detectives. We can’t find any evidence that Mrs. Goodge was flush of money. No-one in the neighbourhood has any proof of that.’

‘You say you found sixteen or seventeen pounds in the tea-caddy?’

‘The exact sum was sixteen pounds, twelve shillings and sixpence. The twelve-and-sixpence was in silver, in another compartment.’

‘And there were five Bank of England notes for five pounds each tightly grasped in her right hand?’

‘Yes!’

‘Where are these notes?’

‘The detective took charge of them.’

‘Do you know if they’re doing anything about tracing them by their numbers?’

‘I can’t say. They can answer that.’

‘Just one more question, sergeant. You have made, I suppose, the most careful and exhaustive enquiries as to whether any suspicious person was seen to enter number— Little Custom Street that night, or to leave it? Have you had any success?’

‘Not the slightest, sir! We have made most careful investigations and have heard nothing. No one that we can find or hear of actually saw Mrs. Goodge come in that night. It is known that she was out about 10.30 or 10.45, but we can’t find anybody who saw her actually enter the house. And no one in the flats above even heard any sound from her rooms.’

Joseph Knottingley, a police-constable, corroborated the evidence of the last witness. There was nothing new in what he had to say, but the interest and excitement in the court increased when the next witness was called into the box. This was the police-surgeon who had been called to Little Custom Street on the discovery of the dead body of Mrs. Clayton.

## II

The evidence of the police-surgeon was highly important, because of the fact just mentioned: that he had been called in on discovery of the murder of Mrs. Clayton, or Crowther. He testified that the injuries which resulted in almost instantaneous death in the case of Mrs. Clayton were precisely similar to those inflicted on Mrs. Goodge and Mr. Mehta. In this view he was supported by the other medical men who had seen Mrs. Clayton's dead body and also those of the last victims. And in addition to that came the evidence of the doctors who had been summoned to Cheverdale Lodge to see Hannington's dead body: the police had fetched them to Little Custom Street to examine the bodies of the caretaker and the Hindu student: they upheld the opinion of their fellow practitioners. There was no doubt, it appeared, that in all four cases the injuries resulting in death were absolutely similar. One of the medical witnesses went so far as to say that in his opinion any one of the blows was of a sufficient force to cause practically instantaneous death.

The next stage of these proceedings was concerned with the result of such enquiries as the police had been able to make up to the time of the opening of the inquest. The police had two or three important witnesses, and these were questioned by Mr. Tankersley.

Albert John Stead, a young man of twenty-eight, said he lived at Bayton Street, Camden Town, and was employed as a barman at the Marquis of Manby tavern, at the corner of Little Custom Street and White Horse Street. He had been employed there, in that capacity, for nearly four years.

'Did you know the dead woman, Mrs. Goodge?' asked Mr. Tankersley.

'Yes, sir, quite well.'

'How did you come to know her?'

'As a customer, sir.'

'Regular customer?'

'She'd be in five nights out of the seven, sir.'

'What did she come for?'

'Always the same thing, sir—regular. Drop of gin to drink there, and a half-quartern to take home with her.'

'Did she confine herself to the drop you speak of?—I mean while she was in your bar?'

'Never knew her to have another, sir! Just the usual fourpen'worth, and the half-quartern in her little bottle. Always the same, sir.'

'Not what you'd call a drinking woman? Didn't come in every now and then

during the day?’

‘Never came in during the day, sir. Came regular as clock-work at night.’

‘Same time every night?’

‘Just about, sir.’

‘What time would that be?’

‘A bit before closing time, sir—eleven o’clock.’

‘Did she come in—in the usual way—last Thursday night?’

‘She did, sir.’

‘You’re certain of the night?’

‘I am, sir.’

‘Any reason for being certain?’

‘Several reasons, sir. For one thing, I heard of the murders first thing next morning, and that was Friday: for another, Thursday was the night of the snowstorm: everybody who came into our bar that night was covered with snow.’

‘Mrs. Goodge, too?’

‘Pretty well powdered, sir—but she hadn’t to come far.’

‘Well—I suppose she had her usual drop, eh? Anything else?’

‘Nothing except the half-quartern in the bottle, sir.’

‘But something happened that attracted your attention, I believe?’

‘Well, there was something I noticed, sir, nothing much. A gentleman came in to our saloon bar—that’s at the end of the counter, opposite to where Mrs. Goodge was standing. I just happened, after serving him, to see Mrs. Goodge staring at him, and I heard her mutter something to herself.’

‘What did she mutter?’

‘She said, as near as I can recollect, sir, “I’ll lay anything it is!”’

‘I’ll repeat that. “I’ll lay anything it is!” Was that it?’

‘It was either “lay” or “bet” sir. I’m not sure which word. The rest of it’s right.’

‘She was looking at the gentleman in the saloon bar when she said this?’

‘Yes, sir. Straight at him.’

‘As if she knew him?’

‘She was looking very hard at him, sir.’

‘Well, now, Stead, here is a plan of your premises: the ground-floor. Just show us exactly where Mrs. Goodge stood and where the gentleman you speak of stood. Your ground floor is divided into three parts, I see—a saloon bar at one end; a public bar at the other; a bottle-and-jug department in the centre. The counter of the public bar, I also see, faces the counter of the saloon bar. Now which bar was Mrs. Goodge in?’

‘Public bar, sir.’

‘Show us where she stood.’

‘Just there, sir.’

‘And the gentleman?’

‘He stood there, sir—in the saloon bar.’

‘So she was directly facing him, with nothing but the space inside the counter—set down here as fifteen-and a-half feet—separating them?’

‘That’s right, sir.’

‘Who was inside that space?’

‘Just then, only myself, sir.’

‘Well, this gentleman who came in: did you know him?’

‘No, sir.’

‘Absolute stranger?’

‘To me, sir.’

‘You can’t remember having ever seen him before?’

‘No, sir. Sure on that point. Not known to me at all, sir.’

‘Can you describe him?’

‘Not particularly, sir. I didn’t take any great notice of him. I thought he was somebody who happened to be passing and wanted a drink before closing-time.’

‘What drink did he have?’

‘Double whisky, sir.’

‘Did he stay long?’

‘Scarcely a minute, sir. Drank it straight off and went.’

‘Still, you saw him, and saw Mrs. Goodge staring at him as if she knew him. Can’t you give us some idea of his appearance?’

‘Only that he was a man of about middle height, sir. Struck me as a foreigner. He was wearing a black overcoat, black hat—one of those big slouch hats like foreigners wear—and was very much muffled up about his neck and face. I can’t remember his face at all. I thought he looked like a musician—or an actor, or something of that sort.’

‘Well, but you heard him speak. Did he speak like a foreigner?’

‘He only said two words, sir. Double Scotch. I can’t remember that he spoke like a foreigner.’

‘Well, you say he drank off his whisky and went out. What did Mrs. Goodge do?’

‘Nipped out of the place, sir, quick!’

‘As if to follow him?’



‘I thought so, sir.’

‘Did you see anything more of them, either of them, after that?’

‘No, sir, nothing—of either.’

‘You felt sure that Mrs. Goodge hurried out to speak to or follow the man?’

‘Yes, sir—for a simple reason. She forgot her bottle—into which I’d put the half-quartern of gin.’

‘Left it on the counter?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Did she come back for it?’

‘No, sir. I put it aside. It’s there now—where I put it, sir.’

No further questions were put to Stead, and his place in the witness-box was presently taken by an elderly man named Frederick Tapster, who said he was a day labourer in the employ of the Holborn Borough Council and lived in Stafford’s Mews, back of Oxford Street. Mr. Tankersley questioned him.

‘Were you standing just outside the Marquis of Manby a little before eleven o’clock last Thursday night?’ he asked.

‘I was, guv’nor!’ replied Tapster.

‘What were you doing there?’

‘Waiting for a pal o’ mine to come out. I was wanting to go home, like, and he was stopping inside, arguing with another chap. I thought if I went, he’d follow, see?’

‘And he didn’t?’

‘Not immediate he didn’t. I waited for him.’

‘Did you see a man in black clothes, with a big white muffler round his neck and face, come along and turn into the Marquis of Manby?’

‘I did! Leastways, I see him turn into the Marquis. I didn’t see where he come from. When I see him he was just a-letting down of his umbrella and turning into the saloon bar.’

‘Did you get any view of his face?’

‘Not particular, guv’nor. Muffled up to his eyes he was, with a big white choker or handkercher.’

‘Did you see him come out again?’

‘I did. Not three minutes afterwards. Come out and put up his umbrella again.’

‘And then? What did he do?’

‘Do? Sets off across the street—that’s what he done.’

‘Well, now, did anything happen then?’

‘Yes, guv’nor. A woman come out o’ the Marquis—t’other bar entrance—looked round her, caught sight o’ this here bloke in the black clothes, and made after

him. She collared him by the arm just as he got t'other side o' the street.'

'Seized him, eh?'

'She got him right enough, guv'nor.'

'What did he do?'

'S far as I could see, guv'nor, he just turned and looked at her. She said something, and they walked round the corner.'

'Which corner? Into which street?'

'Can't say, guv'nor. I ain't familiar with that part. I'd on'y gone there with that pal o' mine, as lives thereabouts.'

'Look at this plan, then, Tapster. You were standing there. Now, there are two corners those people could have gone round. Which was the one—left corner or right corner?'

'That there corner, guv'nor—to the left.'

'That's into Little Custom Street. That was the last you saw of them?'

'The very last, guv'nor. My pal, he come out just then, and we went off. When I hears about this here murder I sees the police about what I saw.'

'And you say the man didn't do anything particular when the woman seized his arm?—didn't shake her off or anything?'

'I see nothing partik'lar, guv'nor. He just turned and looked at her, quiet, like. Then she says something—I dunno what, of course—and they walks off, peaceful, round the corner.'

'Do you think you'd be able to identify that man if you saw him again, Tapster?'

'Can't say as to that, guv'nor. I never see his dial—not to get a clear look at it—he was that wrapped up about his neck and chin. Might rekernize his gen'ral appearances, guv'nor.'

Tapster stood down, and another witness appeared in the person of Mrs. Callaway, a middle-aged woman who stated in answer to Mr. Tankersley that she lived at Number 19, Little Custom Street, a few doors away from the house of which Mrs. Goodge was caretaker.

'Did you know the late Mrs. Goodge, Mrs. Callaway?'

'Very well indeed by sight, sir—not so well otherwise, though I have spoken to her time and again.'

'You knew her intimately enough not to be mistaken when you did see her?'

'Oh, I wouldn't be mistaken in seeing Mrs. Goodge, sir. I'd been familiar with Mrs. Goodge's personal appearance for many years. And see her pretty nearly every day, sir, in the shops and elsewhere.'

'Ever see her in the Marquis of Manby?'

‘Indeed not, sir, never entering such myself!’

‘Well, where did you see Mrs. Goodge last, now?’

‘Last Thursday night, sir, when it was snowing so hard.’

‘Where did you see her?’

‘Coming along the street, sir—Little Custom Street—from the direction of the establishment you’ve just mentioned.’

‘What time was that, Mrs. Callaway?’

‘Just about eleven o’clock, sir—when they closes the publics.’

‘Where were you?’

‘Like Mrs. Goodge, sir, I’m caretaker of the place I live in—flats, sir. My orders are to close our street-door at eleven o’clock every night, and I keeps to orders, strict. I was just about to close the door, and looks out before I done so, and I see Mrs. Goodge, coming down the street.’

‘You could see her—at that time of night—and it snowing?’

‘Which there’s a very good lamp, sir, right opposite our door, and its light fell full on Mrs. Goodge—that’s how, sir.’

‘I see! Was Mrs. Goodge alone?’

‘No, sir: There was a man with her.’

‘Did you see his face?’

‘No, sir. Which he was looking down at the pavement. He was all in black, sir—with one of them big hats what musicians fancies. Looked to me, sir, like one of them fellows which you see going about carrying fiddles in cases.’

‘Did you see where they went—Mrs. Goodge and this man?’

‘I did not, sir. I come in, and closed our door. ‘Twasn’t no concern of mine, sir.’

‘Had you ever seen Mrs. Goodge and the man together before?’

‘Not as I’m aware of, sir.’

‘Very well, Mrs. Callaway, just one more question. When you saw them, in which direction were these two walking in Little Custom Street? East or west?’

Mrs. Callaway looked a little puzzled.

‘They was walking, sir, towards Minerva House—where Mrs. Goodge lived.’

### III

The next witness called was the late Mrs. Goodge's married daughter, Mrs. Jeeveson: she, too, was questioned by Mr. Tankersley.

'I suppose you saw your mother pretty frequently, Mrs. Jeeveson?'

'Constant, sir! Which it would be at least once a week, regular.'

'Did she talk much to you about the murder of Mrs. Clayton?'

'She talked of little else, sir, after it happened. Leastways, not so much about the murder, but about that man she see leaving the flats.'

'What did she say about him?'

'That she'd know him again, right enough, if she ever see him, sir.'

'But—I am looking at your mother's evidence, given at the inquest of Mrs. Clayton—she said then that she never saw his face.'

'No, sir—but she see his back!'

'She thought she'd be able to recognize him by that, eh?'

'What she always say to me and my husband, sir, was this here—If she see that man again, dressed as he was that night, with his big black hat, and his white muffler, and his black clothes she'd know him among a thousand, sir. And there was another thing she'd know him by.'

'What was that, Mrs. Jeeveson?'

'She said he walked very soft and stealthy, sir—like one o' them animals in the Zoological.'

'Like a cat, eh?'

'Or a tiger, sir!'

'Do you think the man your mother was seen with last Thursday night was the man she saw on the night of Mrs. Clayton's murder, Mrs. Jeeveson?'

'I do that, sir! And I wish I could see him!'

'What do you think he was doing down there in your mother's living-room?'

'Well, sir, me and my husband—not to speak of the policemen—has talked that over, frequent. I think he went down there to try and get round her. What did he give her money for?'

'You think he gave her the bank-notes that were found in her hand?'

'I'm sure he did, sir! Where else would she get all that money? It's plain enough to me, sir. He tried to square her—then he bethought himself it would be better to quieten her once for all—and he did! And I wish I'd the chance of quietening him!'

'Was your mother in the habit of keeping money in the cupboard before which she was lying, Mrs. Jeeveson?'

‘Yes, sir, I’m aware of that. She kep’ it in an old tea-caddy.’

‘You don’t think she’d taken those notes out of the tea-caddy, do you? The idea’s been that she was struck down when she was about to put them into the tea-caddy. But—she may have been taking them out?’

‘No, sir, I’m very certain she wasn’t. I know what was in that tea-caddy at four o’clock that very afternoon!’

‘How do you know?’

‘For this reason, sir. I went to see my mother that afternoon—and little did I think what was a-going to befall her that very night. I’d my little boy with me, sir—Gerald Henry, his name is—and it was his birthday. And his grandma said she must give him a nice birthday present, and she brought out the tea-caddy and give Gerald Henry a ten-shilling note out of it. I see what was in it. “My gracious, Ma!” I says, “What a lot o’ money you’ve got there!—it isn’t safe to keep all that in the place—why don’t you put it in the P.O.?” I says. And——’

‘What’s the P.O., Mrs. Jeeveson?’

‘Post Office Savings Bank, sir. And she says “Oh, I always keep it by me till it gets to £20, and then I puts it in the P.O.: it’s safe enough there in the cupboard,” she says, “I always have the key on me.” “Well, Ma,” I says, “I should think you’ve £20 there now.” “Might be,” she says. “You can count it if you like.” And I did count it, sir, and there was getting on to £17. And there weren’t no five-pound notes, I can take my solemn oath, like what they found in my poor mother’s hand! No, sir, that there reptile had given them to her!’

‘What do you suppose he’d given them to her for, Mrs. Jeeveson?’

‘Why, to make her hold her tongue, sir! To square her, of course.’

‘Would she have held her tongue, do you think?’

‘No, sir, I do not! Far be it from me to think that my mother ’ud ha’ done any such thing! I think she was—I ain’t got the proper word for it.’

‘Temporizing with him, eh, Mrs. Jeeveson?’

‘That’s it, sir—I ain’t no good at them fine words, but such is my meaning. I think she was playing cat-and-mouse with him, and that when he left, she’d ha’ followed him and given him in charge. However, she didn’t get no chance, as you’re aware, sir.’

One more witness was called—Samuel John Trotter, taxi-cab driver, to whose evidence, it was obvious, the police attached considerable importance. He gave the impression of being a sharp-witted, observant young fellow, whose testimony could be relied on as regards accuracy. Mr. Tankersley began on him with a direct question:

‘Do you remember the night of Thursday last, Trotter?’

‘I do, sir!’

‘Where were you and your cab at a quarter to twelve that night?’

‘On a rank in Oxford Street, sir.’

‘Whereabouts—exactly?’

‘Oxford Street end of Berners Street, sir.’

‘Were you hailed there?’

‘Yes, sir—just after the three-quarters had gone.’

‘By whom?’

‘Man who came down Berners Street, sir—walking very fast.’

‘Can you describe him?’

‘Some of him, sir. He was wearing a big black hat, a slouch hat with uncommon wide brim, and he’d a big white muffler round his neck and throat, drawn right over his chin and mouth and up to his nose, and the rest of him was in black clothes. Also, he’d a pair of dark spectacles on. Couldn’t see much of his face, sir.’

‘Was he an Englishman?’

‘I took him for a foreigner, sir. He spoke like one.’

‘What did he say?’

‘Nothing but “Liverpool Street”.’

‘He got into your cab?’

‘There and then, sir.’

‘And you drove him to Liverpool Street Station?’

‘That’s where I thought he wanted to go, sir. But when I’d got to the corner of New Broad Street and Liverpool Street he pulled me up sharp. I stopped, and he got out. He muttered something about walking over, and then asked what I wanted.’

‘Broken English, Trotter?’

‘Well, sir, he just said “How mooch”, like these foreigners do. I told him, and he paid me, and set off across the road towards Liverpool Street Station. At least, as if he was going there. But he didn’t—I saw him again, as I was turning my cab round.’

‘What was he doing?’

‘He turned sharp back when he’d got half across the road and went into the Metropolitan station, sir. There’s an entrance to that, sir, right opposite the gates of the big main-line station.’

‘You saw him actually enter the Metropolitan station?’

‘I did, sir.’

‘That’s the underground, of course. And that would be about—what time, Trotter?’

‘About ten past twelve—midnight, sir.’

‘Trains would still be running, eh?’

‘Oh, yes, sir.’

‘East and west?’

‘Both, sir.’

‘Could you recognize that man if you saw him again, Trotter?’

‘Well, sir, it’s hard to say. If he was dressed just as he was then, I should have a pretty good idea. But these here foreigners, at least a lot of ’em, they’re very fond of those big black hats, and black clothes, and white mufflers. I took this chap for a musician or something of that sort.’

‘And you feel certain he was a foreigner?’

‘He didn’t speak English, sir. Not to me, anyway.’

‘Are you pretty well acquainted with foreigners?’

‘I’d driven a good many, sir.’

‘Can you tell one from the other?’

‘Well, I think I can, sir. I know a German from a Frenchman, and a Spaniard from an Italian.’

‘What would you say this man was?’

‘None of them, sir!’

‘What, then?’

‘Can’t say, sir. Some sort that I don’t know.’

‘Have you ever driven a Russian, Trotter?’

‘Not to my knowledge, sir.’

‘Nor a Pole?’

‘Not that I know of, sir.’

‘At any rate, you feel sure that this man we’ve been talking of, whom you drove from Oxford Street to Liverpool Street last Thursday midnight was a foreigner of some sort?’

‘That’s my impression, sir.’

At this stage of the proceedings the coroner, after some consultation with the police authorities, adjourned the further hearing for ten days.

## IV

Chaney threw down his newspaper just as I laid mine aside. He turned to me with a characteristic grunt—expressive of pronounced conviction.

‘Um!’ he said. ‘I don’t think there’s much doubt about all that, Camberwell! Mrs. Goodge met him!’

‘You think that was the original murderer?’ I said.

‘I see nothing else that would explain matters,’ he answered. ‘I figure it out this way. In the man she saw in the bar of the Marquis of Manby Mrs. Goodge recognized the man she’d seen leaving her flats on the night of Mrs. Clayton’s murder. She followed him out, and accosted him. No doubt they began an argument. What is it likely the man would say under the circumstances? At first he’d deny her accusation, point-blank: he’d say that he was never there at all. She’d stick to it—she was the sort of woman who could be obstinate and who’d let anybody see that she meant what she said; probably she threatened to stick to him and hand him over to the first policeman they met. Then he’d begin to temporize with her. Probably he’d admit that he did leave the flats that night, but that he’d been calling on a friend there. Then he no doubt tried the other dodge—squaring Mrs. Goodge. Very likely—I should say certainly—he offered her money to keep her mouth shut: he would do that without admitting any guilt. Now, from what we saw of Mrs. Goodge, I don’t think she’d object to being squared—whatever her daughter may say. And there’s the undoubted fact—Mrs. Goodge was found with five and twenty pounds in Bank of England notes in her hand. Who gave them to her? This man, of course!’

‘Why didn’t he re-possess himself of them?’ I asked.

‘Probably because Mehta came along before he’d time to do so,’ replied Chaney. ‘And, of course, as soon as he’d finished Mehta, he’d want to clear out quick. But the fact that he did leave them seems to indicate to me that he was a man to whom five and twenty pounds was of no importance—a rich man. Anyway, after settling Mehta at the foot of the stairs, he wasn’t returning to his first victim for the sake of recovering a few banknotes. Or—he may have forgotten them in his excitement—if such a fellow can feel excitement. But, in any case, he cleared out, and made off and round a corner or two into Berners Street.’

‘You think he was the man who hailed the taxi-cab driver?’ I said.

‘I do! And I’ll tell you what I think about that. I think it was all a piece of bluff—sheer acting. He asked to go to Liverpool Street Station—bluff!’

‘But he did go there!’ I pointed out.

‘He didn’t. He stopped the cab at the corner of New Broad Street and



Liverpool Street, with some muttered remark about walking. But he didn't walk across to Liverpool Street Station—the big station, at any rate. The taxi-cab man, turning his cab, saw him slink into the Metropolitan—the Underground! Why? Because he was going back on his tracks—going back to the West End! Clever dodge, Camberwell! The fellow had figured things out. He knew that Mrs. Goodge and the Hindu would be found dead, murdered. He knew that he'd been in the Marquis of Manby when Mrs. Goodge was there, and had probably been seen with Mrs. Goodge. He also knew that these last murders would be linked with that of Mrs. Clayton and that of Hannington, and that somebody of foreign appearance, in black hat, black clothes, white muffler would be looked for. Very well!—let them have some clue that will make them look for him in the East End. So—to Liverpool Street. But—I think he went back west when he'd once got down to the Underground. And it's in the West End that we'll look for him!

'Chaney!' said I. 'Who do you think he is?'

'Who do I think he is?' he exclaimed. 'Why, Crowther, of course! Who else? But—who is Crowther?'

'Do you think he's Paley?' I asked 'Do you—really?'

'I can say more about that when I've heard what that clerk of ours has to tell us,' he answered. 'He'll have some sort of a report to make. Paley?—ah, I shouldn't be surprised. I reckon that chap's capable of anything. But if it is Paley—if Paley's Crowther—I should like to know Paley's real motive for indulging in what's becoming wholesale murder. He—the murderer, whoever he really is—is an expert at cracking his victims' skulls, Camberwell! And look here, do you remember what the old gentleman at Monte Carlo told us about Crowther?—that he carried an old-fashioned life-preserver on him, always? Well, from my knowledge of such things, I should say that every one of these victims, Hannington, Mrs. Crowther, Mrs. Goodge, the Hindu, was finished off in that way. With one good blow, delivered in the right place! Camberwell!—we've got to find this chap and make sure that he swings!'

'What are we going to do when we get to Victoria?' I asked.

'We'll go straight to Lord Cheverdale and give in our report,' he answered. 'But listen! Our interview with Lord Cheverdale has got to be with him, in private, and not with him and Paley. With Paley we will have nothing to do. And we must be careful about what we tell Lord Cheverdale. I think he's a man of honour, and if we pledge him to secrecy, he'll respect our confidence. But still, there are things we must not tell him—at present.'

'Such as—what?' I asked.

‘Well, leave it to me—but in particular, we must not, on any account whatever, tell him that the man Crowther, wherever he is, and under whatever name he now goes by, can be identified by that tattoo mark we heard of——’

‘The Black Dragon!’ I exclaimed. ‘Ah!—I’d forgotten it!’

‘I hadn’t!’ he said grimly. ‘Not likely. We keep that matter to ourselves, Camberwell, until——’

He paused, and turning to the window, looked out on the Kentish fields with an inscrutable smile.

‘Until—when?’ I asked.

‘Until the right moment comes!’ he answered. ‘It’s coming!’

## PART FIVE

# THE SWIMMING-POOL

## I

We found Lord Cheverdale alone: he sat at the head of his dinner-table in solitary state, a dish of walnuts and a decanter of port before him. He seemed to be in more genial and expansive mood than we had hitherto found usual with him and sent his butler for more port and glasses. Indeed, he appeared somewhat pleased to have company.

‘Had to dine alone to-night,’ he said, with a grin that seemed to spring from some thought that struck him as humorous. ‘Daughter staying with friends, and Paley away for a day or two on business of his own. Any news?’

‘We have a good deal to tell your lordship,’ replied Chaney. He waited until the butler had discharged his office and gone away, and then bent towards our employer with an air that suggested secrecy. ‘A great deal!’ he continued. ‘And we are very anxious that whatever we tell should be treated by our lordship in absolute confidence.’

‘No other ears than mine, eh?’, suggested Lord Cheverdale.

‘No other ears than your lordship’s,’ assented Chaney. ‘Your lordship has employed our confidential services, and we are most particular that whatever we now tell your lordship should not be repeated to anyone. The fact is,’ he continued, ‘we have secured most important evidence, and while we are bound to reveal it to your lordship, as our employer, we feel that it would be highly dangerous to the success of our plans if any third party knew of it.’

‘Yes, yes!’ said his lordship. ‘Understand exactly—not a word to anybody!’

‘Not even, if your lordship pleases, to your secretary, Mr. Paley,’ remarked Chaney. ‘When we say no one, we mean no one!’

‘Yes, yes—quite so!’ said Lord Cheverdale. ‘Well, now, where have you got to?’

Chaney set to work on his story. He had a natural gift of telling a clear, consecutive story in plain and lucid language, without waste of words. Lord Cheverdale, because of his business training was a good listener; I could see from the expression of his keen old eyes and his characteristically hard and grim lips that he was following every point. And Chaney made his points in sequence—the discovery of the marriage certificate of Frank Crowther and Alice Holroyd; the enquiries of Milthwaite, Mentone, Monte Carlo, and Paris, and their result; the probabilities that the murders of Hannington, Mrs. Crowther, or Clayton, Mrs.

Goodge and the Hindu student were the work of the same hand; and finally that we felt convinced that Crowther was either the actual murderer or had some hand in the murders. But one thing Chaney did *not* tell Lord Cheverdale the story of the tattooed serpent or dragon found round Crowther's arm—that, for reasons of his own, he kept to himself.

Lord Cheverdale, keeping a strict silence till the end of Chaney's report, broke it with a sharp question.

'Who do you suppose this man Crowther to be?'

Chaney shook his head.

'My lord, we have nothing on which to found any supposition!' replied Chaney, keeping back any suspicions he might have. 'We don't know who he is!'

Lord Cheverdale put the tips of his fingers together and assumed a judicial attitude. I could see that his naturally acute wits were working.

'You have no doubt that the woman who called herself Mrs. Clayton at Little Custom Street was, in reality, Mrs. Crowther, formerly Alice Holroyd?' he asked.

'None!' said Chaney.

'You ascertained that Alice Holroyd was well known to Hannington when he was on the *Milthwaite Observer* and she employed at the Angel Hotel there?'

'That we ascertained, beyond question.'

'That explains why Mrs. Crowther, formerly Alice Holroyd, visited Hannington at the *Sentinel* office, eh?'

'We think it's an ample explanation, my lord. She went to seek his aid.'

'In what?'

'As we've told your lordship, she'd recognized her missing husband in a man of whom she'd had a momentary glimpse in Paris. We think she went to Hannington to ask him to help her to find this man in London. Probably the man—Crowther—is now a man of wealth and position. These adventurers, my lord, have strange ups and downs.'

Lord Cheverdale tapped the table in front of him.

'Hannington and the woman were murdered—probably by the same hand—within an hour or two of each other!' he said. 'That means that the man you're thinking of—let's suppose it was Crowther—had found out that the woman had told her story to Hannington, and that Hannington might let it out to the world. How had the man found it out?'

'That, my lord, is, of course, a mystery,' replied Chaney. 'We don't know how he had found it out. But there's the fact that——'

Lord Cheverdale lifted a finger.

‘A moment! Hannington, you remember, was murdered in my grounds. Evidently he was on his way to me. Why should he come to me with this business?—which was not of public interest.’

‘Pardon me, my lord, but it may have been of public interest,’ said Chaney. ‘My own particular theory is this. I think the man Crowther, in the course of the up-and-down career which all adventurers have, is now probably a well-to-do-man, and possibly a public man, or employed in some important capacity. I think, too, that since his desertion of his wife, he has probably contracted a bigamous marriage. If Hannington knew this, he, as a newspaper editor, would feel it a matter of public interest and would naturally want to consult you about it—as being proprietor of his paper.’

Lord Cheverdale thought in silence for a few minutes.

‘You think that Hannington, through his conversation with Mrs. Crowther, found that her missing husband was a man of some importance and known to him?’

‘Yes!’

‘Now, why do you think that Hannington set off to see me about it?’

‘I can answer that at once, my lord! I think that Hannington knew that your lordship also knew the man!—knew of him.’

‘Knew of him, perhaps—knew him, I doubt! I have a very small circle of acquaintances. He may be, as you say, a public man. But to turn back—how, during that evening, did the man—again let’s call him Crowther—how did Crowther find out that his wife had been to Hannington?’

‘Mrs. Crowther may have been watched, my lord. And—there may have been an accomplice.’

Lord Cheverdale rose from his chair and began to pace the room.

‘It comes to this,’ he said, after a pause. ‘Your theory is that Hannington and Mrs. Crowther were murdered because they knew a secret which would, if divulged, have upset all Crowther’s schemes; that Mrs. Goodge was afterwards murdered because she recognized Crowther, and that Mehta, the young Hindu gentleman, was murdered because he appeared on the scene at the moment of Mrs. Goodge’s murder. Is that it?’

‘That, my lord, is it, or about it,’ replied Chaney.

‘But you have evidence as to the appearance of the man seen by Mrs. Goodge, and afterwards by other people,’ remarked Lord Cheverdale. ‘A man of middle height, in dark clothing, black slouch hat, white muffler——’

‘Your lordship will pardon me for interrupting you to point out that nobody, nobody whatever, can say that he or she has seen this man!’ said Chaney. ‘I mean—

nobody has seen his face, or, at least, only the top of it! He has always been so muffled up that not one of the people who have been questioned can say whether he is dark or fair, or even if he is clean-shaven or bearded!

Again Lord Cheverdale paced the room, thinking.

‘There must be somebody who knows something!’ he said at last. ‘Somebody—somewhere!’

‘Exactly, my lord!’ agreed Chaney. ‘There always is somebody who knows a lot in these cases. But the difficulty is to get such people to come forward!’

‘I’m a rich man,’ observed his lordship. ‘I can make it worth anybody’s while to tell. Would it be of use to offer a reward?’

‘It might,’ replied Chaney.

‘Let it be done, then,’ said Lord Cheverdale. ‘You can draw up the offer. How would you put it?’

‘That ought to be very carefully considered, my lord,’ answered Chaney. ‘What I should suggest is that nothing whatever is said about the murder part of the business. There’s an official police notice out for that already. What I should suggest is that we advertise for information as to the whereabouts, at present, of Frank Crowther, at one time resident in Milthwaite, and who was married at Milthwaite Registry office to Alice Holroyd.’

‘Where would you put such an advertisement?’ enquired Lord Cheverdale.

‘In *The Times*, the principal London dailies, and in the leading provincial newspapers,’ replied Chaney.

‘Offering a reward?’ asked his lordship.

‘I shouldn’t mention any particular amount, my lord. It will be sufficient to say that a handsome reward—to be agreed upon—will be paid to anyone giving the information we ask for. I daren’t say,’ continued Chaney, ‘that this will produce any result, but it’s a way of finding Crowther. Somebody may know something about him.’

‘Let it be done—see to it at once,’ said Lord Cheverdale. ‘Do whatever seems best to you. Of course, you know, your theories aren’t those of the official lot at Scotland Yard—oh, dear me, no! They still stick to the political murder idea—only more so since that poor caretaker woman and the Hindu were murdered. They’re convinced of it!’

‘The official police, my lord, don’t know what we know,’ remarked Chaney, quietly. ‘We shall have to tell them sooner or later, but at present they aren’t in possession of our information. No one is but your lordship. And your lordship will remember our bargain as to secrecy?’

‘Oh, yes, yes, yes!’ agreed Lord Cheverdale. ‘Bargain’s a bargain with me. Don’t quite understand your reason for secrecy, but never mind—get on with it!’



## II

Chippendale was the next person we wanted to see, and Chippendale, on his coming to the office on the following morning, was eager to give in his report.

‘I haven’t had such bad luck, sir,’ he answered in response to Chaney’s first question. ‘I got in with ’em pretty thick at Cheverdale Lodge, and I jolly soon settled two points. First of all, there’s no doubt whatever that from the time that the old gentleman—Lord Cheverdale, I mean—finished the game of piquet he was having with him and went off to bed, nobody in the household can say exactly where Paley was. And second, there’s no doubt either that——’

‘Stop there, my lad!’ said Chaney. ‘A detail!—you say that from the time Lord Cheverdale left him for his bed, nobody can say where Paley was. But—till when?’

‘Sorry, sir,’ responded Chippendale, penitently. ‘Until Harris, running to tell of what he’d discovered in the shrubbery, found him in the library, reading a book.’

‘Go on with your second point,’ said Chaney.

‘This,’ continued Chippendale. ‘There’s also no doubt that as soon as Paley had ’phoned the police, he cleared out, saying to the butler and Harris that he must break the news to—but there, at that point, there’s difference of opinion, or of evidence, between Harris and the butler. Harris says that Paley said he must break the news to Hannington’s relations. The butler says that Paley didn’t say “relations”; he said “our people”—by which the butler thought he meant the *Sentinel*. However, Harris sticks to it that it was “relations”. On the other hand, the butler’s equally certain he’s right—it was “our people”.’

‘Anyway, Paley left the house?’ said Chaney.

‘At once, without waiting for the police. I did my best to get the exact time,’ continued Chippendale. ‘As near as I could ascertain, it was five minutes past twelve—midnight—when Harris found the body, and by a quarter past Paley had ’phoned the police and left the house. And——’

‘Just wait a minute, Chippendale,’ I said. ‘I want to glance at the notes I made at the time, after hearing what Harris had to say. There’s something I remember.’

I found my notes, looked them over, and came to a certain passage.

‘Now, listen!’ I continued. ‘I have it down here that Harris, when Mr. Chaney and I interviewed him, said “I heard Paley say to the police that it was a very suspicious thing that there were no papers in Mr. Hannington’s pockets, for Mr. Hannington’s pockets were always bulging with papers”. Now, when did Harris hear that said, if Paley was out when the police came?’

‘I know that point, sir,’ replied Chippendale, confidently. ‘It occurred to me, sir;

if you remember, you gave me all your notes to read, so that I should be posted. That, sir, was overheard by Harris after Mr. Paley's return: he and the police had a long talk then.'

'Very well,' I said. 'You were saying, when I interrupted you——'

'That Paley did not return to the house until three-thirty, sir. The police had asked the butler, Mr. Walker, for him several times. He came hurrying in at exactly half-past three.'

'You've kept all these enquiries secret, at the house, my lad?' asked Chaney.

'Absolutely, sir! What I've discovered's been found out through what you might call casual talk—they're all talking about it still, up there, in the servants' hall.'

'Have you heard anything that would show there's any suspicion about Paley amongst any of 'em?' enquired Chaney.

Chippendale grinned, knowingly.

'Well, I have, sir,' he replied. 'There's a girl there—bit partial to me, I think, gentlemen—that I've taken for a walk in the Park now and then, and of course, we've had a good deal of confidential talk——'

'You haven't let her know your real job?' exclaimed Chaney.

'Not such a fool, sir!—she knows nothing about me except that I'm a friend of Harris's—I told her I was a clerk, in a very promising way. Oh, dear me, no, Mr. Chaney, she knows nothing!'

'Well?' said Chaney.

'Well, sir, she was talking about the murders one night when we were out, and she said something pretty stiff. Just this "I shouldn't wonder," she said, "if that sneaking centipede Paley hadn't something to do with it!—I wouldn't put it past him to do anything!" "You don't like him?" I said. "Who does?" she said. "We all hate him like poison—a crawling crocodile!" "Well, the old man does," I said. "Can't do anything without him, can he?" "Oh!" she said. "He got round the old chap long since—he can twist him round his little finger!"'

'That opinion's generally shared in, there?' asked Chaney.

'I should say so, sir,' replied Chippendale. 'Paley, gentlemen, seems to be the virtual boss at Cheverdale Lodge. Miss Chever appears to be a nonentity, and the old lord leaves everything to Paley. Paley, they say, pokes his nose into everything, and interferes with everybody—he even orders the meals.'

'Useful sort of man,' remarked Chaney, drily. 'Well, my lad, you've got more than that to tell us. What next?'

'Well, sir, what's to come, is, of course, far more important. I set to work, sir,' continued Chippendale, 'to see if I could find out where Paley went when he left

Cheverdale Lodge at a quarter-past twelve that midnight. And—I did!

‘You did?’ exclaimed Chaney. ‘Good lad—good lad! How did you find out?’ he went on eagerly, betraying a characteristic desire to know the method before hearing the result. ‘Stiff job, eh?’

‘Very stiff job, sir,’ assented Chippendale. ‘Well, sir, I thought things over, and it seemed to me that Paley, when he hurried off, would probably go in search of the nearest cab-rank. That was at Clarence Gate. So I went there. And with a great deal of difficulty I at last unearthed a taxi-cab driver, who, on that night, drove a gentleman from Clarence Gate to two different places and finally landed him back at Clarence Gate about a quarter-past three.’

‘Get the details from him?’ enquired Chaney.

‘I did, sir! And,’ continued Chippendale. ‘I should prefer, gentlemen, that the man should give you those details himself. As soon as I got your wire from Paris yesterday, saying you were returning last night, I got into communication with this man—he’s a smart young fellow—and I’ve arranged for him to come here at eleven o’clock this morning—it’s half-past ten, now, gentlemen.’

We spent the next half-hour in dealing with some of the correspondence that had accumulated during our absence. At eleven o’clock Chippendale marshalled in to our office a young man whose appearance fully justified our clerk’s description of him—he looked shrewd, observant, watchful.

‘Albert Marks, gentlemen,’ said Chippendale.

Albert Marks made obeisance, and seated himself on the edge of the chair which Chippendale placed for him. And Chaney, after looking him well over, took him in hand.

‘Taxi-cab driver, eh?’ began Chaney.

‘That’s my occupation, sir.’

‘Our clerk there tells me that you remember a man engaging your cab late one night when you were on the rank at Clarence Gate. How can you fix this particular night?’

‘Very easily, sir. It was the night of the murder of the gentleman in Lord Cheverdale’s grounds. I remember reading about that in the evening papers next day—really, the same day.’

‘You didn’t connect your fare with the murder?’

‘I didn’t, sir. You see, it’s no uncommon thing to be hailed at that time of night, about there. There’s a lot of big houses thereabouts, and gentlemen stop late at ’em, after dinner-parties and such-like. No, I didn’t connect him with the murder until this here young man of yours come after me, and then, of course, I did begin to think

there might be something in it.’

‘Can you describe the man who hailed you?’

‘Well, in a way of speaking, fairly well, sir. I should say he was in evening clothes, sir. All black, anyway. Black trousers, black overcoat—a big white muffler round his neck. Can’t remember his features—middle-sized man, he was; neither old nor young. Carried an umbrella.’

‘Would you know him again if you saw him?’

Marks glanced at Chippendale.

‘Well, sir,’ he replied, ‘this here young man, he put me in the way of having a careful look at a certain gentleman what lives up that way——’

‘A moment,’ interrupted Chaney. He turned to Chippendale. ‘Who was that?’ he asked.

‘Paley!’ replied Chippendale.

‘But,’ continued Marks, obeying Chaney’s nod, ‘I couldn’t say—couldn’t ha’ sworn, you know—that it was him as I drove that night. About his size, and all that. The most I can say as to that is that I daresay the man your clerk showed me is the individual I drove—but I couldn’t swear to him.’

‘Not on closer inspection?’ asked Chaney.

‘No, sir—not on closer inspection! I couldn’t be sure.’

‘Well, where did you drive him?’

‘He come up, sir, rather hurrying, and told me to go down to the bottom of Portland Place and pull up there, and to drive sharp. Of course, we weren’t many minutes getting down there—’tain’t far. I pulled up on the left hand side, facing the corner of the Langham Hotel. He jumped out and thrust a pound note into my hand. “Here,” he says. “I want you to wait—take that in the meantime—I may be five minutes—I may be half-an-hour; in any case, wait.” Then he hurried off.’

‘In which direction?’

‘He went along Riding House Street, sir.’

Chaney looked at me. I knew what he was thinking. Riding House Street leads straight into Great Portland Street; Little Custom Street is just behind Great Portland Street: from the place where the taxi-cab was left to Little Custom Street was not more than three minutes walk.

‘Well,’ said Chaney. ‘How long did you wait? But first, can you remember what time this was?—I mean, when the man got out of your cab?’

‘I can tell you the exact time to a second, sir, for I not only looked at my watch but heard the clocks going at the same instant. It was precisely a quarter to one.’

‘Did the man come back?’

‘He did, sir.’

‘After you’d waited—how long?’

‘Exactly three-quarters of an hour, sir. He came back at half-past one.’

Again Chaney glanced at me. And again I knew what was in his mind. He was wondering if the murdering of Mrs. Clayton and the ransacking of flat Number 12 at Minerva House could have been accomplished in three-quarters of an hour—or, rather, reckoning it a three minutes walk from Portland Place to Little Custom Street and the climbing of that long staircase at Minerva House, in thirty-five minutes.

‘Well,’ continued Chaney, ‘and then?’

‘He got into the cab again——’

‘A moment! Did he seem—or, rather, did you notice anything when he came back?’

‘Only that he seemed to have been hurrying. Breathed hard.’

‘Well—go on.’

‘He got in again, and told me to drive to the corner of Whitehall Place: the War Office corner. When we got there, he told me I’d have to wait a bit, again. Then he hurried off.’

‘Which way?’

‘He went down Whitehall, past the United Service Institution. I didn’t pay any particular attention, but I saw him going that way before I lost sight of him. I stopped where I was—there was nothing about.’

‘How long was he away that time?’

‘Longer! He didn’t come back till past three o’clock; about ten minutes past three it would be.’

‘Notice anything when he came back?’

Marks smiled, glancing at Chippendale.

‘Well, I did notice something, sir. I told this young man about it. As I said at first, this here party had an umbrella when he first got into my cab—I noticed it, particular: it had what looked like a fine gold top. He took it with him when he got out at Langham Place: he took it with him again when he got out in Whitehall. When he came back that second time he hadn’t got it. I drew his attention to the fact. “Excuse me, sir,” says I, “but haven’t you left your umbrella behind you?—I mention it,” I says, “because when you miss it you may think you’ve left it in my cab—which you had it with you when you got out this last time.”’

‘What did he say?’ asked Chaney.

‘Seemed as if he wasn’t going to say anything, I thought,’ replied Marks. ‘Then he muttered something about it being all right—it would be taken care of, laid it

down at a friend's, or something.'

'And then?'

'Then I drove him back to where we'd set out from, and we settled up—leastways he told me to keep the change out of the pound note—and he went off.'

'Marks!' said Chaney, 'are you sure you couldn't swear to this man?'

But Marks shook his head. No! However sure he might feel, he couldn't positively swear.

### III

When Chippendale had shown the taxi-driver out, Chaney and I fell to discussing the information he had given us. There was no doubt in our minds that the man he had driven, on the night of Hannington's murder, first to Langham Place, and then to Whitehall, was Paley. But why had Paley gone to either Whitehall or Langham Place? What had he been after?—what had he done?

Chaney, as was usual with him, summarized things in sequence.

'Let's get it all in order, Camberwell,' he said. 'Hannington's dead body is found, in the grounds of Cheverdale Lodge, by Harris, soon after midnight. Harris runs to the house and finds Paley reading in the library. Paley goes back with him to the dead man; returns to the house and 'phones for the police. He then quits the house saying he must inform Hannington's relations. We know that this was an excuse—a foolish one; there were no relations to warn: at least, not in London. Paley hurried down to Clarence Gate; gets into Marks' cab, and is driven to the bottom of Langham Place. He hastens along Riding House Street, in—mark you!—the direction of Little Custom Street. He is away three-quarters of an hour. And then comes in the first big question.'

'Yes—what?' I said as he paused.

'This. We know in what state the flat Number 12 at Minerva House was found. It had been ransacked. Now, reckoning that a man had some thirty-five minutes at his disposal, could he have done what we saw the murderer or somebody—had done in that time? Two rooms, mind you!—practically rummaged from top to bottom. Is it possible?'

'If he'd worked very rapidly—and presuming that the woman was silenced immediately after his entrance, I should say yes,' I replied. 'You can do a lot of things in thirty-five minutes.'

'Well, anyway,' continued Chaney, 'he went back to the cab, and had himself driven to Whitehall. Now—why? Does anything strike you?'

'At the moment, no,' I replied.

'Well, something strikes me,' he said. 'Mr. Craye has a flat thereabouts. Paley went to him! Now, why? If it was to tell him of the murder—as no doubt it was—why didn't he go there first? I see nothing remarkable, or out-of-the-way, even suspicious in Paley's going to tell Craye that Hannington had been found murdered at Cheverdale Lodge; Craye is Lord Cheverdale's trusted business manager; a smart, and I should say, dependable man. But I do see something very remarkable in the fact that instead of Paley driving straight to Craye, he drove to close by a house in

which, at just about the time he was in the neighbourhood, a second and exactly similar murder took place!’

‘Can we be sure that he went to see Craye?’ I asked. ‘He may have gone to see some other person. The fact that Craye has a flat in that neighbourhood may be only a coincidence. You remember that Hannington was seen round there earlier in the evening—that he chartered a cab from there? Is there some person living in that neighbourhood about whom we know nothing so far?—some person whom Hannington wished to see, whom Paley wished to see?’

‘No—I don’t follow that line,’ he answered. ‘I don’t think there’s the slightest doubt that Hannington went to see Craye and finding him out, drove on to Cheverdale Lodge. And I don’t doubt, either, that Paley went to see Craye. But—why?’

‘It may have been to tell him of what had happened, to consult him about telling Lord Cheverdale, to ask him to see about filling Hannington’s place at the *Sentinel* office——’

‘No!’ he said, interrupting me. ‘All those things could wait. He’d some special reason. What?’

‘It seems to me,’ said I, ‘that Paley’s visit to Craye is a minor matter compared with the fact that after discovering Hannington’s dead body, he hurried to the immediate neighbourhood of Little Custom Street. And as regards his visit to Craye, if he made it, there is surely a very simple way of solving whatever mystery there is about that!’

‘Well?’ he asked. ‘What is it?’

‘Let us see Craye and ask him if Paley came to him that night, and why?’ I replied. ‘Craye has always seemed a straight-forward man of business—he’d probably tell us whatever he knew.’

Chaney thought this out for a minute or two.

‘No!’ he said, suddenly. ‘I’m beginning to be doubtful now if Paley did go to Craye. As you said, there are lots of other people living in flats about there. There may be some person in the background about whom we know nothing. Let’s take a day or two to think it over: to-day, Camberwell, I want off—I’ve got to take my wife to a friend’s wedding. Think things well over before to-morrow morning, and we’ll have another consultation.’

He got up to go, but I stopped him.

‘About that advertisement?’ I said. ‘For information about Crowther?’

‘That, too, there’s no hurry about,’ he answered. ‘You draft what you think will do, and we’ll go into it to-morrow morning. Now I’m off—you know where to find



me if I'm wanted.'

'Not if you're going to a wedding,' I said.

'The wedding's at two o'clock,' he answered. 'I shall be home before five.'

Then he went off, and I settled down to the routine work of the office. There was nothing very exciting that morning. A man came in who wanted his wife's movements watched; a woman called who desired her husband kept under observation. And just before noon Chippendale poked his head into my room to say that a gentleman who would rather not give his name was anxious to see me.

'What's he like, Chippendale?' I asked. 'Didn't you tell him our rule?'

'I did, sir, but he said you'd know him when you saw him. Very well-to-do man, I should say. North-country man, sir, by his speech.'

An idea struck me: I told Chippendale to bring the caller in. And next moment, as I had expected, Mr. Halstead, of Milthwaite, entered the room. Remembering him as one of those men who habitually wear a cheerful and smiling expression, I thought he looked very grave and thoughtful.

'You didn't expect to see me, Mr. Camberwell,' he said as he took a chair.

'No!' I replied. 'But I'm glad to see you. For I daresay you've got some news for us?'

He shifted uneasily in his chair, looking about him uncertainly.

'Well, I don't know,' he answered. 'Maybe I have—and again, I mayn't have. Your partner about?—Chaney?'

'He isn't,' I said. 'He's gone to a wedding. But—I'm here.'

'Oh, you'll do!' he responded. 'It's little that I have to say. But it may be of vast importance. I'm in town for a few days, staying at my club, *The R.A.C.*'

'Royal Automobile Club, eh?' I said. 'Didn't know you were a member there—but I suppose you're an ardent motorist?'

'One of the very first to take it up,' he answered. 'I've driven my car in the days when you had to have a man with a red flag to go in front. Not my present car, of course—I've had a score or two since then.'

'And——?' I suggested, anxious to hear his news. 'You were saying that you have something to tell which——'

'How far have you got, since you saw me at Milthwaite?' he interrupted. 'You were going abroad?'

I told him, briefly, how Chaney and I had fared, and brought the story up to the murders in Little Custom Street. He knew all about that, and when I had finished he sat silent for a minute or two.

'Well!' he said at last, suddenly. 'I may as well say what I came to say. I believe

I've seen Crowther!

'Good heavens!—when?' I exclaimed. 'And where?'

'Never mind exact details just now,' he answered. 'I know where and when I shall see the man I mean again, and how I shall be able to make absolutely certain. I don't want to say more until I am certain.'

'Yorkshire caution!' I said.

'And a very good thing to have!' he retorted. 'Now listen—can you come and dine with me to-night, at the club?'

'Thank you, I can,' I replied. 'What time?'

'Be there at 5.30 sharp,' he answered. 'I'll be on the look-out for you in the main hall. Within half-an-hour both you and I will know if the man I'm thinking of is really Crowther. If he is—well, there'll be more important things than dinner to think of; if he isn't, it won't spoil our appetites to suffer a disappointment. But—I don't think we shall be disappointed.'

'You feel sure the man you mean is Crowther?' I asked.

'I do! He's changed—grown a beard and moustache, and looks older, of course—but I do feel as sure as can be. Still, I want to be certain,' he answered.

'And—how do you propose to make certain?' I said. 'Dead certain?'

'I'll tell you,' he replied. 'I saw this man last night as he was leaving the club. I felt so sure that he was Crowther that I made some very cautious enquiries about him. Of course I got the name he's known by there——'

'You don't want to tell it yet?' I suggested.

'Not yet—let's make sure,' he answered. 'And I found out certain things about his habits. He comes to the club every evening—at least five nights out of seven—about a quarter to six, and has a swim in the big swimming-pool in the basement—perhaps you know it?'

'I've seen it,' I said. 'I've been over the place, more than once.'

'Well, you see the point?' he went on. 'When he comes to-night, we shall see him stripped for swimming. If he's Crowther—eh?'

'The Black Dragon!' I exclaimed.

'Or serpent, or whatever it is,' he assented. 'The tattoo mark! I shall recognize it. And now, look here—suppose we see it? What then?'

'Leave that to me, Mr. Halstead,' I answered. 'If I see that mark, the man will be shadowed, followed, never lost sight of from that moment! I'll see to it.'

'All right,' he said. 'I leave that to you—5.30 then, at the club.'

'One moment!' I said, as he rose. 'You know who this man is. Is he a man of wealth and position?'

‘Both!’ he answered. ‘That is, he is a man holding a most important business position and commanding a big salary. And—he has prospects that people would call brilliant.’

‘And yet—if he’s Crowther—probably a murderer!’ I said.

‘Aye, well, it’s a queer world,’ he retorted. ‘Don’t forget, now, 5.30 sharp.’

He went off then, and I began to form my plans for the evening. One thing was certain; if the man Halstead had spoken of was Crowther, he must be stopped, detained, questioned. After considering the situation I wrote a note to Chaney asking him to be in readiness for a telephone call from me at any moment after 5.30 that afternoon; this I sent off at once by a District Messenger. And then I took Chippendale in hand.

‘Chippendale,’ I said, ‘you’re a good hand at observation. Are you equally good at hanging about a place, indefinitely, till you’re wanted?’

‘Done plenty of it, Mr. Camberwell,’ he answered. ‘Patient as Job, I am!’

‘Very well,’ I continued. ‘Now at half-past four you leave the office and get a real good tea, and at half-past five post yourself outside the Royal Automobile Club in Pall Mall, and stick there like a leech, till I want you. You can hang about there indefinitely, I suppose?’

‘I can hang about anywhere, Mr. Camberwell, if I choose,’ he answered. ‘Leeches and limpets, sir, aren’t in it with me. Outside the R.A.C., from 5.30 onwards. Right, Mr. Camberwell—I shall be there, indefinitely.’

That was all I could do. And at 5.30 I walked into the club.

## IV

Halstead was waiting for me in the main entrance hall; he took me straight down to the swimming-pool, and made for a place on its edge where we could see swimmers on their way to and from the dressing-rooms. We sat down in the shadow of a pillar, behind a table.

‘Made any arrangements?’ he asked.

‘Sufficient,’ I answered.

‘Supposing I’m right?’ he said. ‘What do you propose?’

‘He’ll be stopped, questioned,’ I replied. ‘You, of course, can identify?’

‘If we see what I suggest we may see,’ he answered. ‘I’d swear to him! I don’t believe there’s another man in this world marked like that. I—by George, Camberwell, he’s here! Don’t look round—he’ll be passing right in front of us—glance to your left as he passes. Now...’

I felt a great thump at my heart as I slewed my eyes round to the left. A rapid step or two; a man passed. And I nearly let his name out in a loud exclamation which it was all I could do to repress. Halstead, at the same instant, leaning towards me, caught my wrist in an iron grip.

‘H’sh!’ he whispered. ‘Steady! Know him?’

I recovered myself.

‘Yes!’ I said, my lips close to his ear. ‘Craye! Mr. Francis Craye—Lord Cheverdale’s business manager!’

Halstead’s lips curled.

‘Aye!’ he said. ‘I knew that, my lad. That’s what I wouldn’t tell you—I wanted you to see him. Craye? Aye—but if Craye isn’t Frank Crowther, I’m a Dutchman! However, we’ll see in a minute—he’ll be out of that dressing-room presently, with bare arms. Keep your eyes skinned.’

There was no need for that admonition. I sat as if fascinated, waiting. Five, ten minutes went by. Suddenly Halstead whispered.

‘Look out! He’s coming!’

Just as suddenly Craye appeared on the edge of the bath. Bare as to arms and legs, his left arm, raised for his plunge into the big pool, was next to us; the glow of an electric light fell full on the white flesh. A second ... and we had seen, and he had plunged into the water.

Halstead got up, motioning to me to follow his example. We walked away from the edge of the swimming-pool.

‘That’s Crowther!’ he said. ‘As sure as I’m a living man, that’s Frank Crowther!’

As I said just now there's no other man in this world with that mark on him. If I'd seen him swimming last night, I should have known him at once. As it was, in spite of his having grown a beard and moustache, I felt sure. And what are you going to do, now, Camberwell?'

'The thing is, how long is he likely to stay here, at the club?' I said. 'If I'd any idea——'

'He dined here last night,' said Halstead. 'He may do the same to-night. Do you want to get help? If so, I'll keep an eye on him.'

Leaving him there, I went outside the club and looked about for Chippendale, who suddenly appeared, as if from nowhere, at my elbow.

'Yes, sir?' said Chippendale.

I told Chippendale just sufficient for him to know and tell Chaney, and bade him go straight off in a taxi-cab, tell Chaney to get assistance from the police headquarters and be in readiness outside the club when Craye left: meanwhile Halstead and I would watch. And when Chippendale had jumped into a taxi and gone off, I went back to the swimming-pool.

Craye was just emerging after his swim: once more I had a clear view of the tattoo mark—a black dragon, very vividly portrayed, curling clean round the fleshy part of his left arm. He disappeared into a dressing-room, and Halstead and I, retreating to a corner of the vestibule outside, sat down to await his coming out and to follow his further steps.

'What about his recognizing you?' I asked.

'I don't think he'll know me from Adam,' he answered. 'It's twelve years at least since we met, and in those days, I, like he himself, was clean-shaven. I'm anything but that now—oh, he'll not know. Besides, I was a slim, athletic sort of chap in those days; now I suppose you'd call me portly. But what about you?—he knows you!'

'I don't suppose he'll attach the slightest importance to it, if he sees me here,' I replied. 'I might be a member for all he knew. There's a very heavy membership here, isn't there?'

'Several thousands,' he assented. 'Well, we mustn't lose sight of him.'

Craye came away from the dressing-rooms just then. He went towards the stairs, looking neither right nor left, and we got up and followed at a little distance. Upstairs he turned into a bar. There, evidently awaiting him, was Paley. Together, they went up to the counter and ordered drinks. And as they stood with their backs to us, they did not see Halstead and myself, sitting in a corner near the door, until, some minutes later, they turned to leave the room. Then both saw me. Craye passed

on with a mere nod of recognition. But Paley stopped—for once he had—or assumed—a smile that approached to geniality.

‘Didn’t know you were a member here, Camberwell,’ he observed, eyeing Halstead as he spoke. ‘Never remember seeing you here before!’

‘I’m not,’ I answered. ‘I’m dining here with my friend, who is.’

He glanced again at Halstead; then gave me an enquiring look.

‘Get any fresh information during your trip abroad?’ he asked. ‘Anything of any value?’

‘Something,’ I answered.

‘All to be kept in reserve, I suppose?’ he said, with a return to his usual cynical manner. ‘Well, I daresay we shall hear it at Cheverdale Lodge—I’ve been away for the last two or three days, but I shall be on duty there to-morrow morning.’

He nodded and went off, to join Craye, who was waiting for him outside the room; together they moved away towards the restaurant. And after a time we followed them, and over the dinner-table I told Halstead who Paley was, and of the suspicions Chaney and I had had concerning him.

‘And—next?’ asked Halstead.

‘Nothing to do now but wait—and watch—until Craye leaves,’ I said. ‘Chaney will be outside, with help. Then....’

‘Yes?’ he said. ‘What then?’

‘He’ll be stopped—questioned. You’re ready to say he’s Frank Crowther?’

‘I’m ready to swear he’s Frank Crowther!’ he exclaimed. ‘He *is* Frank Crowther!’

I should be hard put to it if I were asked to say, definitely, what I ate or drank that evening. My chief difficulty, all through dinner, was to avoid glancing at the two men in whom I was now so anxiously interested. And though I was by that time a professional investigator of crimes and mysteries, and should—according to the story books—have been as cool as the proverbial cucumber, I was far more nervous and excited than my host. Once or twice, indeed, Halstead had to give me a word of warning.

‘Keep your eyes this way, Camberwell!’ he muttered. ‘They’re straying across the room. Don’t bother yourself, now—I’ll see that those two don’t escape us, while they’re in this club, at any rate. Eat your dinner—they’re fixed, for the time being.’

I followed his orders as well as I could. But my brain was a-whirl with conflicting and speculative thoughts. Were we, at last, near a solution of the mystery? Was Craye really Crowther? Was he the actual murderer of Hannington, and of Mrs. Crowther, and of Mrs. Goodge, and of the Hindu student? What was this now evident close association with Paley? I had never seen anything during my visits to Cheverdale Lodge to indicate that Craye and Paley were close friends, yet what we were now seeing seemed to show that they were. Was it possible that they were accomplices? And, anyway, what would be the next move in this now—*for me*—tensely exciting game?

The next move came from Paley. When he and Craye rose from their table, Paley came across the room to Halstead and myself. There was an assumption of friendliness in his manner and a question in his eyes, but I was hardly prepared for what he put into words.

‘Would you and your friend care for a game of pool, Camberwell?’ he asked. ‘Craye and I want to make up a party of four.’

I glanced at Halstead. He gave me a kick under the table and his eyes telegraphed an instant assent.

‘Very kind of you,’ I answered. ‘I daresay we should.’

Paley turned and motioned Craye nearer: he came along, hands in pockets, looking from one to the other.

‘Not acquainted with your friend’s name, Camberwell,’ said Paley, interrogatively. ‘So many members here——’

Before I could speak, Halstead intervened quickly.

‘My name’s Horton,’ he said.

‘Pleased to meet you,’ responded Paley. He went through the ceremony of

introduction, and we all walked out of the dining-room together. But instead of going towards the billiard-room, Paley headed us in another direction.

‘There’s a private room upstairs,’ he said. ‘We’ll get that—much more comfortable there. This way!’

We went some way upstairs, coming at last to a closed door. Craye suddenly paused and turned.

‘I’ll fetch my own cue from the billiard-room,’ he said. ‘Shan’t be two minutes.’

He ran back down the stairs; Paley opened the door and ushered Halstead and myself into a large, handsomely appointed room in the centre of which stood a billiard table. There was no attendant there, and Paley switched on the lights.

‘Rattling good table, this,’ he said, leading us up to it. ‘And a particularly good cloth. If you don’t care about pool, we can play billiards. But I’m fond of pool. So’s Craye. I’d better ring for a marker.’

He turned away from the table, over which all three of us had bent, and made for a bell between the fireplace and the door. But with three quick strides he was past the bell and out of the door, and the next instant we heard the key turned on us. We were trapped!

Halstead and I, turning from the table, looked at each other. There was a second’s questioning silence. Then he gave a short, sharp laugh—cynical enough.

‘Clever!’ he said. ‘Damned clever! I’d never thought of—of the possibility of that! Men of resource, those two, Camberwell. They’d fixed this while they dined. Write me down an ass!’

‘What’s to be done?’ I asked. ‘They’ll be off, of course.’

‘You may be sure that Craye’s off already, and that Paley’s going,’ he answered. ‘And they’ll both depart in such a fashion that your friends and associates outside will see neither of ’em! They’ve done us—beautifully.’

‘But we can’t stay locked up in here!’ I said.

‘We shan’t stay locked up in here—for ever,’ he replied. ‘But it’ll take some little time to get out, and five minutes law was quite enough for those two. However, the next thing is to ring this bell.’

He put a firm finger on the bell and kept it there. And while he did that I went over to the window, and drawing aside the heavy curtains, looked out. We were high above Pall Mall: I could hear the subdued murmur of the traffic and catch a glimpse of the street lamps. And somewhere down there, no doubt, Craye and Paley were slipping off as quietly as possible—where?

Suddenly a sharp knock sounded on the panels of the door. Then came a voice—muffled, for the door was stout and heavy and close fitting.



‘Hullo! Hullo!’

Halstead went close to the door.

‘Hullo, there, outside! Open the door!’

I could just hear the reply.

‘Door’s locked, sir!’

‘Isn’t the key there?’

‘No, sir—key’s gone!’

‘Find somebody to open the door, then. We’re locked in!’

Then silence. Halstead turned to me.

‘This means waiting,’ he said. ‘Are you a philosopher, Camberwell?’

‘What do you mean?’ I asked.

‘If you aren’t, I am!’ he answered. ‘And I suggest that as this appears to be a billiard-room, and those seem to be cues, and these to be balls, we play billiards. Come on!—pick up a cue.’

We began to play. We were both pretty good players, for amateurs, and as we soon found, very fairly matched. When the scores showed about 30 all we heard sounds outside the door which showed that a locksmith was at work. But they had reached 150 to Halstead and 139 to me before the door suddenly flew open, and revealed a group of astonished folk outside. A club official stepped in. He evidently knew Halstead well.

‘How did you get locked in, Mr. Halstead?’ he asked eagerly. ‘Some trick, sir? Practical joke?’

Halstead put aside his cue and began putting his coat on.

‘Ah, very likely!’ he said. ‘Practical joke’s a very good idea. I hadn’t thought of that. But the practical joker shouldn’t have taken the key away with him, should he? Come on, Camberwell.’

He shouldered his way past official, locksmith, waiters, and made for the stairs: I hastened after him: it seemed to me that at this juncture Halstead was assuming command and direction. Before we reached the main entrance hall, he paused, turning to me.

‘Those people of yours?’ he said. ‘Will they be outside?’

‘They ought to be,’ I answered. ‘Unless they’re already after those two.’

He shook his head at that.

‘Those two, Camberwell, will have slipped them, as sure as fate!’ he said. ‘Come on, let’s get our coats and hats and go out.’

We went out. It was somewhat misty in Pall Mall: despite the lights, it was not easy to see clearly. There was the usual passing to-and-fro of pedestrians; there

were motor-cars and taxi-cabs ranged up in front of the club; men were going in and out. For a moment we stood on the steps, in the full glare of the entrance lamps: I looked about and saw no one that I wanted. But descending to the pavement and walking along a little way, I suddenly felt a tap on my elbow and turned to find Chaney there. And in another moment Doxford was there, and then Windover, and so all of a sudden there was a group of us, myself, Halstead, Windover, Doxford, Chaney, all bundled together, and all staring at each other in a questioning silence. But—there was something missing! What was it? All in a flash I knew what it was—where was Chippendale?

## VI

It was Chaney who broke the mere second's silence—with one sharp word.

‘Well?’

The staccato tone pulled my wits together.

‘Have you seen them?’ I gasped. ‘You’ve watched the door?’

‘Seen—who?’ snapped Chaney.

‘Craye! Paley! Have you seen them come out? Since you’ve been——’

‘We’ve been watching that door ever since we came here, getting on to two hours ago. We’ve not seen either Craye or Paley. What about them?’

I made another gasp—I suppose it meant that I felt utterly baffled. And instead of answering the question I asked another.

‘Where’s Chippendale?’

The three men looked round as if they expected Chippendale to materialize there and then.

‘He was dodging around here, going up and down, not so long since,’ said Chaney. ‘But what of him? What’s happened—in there?’

Halstead intervened: he saw that I was half beside myself.

‘What’s happened, in there,’ he said, ‘is that Craye and Paley, by a clever dodge, which I was a damned fool for not seeing through, enticed Camberwell and myself into a private billiard-room, locked us in, and took the key away! That’s, roughly speaking, three quarters of an hour ago. And, of course, they left the club as soon as they’d got us fixed.’

‘But—Craye?’ exclaimed Chaney. ‘What’s he got to do with——’

I found my tongue again at that juncture.

‘None of you know!’ I exclaimed. ‘Halstead and I know—now! Craye is Crowther!’

The two detectives stared, uncomprehending. But Chaney let out a big oath.

‘Damnation!’ he burst out. ‘Why didn’t we think of that before! But is it certain?’

I pointed to Halstead.

‘Ask him!’ I said.

‘He’s Frank Crowther, right enough,’ declared Halstead. ‘You remember, Chaney, that I told you and Camberwell here, when you came to see me at Milthwaite, that Frank Crowther had a remarkable specimen of tattooing on his arm? Well, I gave Camberwell an opportunity this evening of seeing Craye in the swimming-pool inside this club, and he can tell you that——’

‘Oh, there’s no doubt that Craye is Crowther!’ I broke in impatiently. ‘The thing is—where have he and Paley gone? Let’s *do* something!’

But here Doxford put himself forward.

‘Steady, steady, Mr. Camberwell!’ he said. ‘You forget that all this is so much Greek and Hebrew to me and Windover. What is all this? Who is Crowther? What’s he got to do with this affair? Or if he’s Craye, what—we’re all in a fog, you know,’ he broke off. ‘At least *we* are. Smooth it out! Put it straight!’

‘In a few words?’ I exclaimed. ‘It would take a volume! But—can you follow this? The woman who was murdered in Little Custom Street——’

‘There were two women,’ interrupted Windover. ‘Which are you talking about?’

‘The first—the unknown woman,’ I went on impatiently. ‘The woman who’d called on Hannington at the *Sentinel* office. She was really a Mrs. Crowther, the wife of a man named Frank Crowther, who married her at Milthwaite, in Yorkshire, some years ago. And Crowther is Craye!’

‘Lord Cheverdale’s right hand?’ exclaimed Doxford.

‘Call him right and left, if you like,’ I said. ‘He’s Crowther!’

‘And about to marry his daughter?’ continued Doxford. ‘Do you really——’

Halstead laughed sardonically.

‘I don’t think that’ll come off, now!’ he said. ‘Come now, you fellows, what’s going to be done? I’m not a detective—I’m a plain Yorkshire business man, but I think you ought to get a move on. Craye and Paley are off! Seeing Camberwell and me together evidently aroused their suspicion—I daresay Crowther, *alias* Craye, recognized me, though he never showed a sign that he did—and they tricked us very neatly and made themselves scarce. So——’

‘But look here,’ persisted Doxford. ‘What are you suggesting, you two? Is it that these two men have something to do with the murders? Is it——’

I smacked both hands together in sheer impatience.

‘We’re suggesting what’s probably the exact truth!’ I exclaimed. ‘That Crowther murdered Hannington, and then his own wife, and then Mrs. Goodge and the Hindu! Now have you got it?’

‘But why—why?’ asked Doxford. ‘Why?’

‘Because Mrs. Crowther had turned up, and had identified Craye as her husband, Frank Crowther, and had told Hannington, who was an old friend!’ I answered, impatiently. ‘Don’t you see, man?—Craye was about to marry Miss Chever, and Mrs. Crowther’s presence.—Good God! it’s as plain as that paving-stone!’

‘I see—I see!’ said Doxford, slowly. ‘Um! But—this other chap, Paley? What

about him? What's he got to do with it?'

'That's plain, too,' I answered. 'Paley's been some sort of an accessory. He knows something, at any rate. That's evident, after his doings in concert with Craye, or Crowther, to-night.'

'Accessory, eh?' said Doxford, still ruminative. 'Um! Well, that's as bad as——'

'I've got my own notion about that,' interrupted Halstead. 'My idea is that Craye is in Paley's power. I think Paley found him out!'

Chaney clapped his hands together, as if a sudden burst of illumination had come upon him.

'I see it!' he exclaimed. 'You see, Doxford,' he went on. 'You chaps don't know what Camberwell and I know. You've gone on totally different lines—you thought these murders were political. Camberwell and I searched back into the life-history of the unknown woman, who, undoubtedly, was Mrs. Frank Crowther. Now, if you remember, Crowther—but we'll call him Craye—had been dining with Lord Cheverdale on the night of the murders, and left on foot at a certain time. Now that I know all I do, I should say that he met Hannington in the grounds of Cheverdale Lodge, and Hannington who was by all accounts a very impetuous, impulsive man, with a hot temper, and enthusiastic about righting any wrongs, real or fancied, tackled him there and then about the news he'd received that afternoon from Mrs. Crowther: namely, that the Francis Craye who was Lord Cheverdale's right-hand arm and was about to marry his daughter was in reality her husband, Frank Crowther. Whereupon Craye promptly knocked him on the head and killed him. After which—Hannington, no doubt, having told him, like a fool, where Mrs. Crowther was to be found, he went there and killed her. How's that?'

'Good!' muttered Doxford. 'I reckon you've hit it. But Paley?'

'Why did Paley immediately leave Cheverdale Lodge as soon as the dead body of Hannington was discovered?' continued Chaney. 'For some reason or other he at once suspected Craye. And—he went after him. Camberwell and I know where Paley went. He drove to the bottom of Portland Place; he left his taxi-cab there and went along Riding House Street. He was away some little time (remember that he was in the immediate neighbourhood of Little Custom Street) but he came back to the cab and was driven to near Whitehall Gardens. Now Craye has a flat in or near Whitehall Gardens—Paley, of course, went to see Craye. And I should say that ever since then Paley has had Craye under his thumb. How's that?'

'Good!' said Doxford. 'Daresay it'll work out. Of course, Paley's an accessory, after the fact. But——'

Halstead made an impatient movement.

‘Aren’t you fellows going to *do* something?’ he asked. ‘Those two are off! But you’ve got to get ’em, you know. What’s the use of standing here in Pall Mall, jawing? Do something!’

‘Yes—what?’ asked Doxford. ‘Go to Craye’s flat, I suppose, and ask politely if Mr. Craye’s at home? Or to Cheverdale Lodge and enquire for Mr. Paley? However, we’ll do something. Come on to the Yard!’

We squeezed ourselves into a taxi-cab and went off to New Scotland Yard, Doxford, Windover, and Chaney discussing various technicalities as we went. But we were not destined to cross even the threshold of headquarters. As our cab drew up a couple of men came out, one of whom at once collared Doxford.

‘I say!’ he exclaimed. ‘There’s a message just come in. Man found shot dead in a flat in Riding House Street. Care to come along?’

Riding House Street? We five looked at each other in silence.

## VII

The silence was brief: Doxford broke it.

‘Riding House Street? That’s the street you mentioned in connection with Paley’s doings on the night of Hannington’s murder isn’t it?’ he said. ‘Went there, or something of that sort.’

‘He hurried along Riding House Street where he left his taxi at the bottom of Portland Place,’ I answered. ‘Riding House Street leads into Great Portland Street, and Little Custom Street is close by.’

Doxford turned to the two men who had spoken to him when we drove up.

‘Any details?’ he asked.

‘Not known to us,’ said one. ‘We’re just going up there.’

‘We’ll go, too,’ said Doxford. ‘Come on!—back into the cab!’

We bundled back into the taxi and set off once more. Not until we had crossed Trafalgar Square and were going up Lower Regent Street did anyone speak. Then Windover spoke, suddenly.

‘Lay anything this is one of those two!’ he said.

‘Thought of that myself,’ remarked Doxford. ‘But—which?’

‘There’s a better word than that,’ observed Chaney. ‘Not which, but—why? Why should whichever it is be found shot dead? However, if it is one of the two I dare lay anything I know which it will be!’

‘Which, then?’ asked Doxford. ‘You seem to be pretty sure of things.’

‘I am! It’ll be Craye!’

‘Why Craye?’

‘Because Paley’s the cleverer devil of the two and most likely to know how to save his own skin,’ retorted Chaney. ‘We’re going to have a nice job, seeking Paley. Never trusted him from the moment I set eyes on him, did I, Camberwell? Didn’t I say he was a rotter when he first came to see us?’

‘You did,’ I admitted. ‘But you didn’t know anything about him, then.’

‘Shows what a judge of character I am!’ he said, with a chuckle. ‘Thorough bad lot, Paley. I should say he’s had old Lord Cheverdale on toast ever since he became his secretary. And I’ll bet anything that if it is either Craye or Paley that we find dead and murdered up here, it’ll not be Paley!’

‘Soon settle that,’ muttered Doxford, glancing out of the window. ‘We’re nearly there.’

The taxi-cab turned into Riding House Street, and the driver, who had had no precise instructions, pulled up, with assured knowledge, at a house in front of which

a couple of policemen kept guard at the door. A few night-birds hung about, inquisitive and open-eyed, another policeman stood within the entrance, talking to a man and woman who were obviously the caretaker and his wife. We left our cab and hastened inside; the two men who had spoken to Doxford at the Yard and had followed us in another cab, joined us.

‘Where is it?’ one of them demanded of the policeman inside. ‘Which flat?’

The policeman pointed to a board which hung on the wall of the lobby.

‘Number 8—Mr. Caldwell,’ he answered. ‘The Inspector’s up there.’

‘Isn’t there a lift?’ asked Doxford.

‘No lift here, sir,’ replied the man who looked like a caretaker. ‘’Tisn’t far, though. First landing—then turn to your right.’

We trooped up the stairs; one or two questioning and half-frightened faces looked out on us from half-opened doors as we turned along a wide corridor. The door of Flat Number 8 was wide open; in the little entrance hall an inspector of police was talking in low tones to a police-constable and a man in plain clothes. At sight of Doxford he turned, opened a door, and motioned us to follow him into the room to which it gave admittance. In silence, we all crowded in after him.

It was a luxurious room, that—neither dining-room, drawing-room, nor anything definite. The softest and thickest of carpets, the deepest and easiest of big chairs, the widest and springiest of sofas; soft, shaded light; beautiful pictures; a grand piano; everything in the way of furnishing and fitting that the most exacting of sybarites could desire, and over and through all a curiously subtle scent as of some rare Eastern perfume. But stretched across the hearthrug, one arm crushed beneath him, the other stretched out at full length, lay the dead body of a man. His face was turned slightly in our direction....

Chaney’s voice broke in on the silence.

‘By God! I was wrong! It’s Paley!’

There was no doubt as to its being Paley. And Paley, whom we had seen in life only two or three hours before, and last remembered as he slipped out of the private billiard room to lock us in, lay there dead as a man can be.

‘You know him?’ asked the inspector.

‘Several of us know him,’ replied Doxford. ‘He was Lord Cheverdale’s secretary. But—who shot him? What have you found out?’

‘What I’ve found out is this much, so far,’ replied the inspector. ‘This flat belongs to a Mr. Caldwell. That’s the name the caretaker knows the tenant by, anyway, and the name on the board downstairs. Mr. Caldwell only uses it occasionally—perhaps two or three nights a week. This man,’ he went on, pointing to Paley’s dead body,



‘used to visit here pretty regularly. And according to the caretaker they used to entertain young ladies here—late supper-parties on a grand scale, and that sort of thing: pretty fast life, I gather, from what I’ve heard. And I’ve drawn my own conclusions from a look round this flat. Two bedrooms there—nests of luxury! Every mortal thing in this flat that pleasure-loving people would want—wines, spirits, best of cigars, all that sort of thing. And every precaution taken, too, to keep things quiet—double doors, double windows, and so on. This Caldwell must have spent a heap of money on the place. Perhaps this man shared the expense—according to the caretaker he was here just as much as Caldwell.’

‘But—this affair?’ said Doxford. ‘To-night?’

‘All I can learn is this,’ continued the inspector. ‘The caretaker saw Caldwell and this man—you say his name’s Paley—come in together this evening; he, the caretaker, happened to be in the entrance hall. They came up here. About an hour and a half after that, the caretaker’s wife, who has a key to this flat, came in, and found Paley lying dead, where you see him, and Caldwell gone. Of course, she ran down to her husband, and they fetched the nearest policeman—and so on. But as to Caldwell—come this way.’

He led us across to another door which proved to open into one of the bedrooms he had referred to. He had not exaggerated his description of it—but I should never have taken it for a man’s room; it was rather the sort of room that a luxury-loving feminine devotee of pleasure would have rejoiced in. That, however, was neither here nor there; what was important and significant was the fact that thrown carelessly and hastily over the rose-coloured trappings of the bed was the suit in which we had seen Craye at the club that evening!

‘You see?’ said the inspector. ‘This Caldwell evidently came in here after shooting the other man and changed his clothes. Everything!—everything that would show, anyway—shirt, collar, necktie, clothes. But he did more than that. Look at this, now!’

He opened another door and showed us into a magnificently-fitted bathroom, the lights in which were switched full on.

‘Have any of you any idea as to the real identity of this Caldwell?’ he asked, turning on us. ‘Any notion who he is?’

‘Yes!’ replied Chaney, quickly. ‘A man who’s known in London as Francis Craye, but whose real name is Frank Crowther. He was in Paley’s company to-night.’

‘Did he wear a beard and moustache?’ demanded the inspector.

‘Both! Why?’

The inspector motioned us over to a dressing-table.

‘Because he’s shaved ’em both off!’ he said. ‘Do you see his game? After shooting Paley, he changed his clothes, shaved off beard and moustache, probably packed what he immediately wanted in a case that he could carry, and made off. And now—where to find him? Anybody got any notions?’

‘He’ll not be found at his usual address, that’s certain,’ said Chaney. ‘He’ll have got clean away for the present. Probably he’d made his plans, in view of possible discovery. But——’

At that moment a slight cough in the adjacent room made us turn towards its open door. There, thoughtfully regarding Paley’s dead body, stood Chippendale!

## VIII

Before any of us had time to question him, Chippendale spoke, quietly. He pointed a finger at the dead man.

‘That’s Craye’s work!’ he said. ‘I suspected something of the sort. And—I know where Craye is! He’s safe—you’ve nothing to do but go there and take him.’

‘Where, then?’ exclaimed Chaney. ‘Out with it, my lad! Where is he?’

‘Close by. Langham Hotel,’ replied Chippendale, in the same quiet tones. ‘Thinks he’s safe—for the night, anyhow. Hasn’t the ghost of a notion that I tracked him. But I did! Tracked ’em both—here. Then him—there.’

‘Where from?’ demanded Chaney. ‘Come on—tell the story.’

Chippendale backed against the table, and resting himself on its edge, looked from one to the other of us.

‘I’m about done up,’ he said. ‘You’ll have to take it in brief. I saw ’em—those two, you know—leave the Royal Automobile Club from a basement entrance. None of you were about—I’d no chance to warn you. I followed ’em along Pall Mall to Waterloo Place. They got a taxi there; I got another. I tracked ’em up here—to the end of the street, near the church, anyway. Then I followed ’em along this street, Riding House Street, to these flats. I watched ’em enter. Then I waited, keeping an eye on the front door. Nearly an hour passed. Then Craye came out, alone. I was near enough, though he never saw me, to see that he’d shaved off his beard and moustache and changed his clothes and got a different hat and overcoat on. But I knew him well enough! He’s the very slightest limp in his left leg, and one shoulder—the right—is a tiny bit higher than the other. He slipped out very quietly, carrying a small suit-case—black, with silver mountings—and went off along the street. I followed. He reached the bottom of Portland Place and turned into the Langham Hotel. And—he didn’t come out. So I did the only thing there was to do.’

‘And that, my lad, was—what?’ asked Chaney.

‘Waited a bit and then went in and asked if I could get a room for the night,’ replied Chippendale with a faint smile. ‘Lucky I’m well dressed, and of decent appearance, and had plenty of money on me—I gave ’em a good deposit, as I’d no luggage. And so I got a sight of the register. In fact, his signature was just above mine. Mr. F. Cameron: Number 395. There you are! He’s in his room now.’

The Inspector and the detective looked at each other. Doxford spoke first.

‘He’ll be a damned ugly customer to tackle!’ he said. ‘He’s probably armed, and he’ll stick at nothing. As like as not, he’ll shoot the first man who enters his room. If we could get him out——’

‘Stop a bit!’ interrupted the inspector. He pointed to Chippendale. ‘Who is this young fellow?’ he asked.

‘Clerk to me and Mr. Camberwell,’ replied Chaney.

‘Thoroughly dependable?’

‘Ask me another!’ retorted Chaney. ‘He’s just given you a taste of his qualities!’

‘What I was going to say is this,’ continued the inspector. ‘Is this young fellow certain that Craye’s safely housed at the Langham Hotel for the night?’

‘I took jolly good care to make certain he’d gone to his room,’ said Chippendale. ‘I did a bit of detective work myself, with the floor waiter. He went to his room as soon as he’d booked it, and he had sandwiches, a bottle of whisky, and a syphon of mineral water sent there. He’s safe enough—till morning.’

‘Very good—then I suggest this,’ said the inspector. ‘If he’s the sort of chap who’s likely to shoot at sight, I say there’s no need for us to go to his bedroom door. Let you, Doxford, go with this young man to the Langham. You’ve got your card, and you know what to do. Find out if Craye’s given any orders as to being called in the morning and what time, and so on. Let them be carried out. And when he comes out to leave we’ll take him. How’s that?’

‘Might save a life or two,’ muttered Doxford. ‘Of course, we’ll have to make sure he doesn’t get away in the night.’

‘That’s easy!’ said the inspector. ‘Come on—we’ll go across to the Langham. You can go in and explain your business—we’ll wait outside for you.’

We left the flat to the police-constables and trooped along the street to Portland Place. There Doxford and Windover left the rest of us and went, with Chippendale, into the hotel. In ten minutes they were back.

‘That’s all right!’ said Doxford. ‘He’s left orders with the night-porter that he’s to call him, with a cup of tea, at five-thirty, and to have a taxi ready for him at six precisely. So——’

‘And he’s in his room now?’ asked the inspector.

‘He’s in his room now—I made sure of that,’ assented Doxford. ‘He’s safe, till six o’clock. Unless indeed, he gets up in the night.’

‘We’ll see to that,’ said the inspector. ‘Now, about keeping watch. There’s nobody knows him but this young fellow—what’s his name?’

‘My name’s Chippendale, Inspector,’ said our clerk, ‘and though I’m done up now, I’m game to sit up all night in that hotel, keeping watch, as soon as I’ve had something to eat and drink. Let me keep an eye on things inside, and you arrange for things outside and we’ll be all ready for him at six in the morning!’

The inspector looked at his watch.

‘It’s nearly twelve o’clock, now,’ he said. ‘All right—let’s fix things. Now, I’ll tell you what, Doxford. Suppose——’

Chaney and I presently left the police and detectives to the business and went to his flat, which was not far away. We had some supper; we tried to sleep—how he fared I don’t know, but I spent the night in a feverish wakefulness, and was thankful when at five o’clock my partner called me to a cup of tea.

‘Last act, Camberwell,’ he said, as he lifted the kettle from the fire. ‘I shan’t be sorry when the curtain falls! Cool customer this that we’re dealing with—fancy going calmly to bed with whisky-and-soda and sandwiches within a few yards of his last victim’s corpse!’

‘I hope there’ll be no more victims,’ I said. ‘You may be certain he’ll make a fight of it if he gets the chance.’

‘Ah, well, but I don’t think those chaps will give him the chance,’ he replied. ‘Doxford’s an experienced man; he’s been in at a good many of these games, and he’ll contrive to collar him before he even gets an idea that he’s being watched. I hope so, anyway. I don’t want any more killing.’

Nor did I, but it was with considerable apprehension that I presently set out with Chaney for the neighbourhood of the hotel in which Craye had taken refuge. The morning was still grey when we came up to the big pile of masonry that closes in the south end of Portland Place, and there was that curious vague mist in the streets which seems to be peculiarly associated with London daybreaks. There appeared to be nobody about. There was no sign of Doxford, nor of Windover, nor of any policemen. That did not seem to trouble Chaney, himself an ex-detective. He drew me into a neighbouring doorway, from which we could see the entrance to the hotel without being seen ourselves, and there we stood, waiting.

A quarter to six struck from the clock of the church close by. Ten minutes later a taxi-cab appeared and drew up at the door of the Langham. A few minutes more elapsed ... then the front door opened and the night-porter appeared on the steps.

‘Now!’ whispered Chaney. ‘Look out for him—and for what’ll happen!’

But ... nothing happened! At any rate, nothing happened of the nature of the things that we expected to happen. The night-porter stood on the steps and waited; once or twice he looked round at the door as if he expected somebody to emerge from it. But nobody came—and presently, with a word to the driver of the taxi-cab he turned and re-entered the hotel.

Once more some minutes passed—and nothing happened. Chaney, watching at my side, suddenly moved out of our shelter.

‘Something’s gone wrong!’ he muttered. ‘Come on! we’ll go across. Good lord!’

I hope they haven't let him give 'em the slip. I trusted Chippendale——'

He broke off at that, and in silence we crossed the angle of the street and hurried into the entrance. Just inside we encountered Doxford, Windover, and Chippendale; they were grouped together at the open doorway of a small room on the left hand of the lobby. Doxford hurriedly beckoned us to join them, and half-closed the door on us when we had done so.

'Where is he? What's up?' demanded Chaney. 'Six o'clock——'

'He hasn't come down,' whispered Doxford. 'The night-porter's gone up to remind him. There's one thing we're sure of—he's never left his room during the night! I've made certain of that—so has this young man of yours.'

'Yes, I can testify to that,' said Chippendale. 'As a matter of fact, I've never had my eye off the door.'

'Kept watch up there?' asked Chaney.

'I've been up there, keeping watch, all night,' replied Chippendale. 'I got a mouthful or two of something to eat down here and then went up. And there I've been, in the corridor, until twenty minutes since. And from the moment I went up there until I came down this morning he's certainly never left that room!'

'The night-porter's coming back,' remarked Windover. 'Alone, too!'

The night-porter came across the hall to us, shaking his head.

'Can't get any answer,' he said as he drew close. 'I've knocked and called, but there's been no response.'

'Why didn't you go in?' demanded Chaney.

'No key,' replied the night-porter. 'But I can get one from the chambermaid—if she's about. Not about though, as a rule, till seven o'clock.'

'Somebody must have a master-key,' said Doxford. 'Find it!—or send to the servants' quarters for the chambermaid's key. We've got to get into that room. Come on—we'll go up while you see after the key.'

We all trooped upstairs—Doxford, Windover, Chaney, myself, Chippendale. There was not a soul in the corridor into which Chippendale led us. And when we gathered around the door of the room about which we were so anxious and so inquisitive, there was not a sound to be heard—within.

'He's hopped it!' muttered Windover, suddenly. 'Lay a fiver to nothing that room's empty!'

'How could he have hopped it——' burst out Chippendale. 'I tell you——'

'Don't care what you tell me, sonny!' said Windover, good-humouredly. 'He's hopped it! Probably took his hook at once—as soon as ever he'd got here. How long were you downstairs getting your bit of grub?'

‘Quarter of an hour at the outside,’ replied Chippendale, sulkily.

‘Ah!’ said Windover. ‘That explains it! Quarter-of-an-hour? Lord—he could put half-a-mile between you and him in that time. Hopped it, I say! Nobody in here, I’ll bet!’

The night-porter came leisurely along the corridor, with a rattle of keys. He selected one; opened the door; flung it wide.

‘What did I tell you?’ exclaimed Windover, triumphantly. ‘Empty!’

He was right there: the room was empty enough—of human life, at any rate. But I had learnt something of my business by that time, and my first instinct was to note what was in it to show that human life had been there recently, and how long before. And the first thing I noted, of course, was that the bed had not been slept in: there it was, all spick and span as the chambermaids had left it the previous day. On a square table in the centre of the room were certain objects—a plate of sandwiches, covered by a napkin; a bottle of whisky; a syphon of mineral water; a tumbler; an A.B.C., railway guide, open; an ashtray on which rested the better part of a cigar. At first sight, nothing more than these things struck one.

But Chaney was already at the table, fingering and inspecting.

‘Not a sandwich touched,’ he muttered. ‘Just as they were brought to him. One good stiff dose of whisky gone from the bottle: not much soda from the syphon. Railway guide open at H—ah, Harwich!—page turned down, and pencil mark against early morning train, Liverpool Street to Harwich. That’s all bluff!—done to make whoever came in here think that he’d sloped for the Continent by way of Harwich and the Hook of Holland. All rot!—he’s bound for Hell, not Harwich. But ———’

Chippendale had been moving round the room, like a terrier after the whereabouts of a rat. A sharp exclamation from him slewed us all round to where he stood by the dressing-table.

‘Look at this!’ he said excitedly. ‘What’s he been up to here?’

As he spoke he held up in one hand what looked like—and in fact, was—a tattered piece of dark stuff, velvet or some similar substance, and in the other a pair of nail-scissors. Chaney went forward and took the piece of stuff from him.

‘Good lord!’ he exclaimed. ‘He’s been making a mask! Look at these!’

On the dressing-table lay two discs, round or oval, of the stuff which Chaney had taken out of Chippendale’s hand. Suddenly turning from them and the dressing-table he snatched up one of the window-curtains, and held out the end to us. A piece had been roughly scissored out of it, leaving torn and jagged edges.

‘That’s it!’ continued Chaney. ‘Before leaving the room, he’s made a rough mask

for his face. Cut eyeholes out, and no doubt attached bits of string to the ends to tie round his head. No doubt of all that! But now—how did he get away? How could he get away—unobserved?

Windover went across to the window, opened it, and looked out.

‘Not this way!’ he remarked laconically.

‘Never came downstairs again, anyhow!’ said the night-porter. ‘I’ll swear to that!’

‘So will I,’ said Chippendale. ‘I had my bit of grub where I could watch the front door.’

‘All the same,’ observed Chaney, ‘he did get away. How?’

‘There’s an entrance to a fire-escape stairway at the end of this corridor,’ said the night-porter.

‘Open?’ asked Chaney.

‘He could open it. Not difficult.’

Chaney bundled the bit of torn stuff and the scissors into his pocket.

‘That’s it!’ he said. ‘He got out that way. But—when? Who saw him last?’

‘The waiter who brought that stuff up to him,’ replied the night-porter.

Chaney made for the door.

‘Come on!’ he said. ‘Let’s see him. Find him at once.’

It took some little time to unearth that particular waiter. But he came at last, wondering and inquisitive at sight of us.

‘You attended to a gentleman in Number 225 last night?’ asked Chaney, who, since our entrance had taken upon himself the office of spokesman. ‘What did you do for him?’

‘Took him up a bottle of Scotch whisky, a syphon of soda-water, and a plate of beef sandwiches,’ answered the waiter, promptly.

‘What was he doing when you entered his room?’ continued Chaney.

‘Reading a railway guide.’

‘Did you notice if he’d unpacked his suit-case?’

‘The suit-case was on the bed, open. He hadn’t unpacked anything from it—then.’

‘Any conversation with him?’

‘Not particular. I asked him if there was anything more he wanted—he said no, there was nothing.’

‘Then you left him?’

‘Then I left him—yes.’

‘Did you hear him fasten his door as you left?’



‘Yes—I heard him shoot the bolt.’

Chaney turned away, motioning the rest of us to follow him.

‘We can do no more good here,’ he said. ‘I see how it’s been. He probably had an idea that he was being followed. He came in here—and got away at once: I daresay he was out of the place within half-an-hour of entering it! And now we’ve got to start hunting for him all over again! That’s about it.’

On the face of it, this seemed conclusive, and we all made for the door, in various degrees of depression. But we had scarcely reached it when the night-porter called us back.

‘Here’s a telephone call for Mr. Windover?’ he said, glancing from one to the other. ‘From Scotland Yard. This way, sir.’

Windover hurried off to the telephone; for a minute or two we heard him in the exchange of what seemed to be an excited conversation. He came back shaking his head at us.

‘Here’s some new development,’ he said. ‘We’re to go up to Cheverdale Lodge—they’re asking for me there. There’s something up. Come on—there’s that taxi still waiting outside.’

Ten minutes later, we drove up to the door of Cheverdale Lodge. It was still, of course, very early in the morning, and the evidence of disturbance and commotion at the house were, accordingly, all the more noticeable. A couple of taxi-cabs were drawn up in the drive; I noticed the faces of maid-servants, frightened and inquisitive, at the upstairs windows. And at the door, all there in a state of hurried undress, were Walker, the butler, and his two satellites, the footman Harris and Simpson.

Walker received us in a grim silence, and to Windover’s sharp enquiry, motioned us to follow him into the inner hall. Then he turned on us, speaking in a hushed voice.

‘There’s been a dreadful affair here, this morning, gentlemen,’ he said. ‘About half-past-five or a quarter to six it was—I was just getting nicely awake when I heard it. What I heard was a shot—then another—then a third one. My bedroom is, of course, next to the butler’s pantry, on the ground floor: the sound of the shots seemed to come from somewhere immediately over my head, on the floor above. I hurried some clothes on and ran up there as quick as I could. My lord’s room is up there—I went there first. The door was open, but his lordship wasn’t in the room, nor in the dressing-room, nor his private bathroom. I went along the corridor: then I saw that the door of Mr. Paley’s bedroom, two or three doors away, was open. I knew Mr. Paley wasn’t there—he hasn’t slept here for the last two or three nights. I went in and first thing I knew I stumbled over a body, lying just within the door. I switched on the electric light—the blinds and curtains were drawn, and the room

only just faintly light. Then I saw it was his lordship's body I'd stumbled into. He was lying on the floor—I didn't know whether dead or unconscious. He'd a revolver in his right hand, and an electric torch in the other—the torch had slipped from his fingers, but it was still burning. Then he groaned, and I saw that he wasn't dead. But \_\_\_\_\_,

Here the butler paused, shaking his head, and moistening his lips: it was evident to all of us that he had had a severe shock.

'That wasn't all,' he went on. 'Half-way across the room, between his lordship and Mr. Paley's writing-desk, or bureau, there was a man lying. And I knew at one glance that he was dead! There was a look about the figure, you understand, gentlemen, that assured me of that—he was, well as still as still can be, and it's a light coloured carpet in that room, and there was blood! And—being chiefly concerned about his lordship, I didn't go near the man, but I noticed a certain thing at once. He'd got a mask tied over his face!'

'A mask!' some of us exclaimed in chorus.

'A mask, gentlemen—I couldn't see his features at all. But I did notice this—as you'll presently find—a life-preserver had slipped from his hand as he fell; one of those old-fashioned ones, gentlemen——'

'Well?' interrupted Chaney. 'What did you do? Didn't touch the man?'

'Never went near him, sir,' replied Walker. 'I fetched the two footmen—very fortunately, Miss Chever is away from town just now, spending a few days with friends in the country, so I hadn't her to deal with—and we carried his lordship back to his own rooms. I just satisfied myself that he was not wounded in any way and then I telephoned for doctors and to your headquarters, gentlemen. There are two doctors with his lordship now; they say he's suffering from fright and shock.'

'But the man?' demanded Windover. 'Have the doctors——'

'One of them's seen the man's dead body, sir, just to satisfy himself that he was dead, but he hasn't removed the mask,' said Walker. 'I locked up the room—Mr. Paley's room—as soon as we'd carried Lord Cheverdale out of it, and again after the doctor had been in for a minute, and—here's the key, Mr. Windover.'

'Show the way!' said Windover. He drew back as the butler made for the stairs and threw the rest of us a whisper. 'You may be sure of what we are going to see!' he said, significantly. 'But—why here?'

We followed the butler up the big staircase and along a thickly-carpeted corridor. A door on the right opened; a man, obviously a doctor, came out. He glanced enquiringly at us; then addressed himself to Walker. And his words were brief and plain.

‘Lord Cheverdale is dead!’ he said.

The butler replied with an inarticulate catching of his breath, but Chaney put a direct question.

‘You’re sure his lordship hadn’t been attacked?—wounded, sir?’ he asked.

‘Quite sure,’ replied the doctor. ‘Shock! He had suffered from a very weak heart for some time.’ He paused, looking at us with speculative eyes. ‘Have you seen the man whom he shot?’ he asked. ‘The burglar?’

Windover replying in the negative, the doctor turned and went further along the corridor with us. The butler indicated a door: Windover inserted the key and opened it; we trooped in.

The blinds had been drawn up and the curtains drawn back, and the dead man lay in the full light of the mounting sun. One glance at the material of the mask tied over the upper part of the face showed us that it matched the tattered scrap lying in Chaney’s pocket.

Two hours later, after a patient search amongst the various matters in Paley’s bureau we found something that explained Craye’s presence in the room where he had met his death at the hand of his employer. And that was a promissory note from Craye to Paley, engaging to pay Paley the sum of two hundred and fifty thousands pounds within one month of Craye’s marriage to Miss Chever.

So there came the end—but to me one question must always remain unanswered. Did Lord Cheverdale know who it was that he shot dead that morning?

It is a little known fact that besides being one of the foremost writers of detective-mysteries in the world, J. S. FLETCHER is possessed of talents that might have rendered him equally famous as an historian, a straight novelist, a journalist, or a sportsman. His reasons for turning to the field in which he is now a master are best expressed in his own words: "I believe I got my interest in criminology right from the fact that a famous case of fraud was heard at the Quarter Sessions at a town where I was at school—its circumstances were unusual and mysterious and the truth hard to get at; oddly enough, I have never yet used this as the basis of a story. Then, when I left school, I meant to be a barrister and I read criminal law and attended a great many queer trials for some time. But turning to journalism instead, I knew of a great many queer cases and mysteries, and now and then did 'special commissions' for various big papers on famous murder trials. Also, I learnt a good deal about criminology in conversations with the late H. B. Irving, the famous actor, who was an expert."

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TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

[The end of *Murder in Four Degrees: Being Entry Number Two in the Case-book of Ronald Camberwell* by J. S. (Joseph Smith) Fletcher]