

DR. THORNDYKE
HIS FAMOUS CASES
AS DESCRIBED BY
R. AUSTIN FREEMAN

Number Twenty Nine

The Apparition
of
Burling Court

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THORNDYKE seldom took a formal holiday. He did not seem to need one. As he himself put it, "A holiday implies the exchange of a less pleasurable occupation for one more pleasurable. But there is no occupation more pleasurable than the practice of Medical Jurisprudence." Moreover, his work was less affected by terms and vacations than that of an ordinary barrister, and the Long Vacation often found him with his hands full. Even when he did appear to take a holiday the appearance tended to be misleading, and it was apt to turn out that his disappearance from his usual haunts was associated with a case of unusual interest at a distance.

Thus it was on the occasion when our old friend, Mr. Brodribb, of Lincoln's Inn, beguiled him into a fortnight's change at St. David's-at-Cliffe, a seaside hamlet on the Kentish coast. There was a case in the background, and a very curious case it turned out to be, though at first it appeared to me quite a commonplace affair; and the manner of its introduction was as follows.

One hot afternoon in the early part of the Long Vacation the old solicitor dropped in for a cup of tea and a chat. That, at least, was how he explained his visit; but my experience of Mr. Brodribb led me to suspect some ulterior purpose in the call, and as he sat by the open window, teacup in hand, looking, with his fine pink complexion, his silky white hair and his faultless "turn out," the very type of the courtly, old-fashioned lawyer, I waited expectantly for the matter of his visit to transpire. And, presently, out it came.

"I am going to take a little holiday down at St. David's," said he. "Just a quiet spell by the sea, you know. Delightful place. So quiet and restful and so breezy and fresh. Ever been there?"

"No," replied Thorndyke. "I only just know the name."

"Well, why shouldn't you come down for a week or so? Both of you. I shall stay at Burling Court, the Lumleys' place. I can't invite you there as I'm only a guest, but I know of some comfortable rooms in the village that I could get for you. I wish you would come down, Thorndyke," he added after a pause. "I'm rather unhappy about young Lumley—I'm the family lawyer, you know, and so was my father and my grandfather, so I feel almost as if the Lumleys were my own kin—and I should like to have your advice and help."

“Why not have it now?” suggested Thorndyke.

“I will,” he replied; “but I should like your help on the spot too. I’d like you to see Lumley and have a talk with him and tell me what you think of him.”

“What is amiss with him?” Thorndyke asked.

“Well,” answered Brodrigg, “it looks uncomfortably like insanity. He has delusions—sees apparitions and that sort of thing. And there is some insanity in the family. But I had better give you the facts in their natural order.

“About four months ago Giles Lumley of Burling Court died; and as he was a widower without issue, the estate passed to his nearest male relative, my present client, Frank Lumley, who was also the principal beneficiary under the will. At the time of Giles’ death Frank was abroad, but a cousin of his, Lewis Price, was staying at the house with his wife as a more or less permanent guest; and as Price’s circumstances were not very flourishing, and as he is the next heir to the estate, Frank—who is a bachelor—wrote to him at once telling him to look upon Burling Court as his home for as long as he pleased.”

“That was extremely generous of him,” I remarked.

“Yes,” Brodrigg agreed; “Frank is a good fellow; a very high-minded gentleman and a very sweet nature; but a little queer—very queer just now. Well, Frank came back from abroad and took up his abode at the house; and for a time all went well. Then, one day, Price called on me and gave me some very unpleasant news. It seemed that Frank, who had always been rather neurotic and imaginative, had been interesting himself a good deal in psychological research and—and balderdash of that kind, you know. Well, there was no great harm in that, perhaps. But just lately he had taken to seeing visions and—what was worse—talking about them; so much so that Price got uneasy and privately invited a mental specialist down to lunch; and the specialist, having had a longish talk with Frank, informed Price confidentially that he (Frank) was obviously suffering from insane delusions. Thereupon Price called on me and begged me to see Frank myself and consider what ought to be done; so I made an occasion for him to come and see me at the office.”

“And what did you think of him?” asked Thorndyke.

“I was horrified—horrified,” said Mr. Brodrigg. “I assure you, Thorndyke, that that poor young man sat in my office and talked like a stark lunatic. Quite quietly, you know. No excitement, though he was evidently anxious and unhappy. But there he sat gravely talking the damnedest nonsense you ever heard.”

“As, for instance——?”

“Well, his infernal visions. Luminous birds flying about in the dark, and a human head suspended in mid-air—upside down, too. But I had better give you his story as he told it. I made full shorthand notes as he was talking, and I’ve brought them with me, though I hardly need them.

“His trouble seems to have begun soon after he took up his quarters at Burling Court. Being a bookish sort of fellow, he started to go through his library systematically; and presently he came across a small manuscript book, which turned out to be a sort of family history, or rather a collection of episodes. It was rather a lurid little book, for it apparently dwelt chiefly on the family crime, the family spectre and the family madness.”

“Did you know about these heirlooms?” Thorndyke asked.

“No; it was the first I’d heard of ’em. Price knew there was some sort of family superstition, but he didn’t know what it was; and Giles knew about it—so Price tells me—but didn’t care to talk about it. He never mentioned it to me.”

“What is the nature of the tradition?” inquired Thorndyke.

“I’ll tell you,” said Brodribb, taking out his notes. “I’ve got it all down, and poor Frank reeled the stuff off as if he had learned it by heart. The book, which is dated 1819, was apparently written by a Walter Lumley; and the story of the crime and the spook runs thus: About 1720 the property passed to a Gilbert Lumley, a naval officer, who then gave up the sea, married and settled down at Burling Court. A year or two later some trouble arose about his wife and a man named Glynn, a neighbouring squire. With or without cause, Lumley became violently jealous, and the end of it was that he lured Glynn to a large cavern in the cliffs and there murdered him. It was a most ferocious and vindictive crime. The cavern, which was then used by smugglers, had a beam across the roof bearing a tackle for hoisting out boat cargoes, and this tackle Lumley fastened to Glynn’s ankles—having first pinioned him—and hoisted him up so that he hung head downwards a foot or so clear of the floor of the cave. And there he left him hanging until the rising tide flowed into the cave and drowned him.

“The very next day the murder was discovered, and as Lumley was the nearest justice of the peace, the discoverers reported to him and took him to the cave to see the body. When he entered the cave the corpse was still hanging as he had left the living man, and a bat was fluttering round and round the dead man’s head. He had the body taken down and carried to Glynn’s house and took the necessary measures for the inquest. Of course, everyone suspected

him of the murder, but there was no evidence against him. The verdict was murder by some person unknown, and as Gilbert Lumley was not sensitive, everything seemed to have gone off quite satisfactorily.

“But it hadn’t. One night, exactly a month after the murder, Gilbert retired to his bedroom in the dark. He was in the act of feeling along the mantelpiece for the tinder-box, when he became aware of a dim light moving about the room. He turned round quickly and then saw that it was a bat—a most uncanny and abnormal bat that seemed to give out a greenish ghostly light—flitting round and round his bed. On this, remembering the bat in the cavern, he rushed out of the room in the very deuce of a fright. Presently he returned with one of the man-servants and a couple of candles; but the bat had disappeared.

“From that time onward, the luminous bat haunted Gilbert, appearing in dark rooms, on staircases and in passages and corridors, until his nerves were all on edge and he did not dare to move about the house at night without a candle or a lantern. But that was not the worst. Exactly two months after the murder the next stage of the haunting began. He had retired to his bedroom and was just about to get into bed when he remembered that he had left his watch in the little dressing-room that adjoined his chamber. With a candle in his hand he went to the dressing-room and flung open the door. And then he stopped dead and stood as if turned into stone; for, within a couple of yards of him, suspended in mid-air, was a man’s head hanging upside down.

“For some seconds he stood rooted to the spot, unable to move. Then he uttered a cry of horror and rushed back to his room and down to the hall. There was no doubt whose head it was, strange and horrible as it looked in that unnatural, inverted position; for he had seen it twice before in that very position hanging in the cavern. Evidently he had not got rid of Glynn.

“That night, and every night henceforward, he slept in his wife’s room. And all through the night he was conscious of a strange and dreadful impulse to rise and go down to the shore; to steal into the cavern and wait for the flowing tide. He lay awake, fighting against the invisible power that seemed to be drawing him to destruction, and by the morning the horrid impulse began to weaken. But he went about in terror, not daring to go near the shore and afraid to trust himself alone.

“A month passed. The effect of the apparition grew daily weaker and an abundance of lights in the house protected him from the visitation of the bat. Then, exactly three months after the murder, he saw the head again. This time it was in the library, where he had gone to fetch a book. He was standing by the book-shelves and had just taken out a volume, when, as he turned away, there the hideous thing was, hanging in that awful, grotesque posture, chin

upwards and the scanty hair dropping down like wet fringe. Gilbert dropped the book that he was holding and fled from the room with a shriek; and all that night invisible hands seemed to be plucking at him to draw him away to where the voices of the waves were reverberating in the cavern.

“This second visitation affected him profoundly. He could not shake off that sinister impulse to steal away to the shore. He was a broken man, the victim of an abiding terror, clinging for protection to the very servants, creeping abroad with shaking limbs and an apprehensive eye towards the sea. And ever in his ears was the murmur of the surf and the hollow echoes of the cavern.

“Already he had sought forgetfulness in drink; and sought it in vain. Now he took refuge in opiates. Every night, before retiring to the dreaded bed, he mingled laudanum with the brandy that brought him stupor if not repose. And brandy and opium began to leave their traces in the tremulous hand, the sallow cheek and the bloodshot eye. And so another month passed.

“As the day approached that would mark the fourth month, his terror of the visitation that he now anticipated reduced him to a state of utter prostration. Sleep—even drugged sleep—appeared that night to be out of the question, and he decided to sit up with his family, hoping by that means to escape the dreaded visitor. But it was a vain hope. Hour after hour he sat in his elbow-chair by the fire, while his wife dozed in her chair opposite, until the clock in the hall struck twelve. He listened and counted the strokes of the bell, leaning back with his eyes closed. Half the weary night was gone. As the last stroke sounded and a deep silence fell on the house, he opened his eyes—and looked into the face of Glynn within a few inches of his own.

“For some moments he sat with dropped jaw and dilated eyes staring in silent horror at this awful thing; then with an agonised screech he slid from his chair into a heap on the floor.

“At noon on the following day he was missed from the house. A search was made in the grounds and in the neighbourhood, but he was nowhere to be found. At last some one thought of the cavern, of which he had spoken in his wild mutterings and a party of searchers made their way thither. And there they found him when the tide went out, lying on the wet sand with the brown sea-tangle wreathed about his limbs and the laudanum bottle—now full of sea water—by his side.

“With the death of Gilbert Lumley it seemed that the murdered man’s spirit was appeased. During the lifetime of Gilbert’s son, Thomas, the departed Glynn made no sign. But on his death and the succession of his son Arthur—

then a middle-aged man—the visitations began again, and in the same order. At the end of the first month the luminous bat appeared; at the end of the second, the inverted head made its entry, and again at the third and the fourth months; and within twenty-four hours of the last visitation, the body of Arthur Lumley was found in the cavern. And so it has been from that time onward. One generation escapes untouched by the curse; but in the next, Glynn and the sea claim their own.”

“Is that true, so far as you know?” asked Thorndyke.

“I can’t say,” answered Brodribb. “I am now only quoting Walter Lumley’s infernal little book. But I remember that, in fact, Giles’ father was drowned. I understood that his boat capsized, but that may have been only a story to cover the suicide.

“Well now, I have given you the gruesome history from this book that poor Frank had the misfortune to find. You see that he had it all off by heart and had evidently read it again and again. Now I come to his own story, which he told me very quietly but with intense conviction and very evident forebodings.

“He found this damned book a few days after his arrival at Burling Court, and it was clear to him that, if the story was true, he was the next victim, since his predecessor, Giles, had been left in peace. And so it turned out. Exactly a month after his arrival, going up to his bedroom in the dark—no doubt expecting this apparition—as soon as he opened the door he saw a thing like a big glow-worm or firefly flitting round the room. It is evident that he was a good deal upset, for he rushed downstairs in a state of great agitation and fetched Price up to see it. But the strange thing was—though perhaps not so very strange, after all—that, although the thing was still there, flitting about the room, Price could see nothing. However, he pulled up the blind—the window was wide open—and the bat flopped out and disappeared.

“During the next month the bat reappeared several times, in the bedroom, in corridors and once in a garret, when it flew out as Frank opened the door.”

“What was he doing in the garret?” asked Thorndyke.

“He went up to fetch an ancient coffin-stool that Mrs. Price had seen there and was telling him about. Well, this went on until the end of the second month. And then came the second act. It seems that by some infernal stupidity, he was occupying the bedroom that had been used by Gilbert. Now on this night, as soon as he had gone up, he must needs pay a visit to the little dressing-room, which is now known as ‘Gilbert’s cabin’—so he tells me, for I was not aware of it—and where Gilbert’s cutlass, telescope, quadrant and the old navigator’s watch are kept.”

“Did he take a light with him?” inquired Thorndyke.

“I think not. There is a gas jet in the corridor and presumably he lit that. Then he opened the door of the cabin; and immediately he saw, a few feet in front of him, a man’s head, upside down, apparently hanging in mid-air. It gave him a fearful shock—the more so, perhaps, because he half expected it—and, as before, he ran downstairs, all of a tremble. Price had gone to bed, but Mrs. Price came up with him, and he showed her the horrible thing which was still hanging in the middle of the dark room.

“But Mrs. Price could see nothing. She assured him that it was all his imagination; and in proof of it, she walked into the room, right through the head, as it seemed, and when she had found the matches, she lit the gas. Of course, there was nothing whatever in the room.

“Another month passed. The bat appeared at intervals and kept poor Frank’s nerves in a state of constant tension. On the night of the appointed day, as you will anticipate, Frank went again to Gilbert’s cabin, drawn there by an attraction that one can quite understand. And there, of course, was the confounded head as before. That was a fortnight ago. So, you see, the affair is getting urgent. Either there is some truth in this weird story—which I don’t believe for a moment—or poor old Frank is ripe for the asylum. But in any case something will have to be done.”

“You spoke just now,” said Thorndyke, “of some insanity in the family. What does it amount to, leaving these apparitions out of the question?”

“Well, a cousin of Frank’s committed suicide in an asylum.”

“And Frank’s parents?”

“They were quite sane. The cousin was the son of Frank’s mother’s sister; and she was all right, too. But the boy’s father had to be put away.”

“Then,” said Thorndyke, “the insanity doesn’t seem to be in Frank’s family at all, in a medical sense. Legal inheritance and physiological inheritance do not follow the same lines. If his mother’s sister married a lunatic, he might inherit that lunatic’s property, but he could not inherit his insanity. There was no blood relationship.”

“No, that’s true,” Brodribb admitted, “though Frank certainly seems as mad as a hatter. But now, to come back to the holiday question, what do you say to a week or so at St. David’s?”

Thorndyke looked at me interrogatively. “What says my learned friend?” he asked.

“I say: Let us put up the shutters and leave Polton in charge,” I replied; and Thorndyke assented without a murmur.

Less than a week later, we were installed in the very comfortable rooms that Mr. Brodribb had found for us in the hamlet of St. David’s, within five minutes’ walk of the steep gap-way that led down to the beach. Thorndyke entered into the holiday with an enthusiasm that would have astonished the denizens of King’s Bench Walk. He explored the village, he examined the church, inside and out, he sampled all the footpaths with the aid of the Ordnance map, he foregathered with the fishermen on the beach and renewed his acquaintance with boat-craft, and he made a pilgrimage to the historic cavern—it was less than a mile along the shore—and inspected its dark and chilly interior with the most lively curiosity.

We had not been at St. David’s twenty-four hours before we made the acquaintance of Frank Lumley—Mr. Brodribb saw to that. For the old solicitor was profoundly anxious about his client—he took his responsibilities very seriously, did Mr. Brodribb. His “family” clients were to him as his own kin, and their interests his own interests—and his confidence in Thorndyke’s wisdom was unbounded. We were both very favourably impressed by the quiet, gentle, rather frail young man, and for my part, I found him, for a certifiable lunatic, a singularly reasonable and intelligent person. Indeed, apart from his delusions—or rather hallucinations—he seemed perfectly sane; for a somewhat eager interest in psychical and supernormal phenomena (of which he made no secret) is hardly enough to create a suspicion of a man’s sanity.

But he was clearly uneasy about his own mental condition. He realised that the apparitions might possibly be the products of a disordered brain, though that was not his own view of them; and he discussed them with us in the most open and ingenuous manner.

“You don’t think,” Thorndyke suggested, “that these apparitions may possibly be natural appearances which you have misinterpreted or exaggerated in consequence of having read that very circumstantial story?”

Lumley shook his head emphatically. “It is impossible,” said he. “How could I? Take the case of the bat. I have seen it on several occasions quite distinctly. It was obviously a bat; but yet it seemed full of a ghostly, greenish light like that of a glow-worm. If it was not what it appeared, what was it? And then the head. There it was, perfectly clear and solid and real, hanging in mid-air within three or four feet of me. I could have touched it if I had dared.”

“What size did it appear?” asked Thorndyke.

Lumley reflected. "It was not quite life-size. I should say about two-thirds the size of an ordinary head."

"Should you recognise the face if you saw it again?"

"I can't say," replied Lumley. "You see, it was upside down. I haven't a very clear picture of it—I mean as to what the face would have been like the right way up."

"Was the room quite dark on both occasions?" Thorndyke asked.

"Yes, quite. The gas jet in the corridor is just above the door and does not throw any light into the room."

"And what is there opposite the door?"

"There is a small window, but that is usually kept shuttered nowadays. Under the window is a small folding dressing-table that belonged to Gilbert Lumley. He had it made when he came home from sea."

Thus Lumley was quite lucid and coherent in his answers. His manner was perfectly sane; it was only the matter that was abnormal. Of the reality of the apparitions he had not the slightest doubt, and he never varied in the smallest degree in his description of their appearance. The fact that they had been invisible both to Mr. Price and his wife he explained by pointing out that the curse applied only to the direct descendants of Gilbert Lumley, and to those only in alternate generations.

After one of our conversations, Thorndyke expressed a wish to see the little manuscript book that had been the cause of all the trouble—or at least had been the forerunner; and Lumley promised to bring it to our rooms on the following afternoon. But then came an interruption to our holiday, not entirely unexpected; an urgent telegram from one of our solicitor friends asking for a consultation on an important and intricate case, that had just been put into his hands, and making it necessary for us to go up to town by an early train on the following morning.

We sent a note to Brodribb, telling him that we should be away from St. David's for perhaps a day or two, and on our way to the station he overtook us.

"I am sorry you have had to break your holiday," he said; "but I hope you will be back before Thursday."

"Why Thursday, in particular?" inquired Thorndyke.

"Because Thursday is the day on which that damned head is due to make its third appearance. It will be an anxious time. Frank hasn't said anything, but

I know his nerves are strung up to concert pitch.”

“You must watch him,” said Thorndyke. “Don’t let him out of your sight if you can help it.”

“That’s all very well,” said Brodribb, “but he isn’t a child, and I am not his keeper. He is the master of the house and I am just his guest. I can’t follow him about if he wants to be alone.”

“You mustn’t stand on politeness, Brodribb,” rejoined Thorndyke. “It will be a critical time and you must keep him in sight.”

“I shall do my best,” Brodribb said anxiously, “but I do hope you will be back by then.”

He accompanied us dejectedly to the platform and stayed with us until our train came in. Suddenly, just as we were entering our carriage, he thrust his hand into his pocket.

“God bless me!” he exclaimed, “I had nearly forgotten this book. Frank asked me to give it to you.” As he spoke, he drew out a little rusty calf-bound volume and handed it to Thorndyke. “You can look through it at your leisure,” said he, “and if you think it best to chuck the infernal thing out of the window, do so. I suspect poor Frank is none the better for conning it over perpetually as he does.”

I thought there was a good deal of reason in Brodribb’s opinion. If Lumley’s illusions were, as I suspected, the result of suggestion produced by reading the narrative, that suggestion would certainly tend to be reinforced by conning it over and over again. But the old lawyer’s proposal was hardly practicable.

As soon as the train had fairly started, Thorndyke proceeded to inspect the little volume; and his manner of doing so was highly characteristic. An ordinary person would have opened the book and looked through the contents, probably seeking out at once the sinister history of Gilbert Lumley.

Not so Thorndyke. His inspection began at the very beginning and proceeded systematically to deal with every fact that the book had to disclose. First he made an exhaustive examination of the cover; scrutinised the corners; inspected the bottom edges and compared them with the top edges; and compared the top and bottom head-caps. Then he brought out his lens and examined the tooling, which was simple in character and worked in “blind”—i.e. not gilt. He also inspected the head-bands through the glass, and then he turned his attention to the interior. He looked carefully at both end-papers, he opened the sections and examined the sewing-thread, he held the leaves up to

the light and tested the paper by eye and by touch and he viewed the writing in several places through his lens. Finally he handed the book and the lens to me without remark.

It was a quaint little volume, with a curiously antique air, though it was but a century old. The cover was of rusty calf, a good deal rubbed, but not in bad condition; for the joints were perfectly sound; but then it had probably had comparatively little use. The paper—a laid paper with very distinct wire-lines but no water-mark—had turned with age to a pale, creamy buff; the writing had faded to a warm brown, but was easily legible and very clearly and carefully written. Having noted these points, I turned over the leaves until I came to the story of Gilbert Lumley and the ill-fated Glynn, which I read through attentively, observing that Mr. Brodrigg's notes had given the whole substance of the narrative with singular completeness.

“This story,” I said, as I handed the book back to Thorndyke, “strikes me as rather unreal and unconvincing. One doesn't see how Walter Lumley got his information.”

“No,” agreed Thorndyke. “It is on the plane of fiction. The narrator speaks in the manner of a novelist, with complete knowledge of events and actions which were apparently known only to the actors.”

“Do you think it possible that Walter Lumley was simply romancing?”

“I think it quite possible, and in fact very probable, that the whole narrative is fictitious,” he replied. “We shall have to go into that question later on. For the present, I suppose, we had better give our attention to the case that we have in hand at the moment.”

The little volume was accordingly put away, and for the rest of the journey our conversation was occupied with the matter of the consultation that formed our immediate business. As this, however, had no connection with the present history, I need make no further reference to it beyond stating that it kept us both busy for three days and that we finished with it on the evening of the third.

“Do you propose to go down to St. David's to-night or to-morrow?” I asked, as we let ourselves into our chambers.

“To-night,” replied Thorndyke. “This is Thursday, you know, and Brodrigg was anxious that we should be back some time to-day. I have sent him a telegram saying that we shall go down by the train that arrives about ten o'clock. So if he wants us, he can meet us at the station or send a message.”

“I wonder,” said I, “if the apparition of Glynn's head will make its

expected visitation to-night.”

“It probably will if there is an opportunity,” Thorndyke replied. “But I hope that Brodribb will manage to prevent the opportunity from occurring. And, talking of Lumley, as we have an hour to spare, we may as well finish our inspection of his book. I snipped off a corner of one of the leaves and gave it to Polton to boil up in weak caustic soda. It will be ready for examination by now.”

“You don’t suspect that the book has been faked, do you?” said I.

“I view that book with the deepest suspicion,” he replied, opening a drawer and producing the little volume. “Just look at it, Jervis. Look at the cover, for instance.”

“Well,” I said, turning the book over in my hand, “the cover looks ancient enough to me; typical old, rusty calf with a century’s wear on it.”

“Oh, there’s no doubt that it is old calf,” said he; “just the sort of leather that you could skin off the cover of an old quarto or folio. But don’t you see that the signs of wear are all in the wrong places? How does a book wear in use? Well, first there are the bottom edges, which rub on the shelf. Then the corners, which are the thinnest leather and the most exposed. Then the top head-cap, which the finger hooks into in pulling the book from the shelf. Then the joint or hinge, which wears through from frequent opening and shutting. The sides get the least wear of all. But in this book, the bottom edges, the corners, the top head-cap and the joints are perfectly sound. They are not more worn than the sides; and the tooling is modern in character, looks quite fresh and the tool-marks are impressed on the marks of wear instead of being themselves worn. The appearances suggest to me a new binding with old leather.

“Then look at the paper. It professes to be discoloured by age. But the discoloration of the leaves of an old book occurs principally at the edges, where the paper has become oxidised by exposure to the air. The leaves of this book are equally discoloured all over. To me they suggest a bath of weak tea rather than old age.

“Again, there is the writing. Its appearance is that of faded writing done with the old-fashioned writing-ink—made with iron sulphate and oak-galls. But it doesn’t look quite the right colour. However, we can easily test that. If it is old iron-gall ink, a drop of ammonium sulphide will turn it black. Let us take the book up to the laboratory and try it—and we had better have a ‘control’ to compare it with.”

He ran his eye along the book-shelves and took down a rusty-looking volume of *Humphry Clinker*, the end-paper of which bore several brown and faded signatures. "Here is a signature dated 1803," said he. "That will be near enough"; and with the two books in his hand he led the way upstairs to the laboratory. Here he took down the ammonium sulphide bottle, and dipping up a little of the liquid in a fine glass tube, opened the cover of *Humphry Clinker* and carefully deposited a tiny drop on the figure 3 in the date. Almost immediately the ghostly brown began to darken until it at length became jet black. Then, in the same way, he opened Walter Lumley's manuscript book and on the 9 of the date, 1819, he deposited a drop of the solution. But this time there was no darkening of the pale brown writing; on the contrary, it faded rapidly to a faint and muddy violet.

"It is not an iron ink," said Thorndyke, "and it looks suspiciously like an aniline brown. But let us see what the paper is made of. Have you boiled up that fragment, Polton?"

"Yes, sir," answered our laboratory assistant, "and I've washed the soda out of it, so it's all ready."

He produced a labelled test-tube containing a tiny corner of paper floating in water, which he carefully emptied into a large watch-glass. From this Thorndyke transferred the little pulpy fragment to a microscope slide and, with a pair of mounted needles, broke it up into its constituent fibres. Then he dropped on it a drop of aniline stain, removed the surplus with blotting-paper, added a drop of glycerine and put on it a large cover-slip.

"There, Jervis," said he, handing me the slide, "let us have your opinion on Walter Lumley's paper."

I placed the slide on the stage of the microscope and proceeded to inspect the specimen. But no exhaustive examination was necessary. The first glance settled the matter.

"It is nearly all wood," I said. "Mechanical wood fibre, with some esparto, a little cotton and a few linen fibres."

"Then," said Thorndyke, "it is a modern paper. Mechanical wood-pulp—prepared by Keller's process—was first used in paper-making in 1840. 'Chemical wood-pulp' came in later; and esparto was not used until 1860. So we can say with confidence that this paper was not made until more than twenty years after the date that is written on it. Probably it is of quite recent manufacture."

"In that case," said I, "this book is a counterfeit—presumably fraudulent."

“Yes. In effect it is a forgery.”

“But that seems to suggest a conspiracy.”

“It does,” Thorndyke agreed; “especially if it is considered in conjunction with the apparitions. The suggestion is that this book was prepared for the purpose of inducing a state of mind favourable to the acceptance of supernatural appearances. The obvious inference is that the apparitions themselves were an imposture produced for fraudulent purposes. But it is time for us to go.”

We shook hands with Polton, and, having collected our suit-cases from the sitting-room, set forth for the station.

During the journey down I reflected on the new turn that Frank Lumley’s affairs had taken. Apparently, Brodribb had done his client an injustice. Lumley was not so mad as the old lawyer had supposed. He was merely credulous and highly suggestible. The “hallucinations” were real phenomena which he had simply misinterpreted. But who was behind these sham illusions? And what was it all about? I tried to open the question with Thorndyke; but though he was willing to discuss the sham manuscript book and the technique of its production, he would commit himself to nothing further.

On our arrival at St. David’s, Thorndyke looked up and down the platform and again up the station approach.

“No sign of Brodribb or any messenger,” he remarked, “so we may assume that all is well at Burling Court up to the present. Let us hope that Brodribb’s presence has had an inhibitory effect on the apparitions.”

Nevertheless, it was evident that he was not quite easy in his mind. During supper he appeared watchful and preoccupied, and when, after the meal, he proposed a stroll down to the beach, he left word with our landlady as to where he was to be found if he should be wanted.

It was about a quarter to eleven when we arrived at the shore, and the tide was beginning to run out. The beach was deserted with the exception of a couple of fishermen who had apparently come in with the tide and who were making their boat secure for the night before going home. Thorndyke approached them, and addressing the older fisherman, remarked: “That is a big, powerful boat. Pretty fast, too, isn’t she?”

“Ay, sir,” was the reply; “fast and weatherly, she is. What we calls a galley-punt. Built at Deal for the hovelling trade—salvage, you know, sir—but there ain’t no hovelling nowadays, not to speak of.”

“Are you going out to-morrow?” asked Thorndyke.

“Not as I know of, sir. Was you thinking of a bit of fishing?”

“If you are free,” said Thorndyke, “I should like to charter the boat for to-morrow. I don’t know what time I shall be able to start, but if you will stand by ready to put off at once when I come down we can count the waiting as sailing.”

“Very well, sir,” said the fisherman; “the boat’s yours for the day to-morrow. Any time after six, or earlier, if you like, if you come down here you’ll find me and my mate standing by with a stock of bait and the boat ready to push off.”

“That will do admirably,” said Thorndyke; and the morrow’s programme being thus settled, we wished the fishermen good-night and walked slowly back to our lodgings, where, after a final pipe, we turned in.

On the following morning, just as we were finishing a rather leisurely breakfast, we saw from our window our friend Mr. Brodribb hurrying down the street towards our house. I ran out and opened the door, and as he entered I conducted him into our sitting-room. From his anxious and flustered manner it was obvious that something had gone wrong, and his first words confirmed the sinister impression.

“I’m afraid we’re in for trouble, Thorndyke,” said he. “Frank is missing.”

“Since when?” asked Thorndyke.

“Since about eight o’clock this morning. He is nowhere about the house and he hasn’t had any breakfast.”

“When was he last seen?” Thorndyke asked. “And where?”

“About eight o’clock, in the breakfast-room. Apparently he went in there to say ‘good-bye’ to the Prices—they have gone on a visit for the day to Folkestone and were having an early breakfast so as to catch the eight-thirty train. But he didn’t have breakfast with them. He just went in and wished them a pleasant journey and then it appears that he went out for a stroll in the grounds. When I came down to breakfast at half-past eight, the Prices had gone and Frank hadn’t come in. The maid sounded the gong, and as Frank still did not appear, she went out into the grounds to look for him; and presently I went out myself. But he wasn’t there and he wasn’t anywhere in the house. I don’t like the look of it at all. He is usually very regular and punctual at meals. What do you think we had better do, Thorndyke?”

My colleague looked at his watch and rang the bell.

“I think, Brodribb,” said he, “that we must act on the obvious probabilities and provide against the one great danger that is known to us. Mrs. Robinson,” he added, addressing the landlady, who had answered the bell in person, “can you let us have a jug of strong coffee at once?”

Mrs. Robinson could, and bustled away to prepare it, while Thorndyke produced from a cupboard a large vacuum flask.

“I don’t quite follow you, Thorndyke,” said Mr. Brodribb. “What probabilities and what danger do you mean?”

“I mean that, up to the present, Frank Lumley has exactly reproduced in his experiences and his actions the experiences and actions of Gilbert Lumley as set forth in Walter Lumley’s narrative. The overwhelming probability is that he will continue to reproduce the story of Gilbert to the end. He probably saw the apparition for the third time last night, and is even now preparing for the final act.”

“Good God!” gasped Brodribb. “What a fool I am! You mean the cave? But we can never get there now. It will be high water in an hour and the beach at St. David’s Head will be covered already. Unless we can get a boat,” he added despairingly.

“We have got a boat,” said Thorndyke. “I chartered one last night.”

“Thank the Lord!” exclaimed Brodribb. “But you always think of everything—though I don’t know what you want that coffee for.”

“We may not want it at all,” said Thorndyke, as he poured the coffee, which the landlady had just brought, into the vacuum flask, “but on the other hand we may.”

He deposited the flask in a hand-bag, in which I observed a small emergency-case, and then turned to Brodribb.

“We had better get down to the beach now,” said he.

As we emerged from the bottom of the gap-way we saw our friends of the previous night laying a double line of planks across the beach from the boat to the margin of the surf; for the long galley-punt, with her load of ballast, was too heavy to drag over the shingle. They had just got the last plank laid as we reached the boat, and as they observed us they came running back with half a dozen of their mates.

“Jump aboard, gentlemen,” said our skipper, with a slightly dubious eye on Mr. Brodribb—for the boat’s gunwale was a good four feet above the beach. “We’ll have her afloat in a jiffy.”

We climbed in and hauled Mr. Brodribb in after us. The tall mast was already stepped—against the middle thwart in the odd fashion of galley-punts—and the great sail was hooked to the traveller and the tack-hook ready for hoisting. The party of boatmen gathered round; and each took a tenacious hold of gunwale or thole. The skipper gave time with a jovial “Yo-ho!” his mates joined in with a responsive howl and heaved as one man. The great boat moved forward, and gathering way, slid swiftly along the greased planks towards the edge of the surf. Then her nose splashed into the sea; the skipper and his mate sprang in over the transom; the tall lug-sail soared up the mast and filled, and the skipper let the rudder slide down its pintles and grasped the tiller.

“Did you want to go anywheres in particklar?” he inquired.

“We want to make for the big cave round St. David’s Head,” said Thorndyke, “and we want to get there well before high water.”

“We’ll do that easy enough, sir,” said the skipper, “with this breeze. ’Tis but about a mile and we’ve got three-quarters of an hour to do it in.”

He took a pull at the main sheet and, putting the helm down, brought the boat on a course parallel to the coast. Quietly but swiftly the water slipped past, one after another fresh headlands opened out till, in about a quarter of an hour, we were abreast of St. David’s Head with the sinister black shape of the cavern in full view over the port bow. Shortly afterwards the sail was lowered and our crew, reinforced by Thorndyke and me, took to the oars, pulling straight towards the shore with the cavern directly ahead.

As the boat grounded on the beach Thorndyke, Brodribb and I sprang out and hurried across the sand and shingle to the gloomy and forbidding hole in the white cliff. At first, coming out of the bright sunlight, we seemed to be plunged in absolute darkness, and groped our way insecurely over the heaps of slippery sea-tangle that littered the floor. Presently our eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, and we could trace faintly the narrow, tunnel-like passage with its slimy green walls and the jagged roof nearly black with age. At the farther end it grew higher; and here I could see the small, dark bodies of bats hanging from the roof and clinging to the walls, and one or two fluttering blindly and noiselessly like large moths in the hollows of the vault above. But it was not the bats that engrossed my attention. Far away, at the extreme end, I could dimly discern the prostrate figure of a man lying motionless on a patch of smooth sand; a dreadful shape that seemed to sound the final note of tragedy to which the darkness, the clammy chill of the cavern and the ghostly forms of the bats had been a fitting prelude.

“My God!” gasped Brodribb, “we’re too late!”

He broke into a shambling run and Thorndyke and I darted on ahead. The man was Frank Lumley, of course, and a glance at him gave us at least a ray of hope. He was lying in an easy posture with closed eyes and was still breathing, though his respiration was shallow and slow. Beside him on the sand lay a little bottle and near it a cork. I picked up the former and read on the label “Laudanum: Poison” and a local druggist’s name and address. But it was empty save for a few drops, the appearance and smell of which confirmed the label.

Thorndyke, who had been examining the unconscious man’s eyes with a little electric lamp, glanced at the bottle.

“Well,” said he, “we know the worst. That is a two-drachm phial, so if he took the lot his condition is not hopeless.”

As he spoke he opened the hand-bag, and taking out the emergency-case, produced from it a hypodermic syringe and a tiny bottle of atropine solution. I drew up Lumley’s sleeve while the syringe was filled and Thorndyke then administered the injection.

“It is opium poisoning, I suppose?” said I.

“Yes,” was the answer. “His pupils are like pinpoints; but his pulse is not so bad. I think we can safely move him down to the boat.”

Thereupon we lifted him, and with Brodribb supporting his feet, we moved in melancholy procession down the cave. Already the waves were lapping the beach at the entrance and even trickling in amongst the seaweed; and the boat, following the rising tide, had her bows within the cavern. The two fishermen, who were steadying the boat with their oars, greeted our appearance, carrying the body, with exclamations of astonishment. But they asked no questions, simply taking the unconscious man from us and laying him gently on the grating in the stern-sheets.

“Why, ’tis Mr. Lumley!” exclaimed the skipper.

“Yes,” said Thorndyke; and having given them a few words of explanation, he added: “I look to you to keep this affair to yourselves.”

To this the two men agreed heartily, and the boat having been pushed off and the sail hoisted, the skipper asked:

“Do we sail straight back, sir?”

“Yes,” replied Thorndyke, “but we won’t land yet. Stand on and off

opposite the gap-way.”

Already, as a result of the movement, the patient’s stupor appeared less profound. And now Thorndyke took definite measures to rouse him, shaking him gently and constantly changing his position. Presently Lumley drew a deep sighing breath, and opened his eyes for a moment. Then Thorndyke sat him up, and producing the vacuum-flask, made him swallow a few teaspoonfuls of coffee. This procedure was continued for over an hour while the boat cruised up and down opposite the landing-place half a mile or so from the shore. Constantly our patient relapsed into stuporous sleep, only to be roused again and given a sip of coffee.

At length he recovered so far as to be able to sit up—lurching from side to side as the boat rolled—and drowsily answer questions spoken loudly in his ear. A quarter of an hour later, as he still continued to improve, Thorndyke ordered the skipper to bring the boat to the landing-place.

“I think he could walk now,” said he, “and the exercise will rouse him more completely.”

The boat was accordingly beached and Lumley assisted to climb out; and though at first he staggered as if he would fall, after a few paces he was able to walk fairly steadily, supported on either side by me and Thorndyke. The effort of ascending the steep gap-way revived him further; and by the time we reached the gate of Burling Court—half a mile across the fields—he was almost able to stand alone.

But even when he had arrived home he was not allowed to rest, earnestly as he begged to be left in peace. First Thorndyke insisted on his taking a light meal, and then proceeded to question him as to the events of the previous night.

“I presume, Lumley,” said he, “that you saw the apparition of Glynn’s head?”

“Yes. After Mr. Brodribb had seen me to bed, I got up and went to Gilbert’s cabin. Something seemed to draw me to it. And as soon as I opened the door, there was the head hanging in the air within three feet of me. Then I knew that Glynn was calling me, and—well, you know the rest.”

“I understand,” said Thorndyke. “But now I want you to come to Gilbert’s cabin with me and show me exactly where you were and where the head was.”

Lumley was profoundly reluctant and tried to postpone the demonstration. But Thorndyke would listen to no refusal, and at last Lumley rose wearily and conducted his tormentor up the stairs, followed by Brodribb and me.

We went first to Lumley's bedroom and from that into a corridor, into which some other bedrooms opened. The corridor was dimly lighted by a single window, and when Thorndyke had drawn the thick curtain over this, the place was almost completely dark. At one end of the corridor was the small, narrow door of the "cabin," over which was a gas bracket. Thorndyke lighted the gas and opened the door and we then saw that the room was in total darkness, its only window being closely shuttered and the curtains drawn. Thorndyke struck a match and lit the gas and we then looked curiously about the little room.

It was a quaint little apartment, to which its antique furniture and contents gave an old-world air. An ancient hanger, quadrant and spy-glass hung on the wall, a large, dropsical-looking watch, inscribed "Thomas Tompion, Londini fecit," reposed on a little velvet cushion in the middle of a small, black mahogany table by the window, and a couple of Cromwellian chairs stood against the wall. Thorndyke looked curiously at the table, which was raised on wooden blocks, and Lumley explained:

"That was Gilbert's dressing-table. He had it made for his cabin on board ship."

"Indeed," said Thorndyke. "Then Gilbert was a rather up-to-date gentleman. There wasn't much mahogany furniture before 1720. Let us have a look at the interior arrangements."

He lifted the watch, and having placed it on a chair, raised the lid of the table, disclosing a small wash-hand basin, a little squat ewer and other toilet appliances. The table lid, which was held upright by a brass strut, held a rather large dressing-mirror enclosed in a projecting case.

"I wonder," said I, "why the table was stood on those blocks."

"Apparently," said Thorndyke, "for the purpose of bringing the mirror to the eye-level of a person standing up."

The answer gave Brodribb an idea. "I suppose, Frank," said he, "it was not your own reflection in the mirror that you saw?"

"How could it be?" demanded Lumley. "The head was upside down, and besides, it was quite near to me."

"No, that's true," said Brodribb; and turning away from the table he picked up the old navigator's watch. "A queer old timepiece, this," he remarked.

"Yes," said Lumley; "but it's beautifully made. Let me show you the inside."

He took off the outer case and opened the inner one, exhibiting the delicate workmanship of the interior to Brodribb and me, while Thorndyke continued to pore over the inner fittings of the table. Suddenly my colleague said:

“Just go outside, you three, and shut the door. I want to try an experiment.”

Obediently we all filed out and closed the door, waiting expectantly in the corridor. In a couple of minutes Thorndyke came out and before he shut the door I noticed that the little room was now in darkness. He walked us a short distance down the corridor and then, halting, said:

“Now, Lumley, I want you to go into the cabin and tell us what you see.”

Lumley appeared a little reluctant to go in alone, but eventually he walked towards the cabin and opened the door. Instantly he uttered a cry of horror, and closing the door, ran back to us, trembling, agitated, wild-eyed.

“It is there now!” he exclaimed. “I saw it distinctly.”

“Very well,” said Thorndyke. “Now you go and look, Brodribb.”

Mr. Brodribb showed no eagerness. With very obvious trepidation he advanced to the door and threw it open with a jerk. Then, with a sharp exclamation, he slammed it to, and came hurrying back, his usually pink complexion paled down to a delicate mauve.

“Horrible! Horrible!” he exclaimed. “What the devil is it, Thorndyke?”

A sudden suspicion flashed into my mind. I strode forward, and turning the handle of the door, pulled it open. And then I was not surprised that Brodribb had been startled. Within a yard of my face, clear, distinct and solid, was an inverted head, floating in mid-air in the pitch-dark room. Of course, being prepared for it, I saw at a glance what it was; recognised my own features, strangely and horribly altered as they were by their inverted position. But even now that I knew what it was, the thing had a most appalling, uncanny aspect.

“Now,” said Thorndyke, “let us go in and explode the mystery. Just stand outside the door, Jervis, while I demonstrate.”

He produced a sheet of white paper from his pocket, and smoothing it out, let our two friends into the room.

“First,” said he, holding the paper out flat at the eye-level, “you see on this paper a picture of Dr. Jervis’s head upside down.”

“So there is,” said Brodribb; “like a magic-lantern picture.”

“Exactly like,” agreed Thorndyke; “and of exactly the same nature. Now let us see how it is produced.”

He struck a match and lit the gas; and instantly all our eyes turned towards the open dressing-table.

“But that is not the same mirror that we saw just now,” said Brodribb.

“No,” replied Thorndyke. “The frame is reversible on a sliding hinge and I have turned it round. On one side is the ordinary flat looking-glass which you saw before; on the other is this concave shaving-mirror. You observe that, if you stand close to it, you see your face the right way up and magnified; if you go back to the door, you see your head upside down and smaller.”

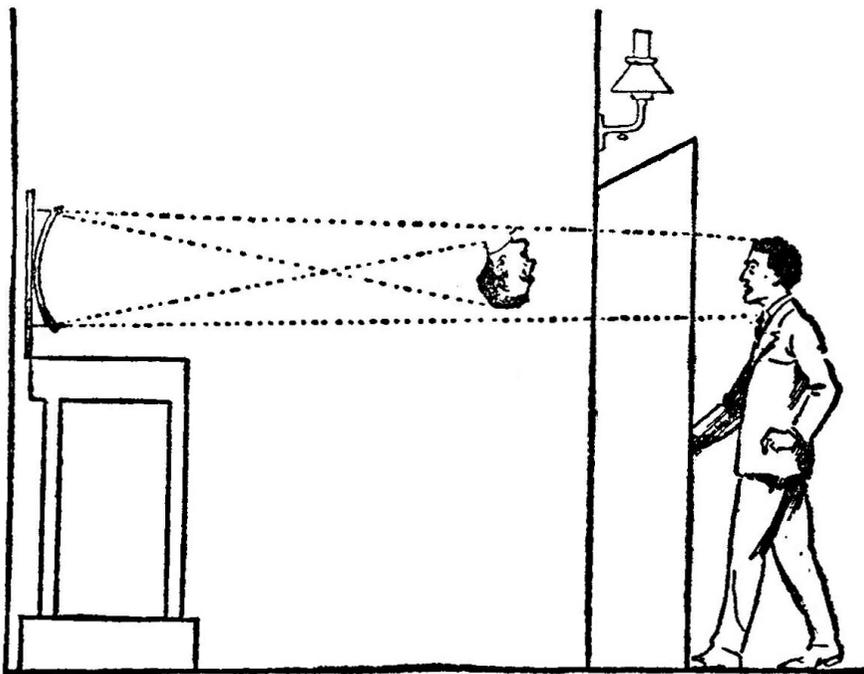
“But,” objected Lumley, “the head looked quite solid and seemed to be right out in the room.”

“So it was, and is still. But the effect of reality is destroyed by the fact that you can now see the frame of the mirror enclosing the image, so that the head appears to be in the mirror. But in the dark, you could only see the image. The mirror was invisible.”

Brodribb reflected on this explanation. Presently he said:

“I don’t think I quite understand it now.”

Thorndyke took a pencil from his pocket and began to draw a diagram on the sheet of paper that he still held.



THE APPARITION OF BURLING COURT.

“The figure that you see in an ordinary flat looking-glass,” he explained, “is what is called a ‘virtual image.’ It appears to be behind the mirror, but of course it is not there. It is an optical illusion. But the image from a concave mirror is in front of the mirror and is a real image like that of a magic-lantern or a camera, and, like them, inverted. This diagram will explain matters. Here is Lumley standing at the open door of the room. His figure is well lighted by the gas over the door (which, however, throws no light into the room) and is clearly reflected by the mirror, which throws forward a bright inverted image. But, as the room is dark and the mirror invisible, he sees only the image, which looks like—and in fact is—a real object standing in mid-air.”

“But why did I see only the head?” asked Lumley.

“Because the head occupied the whole of the mirror. If the mirror had been large enough you would have seen the full-length figure.”

Lumley reflected for a moment. “It almost looks as if this had been arranged,” he said at length.

“Of course it has been arranged,” said Thorndyke; “and very cleverly arranged, too. And now let us go and see if anything else has been arranged. Which is Mr. Price’s room?”

“He has three rooms, which open out of this corridor,” said Lumley; and he conducted us to a door at the farther end, which Thorndyke tried and found locked.

“It is a case for the smoker’s companion,” said he, producing from his pocket an instrument that went by that name, but which looked suspiciously like a pick-lock. At any rate, after one or two trials—which Mr. Brodrigg watched with an appreciative smile—the bolt shot back and the door opened.

We entered what was evidently the bedroom, around which Thorndyke cast a rapid glance and then asked:

“What are the other rooms?”

“I think he uses them to tinker in,” said Lumley, “but I don’t quite know what he does in them. All three rooms communicate.”

We advanced to the door of communication and, finding it unlocked, passed through into the next room. Here, on a large table by the window, was a litter of various tools and appliances.

“What is that thing with the wooden screws?” Brodrigg asked.

“A bookbinder’s sewing-press,” replied Thorndyke. “And here are some boxes of finishing tools. Let us look over them.”

He took up the boxes one after the other and inspected the ends of the tools—brass stamps for impressing the ornaments on book covers. Presently he lifted out two, a leaf and a flower. Then he produced from his coat pocket the little manuscript book, and laying it on the table, picked up from the floor a little fragment of leather. Placing this also on the table, he pressed each of the tools on it, leaving a clear impression of a leaf and a flower. Finally he laid the scrap of leather on the book, when it was obvious that the leaf and flower were identical replicas of the leaves and flowers which formed the decoration of the book cover.

“This is very curious,” said Lumley. “They seem to be exactly alike.”

“They are exactly alike,” said Thorndyke. “I affirm that the tooling on that book was done with these tools, and the leaves sewn on that press.”

“But the book is a hundred years old,” objected Lumley.

Thorndyke shook his head. “The leather is old,” said he, “but the book is new. We have tested the paper and found it to be of recent manufacture. But now let us see what is in that little cupboard. There seem to be some bottles there.”

He ran his eye along the shelves, crowded with bottles and jars of varnish, glair, oil, cement and other material.

“Here,” he said, taking down a small bottle of dark-coloured powder, “is some aniline brown. That probably produced the ancient and faded writing. But this is more illuminating—in more senses than one.” He picked out a little, wide-mouthed bottle labelled “Radium Paint for the hands and figures of luminous watches.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Brodribb; “a very illuminating discovery, as you say.”

“And that,” said Thorndyke, looking keenly round the room, “seems to be all there is here. Shall we take a glance at the third room?”

We passed through the communicating doorway and found ourselves in a small apartment, practically unfurnished and littered with trunks, bags and various lumber. As we stood looking about us, Thorndyke sniffed suspiciously.

“I seem to detect a sort of mousy odour,” said he, glancing round inquisitively. “Do you notice it, Jervis?”

I did; and with the obvious idea in my mind began to prowl round the room in search of the source. Suddenly my eye lighted on a smallish box, in the top of which a number of gimlet-holes had been bored. I raised the lid and peered in. The interior was covered with filth and on the bottom lay a dead bat.

We all stood for a few seconds looking in silence at the little corpse. Then Thorndyke closed the box and tucked it under his arm.

“This completes the case, I think,” said he. “What time does Price return?”

“He is expected home about seven o’clock,” said Lumley. Then he added with a troubled expression: “I don’t understand all this. What does it mean?”

“It is very simple,” replied Thorndyke. “You have a sham ancient book containing an evidently fabulous story of supernatural events; and you have a series of appliances and arrangements for producing illusions which seem to repeat those events. The book was planted where it was certain to be found and read, and the illusions began after it was known that it actually had been read. It is a conspiracy.”

“But why?” demanded Lumley. “What was the object?”

“My dear Frank,” said Brodribb, “you seem to forget that Price is the next of kin and the heir to your estate on your death.”

Lumley’s eyes filled. He seemed overcome with grief and disgust.

“It is incredible,” he murmured huskily. “The baseness of it is beyond

belief.”

Price and his wife arrived home at about seven o'clock. A meal had been prepared for them, and when they had finished, a servant was sent in to ask Mr. Price to speak with Mr. Brodribb in the study. There we all awaited him, Lumley being present by his own wish; and on the table were deposited the little book, the scrap of leather, the two finishing tools, the pot of radium paint and the box containing the dead bat. Presently Price entered, accompanied by his wife; and at the sight of the objects on the table they both turned deathly pale. Mr. Brodribb placed chairs for them, and when they were seated he began in a dry, stern voice:

“I have sent for you, Mr. Price, to give you certain information. These two gentlemen, Dr. Thorndyke and Dr. Jervis, are eminent criminal lawyers whom I have commissioned to make certain investigations and to advise me in this matter. Their investigations have disclosed the existence of a forged manuscript, a dead bat, a pot of luminous paint and a concave mirror. I need not enlarge on those discoveries. My intention is to prosecute you and your wife for conspiracy to procure the suicide of Mr. Frank Lumley. But, at Mr. Lumley's request, I have consented to delay the proceedings for forty-eight hours. During that period you will be at liberty to act as you think best.”

For some seconds there was a tense silence. The two crestfallen conspirators sat with their eyes fixed on the floor, and Mrs. Price choked down a half-hysterical sob. Then they rose; and Price, without looking at any of us, said in a low voice:

“Very well. Then I suppose we had better clear out.”

“And the best thing, too,” remarked Brodribb, when they had gone; “for I doubt if we could have carried our bluff into court.”

On the wall of our sitting-room in the Temple there hang, to this day, two keys. One is that of the postern gate of Burling Court, and the other belongs to the suite of rooms that were once occupied by Mr. Lewis Price; and they hang there, by Frank Lumley's wish, as a token that Burling Court is a country home to which we have access at all hours and seasons as tenants in virtue of an inalienable right.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

This story is Number Twenty Nine from the book
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Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Book name and author have been added to the original book cover, together with the name and number of this story. The resulting cover is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *The Apparition of Burling Court* by Richard Austin Freeman]