

The Corpse on the Bridge



Charles Barry

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"I put my hand on his shoulder and shook him."

The Scotland Yard Mystery Library

THE CORPSE ON THE BRIDGE

By
CHARLES BARRY



McKINLAY, STONE & MACKENZIE
NEW YORK

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TO
M. R. K. BURGE
without whose ingenious aid the body
could not have been placed
on the bridge

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THE CORPSE ON THE BRIDGE

The Corpse on the Bridge

I. Gilmartin Is Puzzled

As the District Railway train entered Westminster Station Chief Detective Inspector Laurence Gilmartin got up and handed the penny morning paper he had been reading to his neighbour, a costermonger whom he had noticed making efforts to read it over his shoulder. He was the first passenger to alight when the carriage doors had slid back into their grooves, and he was already half-way to the street before any others had left the platform. Like most indolent men he was capable of extraordinary spurts of energy, and on this—the sixth—morning of November he had overslept. As he turned the corner towards Scotland Yard he threw a look up at Big Ben.

“Ten minutes late!” he murmured and lengthened his already long stride.

A tall, handsome Irishman was Gilmartin and, except for his height and chest measurement unlike the popular conception of a detective. His curly black hair, only slightly streaked with grey, and his luxuriant moustache so unlike the toothbrush of the present day gave rather the impression of a *beau sabreur* out of one of Ouida’s books. The cut of his clothes was military in its spruceness.

“Good morning, Phibbs!” he said to the constable under the archway who without saluting gave nevertheless the effect by his attitude of a very correct salute indeed, “Late, eh?”

“’Fraid so, sir!” the man smiled, “They’ve all come.”

Gilmartin strode up the shabby stairs three steps at a time and turned down the corridor towards the room occupied by Assistant Commissioner Roche—popularly known as “Cocky” or “The Beetle”—where a conference with his principal superintendents was taking place.

“Sorry, sir!” the Irishman said to the grey-headed little man behind the desk, “Overslept!”

Assistant Commissioner waved his pipe in acknowledgment of the apology and went on with what he was saying.

“Yes, Meldrum,” he addressed one of the four men seated at the other side of the desk, “It’s a very curious business indeed! What are you doing about it?”

"I don't see what we *can* do!" Superintendent Meldrum replied, "It's just a matter of interrogating people who will admit having been in that neighbourhood late last night."

He looked at his colleagues and smiled.

"It's my opinion," he continued, "That it's a case which Gilmartin will get a lot of pleasure out of. He likes to start without a blessed thing to go on."

Gilmartin looked at his superior quizzically.

"Then," he said, "You're certainly trying hard to please me now. My own fault, of course, but I haven't the faintest idea of what you're talking about."

The others laughed.

"Well!" the Assistant Commissioner declared, "I had just thought of Gilmartin myself. He hasn't anything of any importance on at the moment. So, for his benefit and ours, Meldrum, you might let us have the details of what you told me before we came in here."

"Very good, sir!" Meldrum replied and fingered a small sheaf of papers on the desk before him, "Perhaps I'd better read the gist of the statements they've sent along."

Roche nodded and the others sat back to listen.

"The first statement," the superintendent began, "Is that of Constable Clarke and is as follows: 'I relieved Constable Jones at the corner of the Embankment and Wellington Street at midnight and proceeded at once along Waterloo Bridge. In the first embrasure on the East side I noticed a white figure which seemed to be sitting hunched up on the stone seat. I threw my light on it and went over. Then I saw that it was a man sitting in his underclothes with his feet on the seat. He had his hands clasped round his knees which were bent and touching his chin. As I approached him I tripped on what subsequently proved to be an old army blanket which lay on the pavement by the seat. I thought that the man was asleep and I said: "Hi! What are you doing here like that? You'll catch your death of cold! Get up!" The man did not move so I put my hand on his shoulder and shook him. The man then fell to the pavement and when I saw that he kept the same position I realised that he was dead. I called out and some tramwaymen who were passing by came over to me. I sent one of them to the corner of Wellington Street for the sergeant and remained with the body.'"

Meldrum stopped reading for a moment and looked up.

"Then," he went on, "The body was removed and Jones, the constable who had been relieved was recalled and questioned. He stated that he had

passed over the bridge twenty minutes before his relief and had noticed nothing there then. There had been quite a large number of passers-by all the evening. He declares that he would have noticed if there had been anybody in the embrasure, for as it happened he had walked along that side of the bridge and thrown the light of his torch into each niche. Personally, I can imagine that if the body had been covered by the army blanket which is about the same colour as the stonework of the bridge, Jones might not, in spite of his certainty, have noticed it. That, of course, is only a personal opinion."

The superintendent turned to another paper to refresh his memory.

"The next statement," he continued then, "Is that of the sergeant who went back with the tramwayman from Wellington Street. It merely tells how he joined the constable and what measures—the usual ones—he took afterwards. He describes the body, however. He says that it is the body of a man of between forty-five and fifty years of age, clean-shaven, grey hair clipped closely—a prison crop, in fact—bald on top. At the mortuary they took the fingerprints of the body, but we have no record of them in our files. The next thing is the report of the divisional surgeon. Death, he says, was probably due to a violent blow of some heavy instrument on the base of the skull. The skin was unbroken but the spinal cord was severed and the neck dislocated. He uses big words to say that, but that's what he means. There will, of course, be a post mortem when he will confirm this report or otherwise. Dr. Ellard estimates that the man was dead five or six hours when he saw him, that is to say, he must have been killed yesterday evening before seven o'clock."

"Nothing to show how the body got there?" Superintendent Pennell—one of the listeners—asked.

"Not a thing," Meldrum replied, "He might have been there all the evening for all the trace there is of his having been placed there afterwards."

"What about the seat?" the Assistant Commissioner asked, "Has it been examined for fingerprints?"

"Useless," the superintendent replied, "It is too rough to take them. The bridge parapet which in parts is smooth enough was handled by a dozen people even before the body was removed."

"Tchah!" Roche exclaimed irritably.

"You spoke of a prison crop," Gilmartin interposed, "What about the man's hands? Were they calloused with work or— —"

"No," the superintendent answered, "On the contrary, they were soft, except for a hardening of the skin of the tip of the index finger of the right

hand and the side of the middle finger.”

“H’m!” Gilmartin reflected, “That sounds like a pen.”

“Perhaps,” Meldrum agreed, “There was a slight stain of ink on the middle finger.”

“Any marks on the underclothes?” the Irishman asked.

“Yes,” the superintendent, replied, “A number.”

He consulted his papers.

“Fifteen,” he added, “In Roman numbers—XV!”

“What quality of linen?” the Assistant Commissioner asked.

“Ah!” Meldrum exclaimed, “That is one of the strange things connected with the case. I’ve never seen underclothing like that before in my life. The stuff is coarse cotton material like the stuff they make flour sacks out of. You know the material I mean?”

Gilmartin nodded.

“Both shirt and pants?” he asked.

“Yes! Both! The pants are loose baggy things fastened with white tape and—listen to this!—tucked into long black woollen stockings—not socks, but stockings reaching to above the knees like a woman’s! And then the shirt! I’ve never seen such a garment! Not a button on it! Fastened at the neck and at the wrists with tape!”

“That’s interesting!” Assistant Commissioner Roche exclaimed, “What do you think about it, Gilmartin?”

The Irishman had straightened himself in his chair at the description of the shirt, and appeared to be searching for something in his memory. He ignored the Chief’s question.

“Now, where have I seen a shirt like that?” he murmured, “I’ve seen one somewhere!”

His colleagues waited.

“No!” he said finally, “I can’t get it! But it’ll come back to me.”

“I think you’d better take charge of the investigations, Gilmartin,” the Assistant Commissioner suggested rather than ordered, “If anybody can make anything out of it you can.”

“Thanks for the compliment, sir,” Gilmartin grinned, “I’ll see what I can do. Where’s the body now?”

“In the Westminster mortuary,” Meldrum replied.

“Did you make any arrangements for photographing it?”

“Of course! In fact the prints are probably ready by now.”

"It wouldn't be a bad idea," Superintendent Forsyth—one of the officers present—suggested, "To let the Press have them. Somebody might identify the body if they were reproduced."

"A gruesome sort of tit-bit for the picture page," the Assistant Commissioner commented, "But I think we'd better leave all these details to Gilmartin now."

"How is it that the Press hasn't got hold of the thing?" Gilmartin asked of nobody in particular. "I saw nothing of it in this morning's papers."

"I don't know," Meldrum replied, "whether it was because the whole scene on the bridge only occupied a few minutes and almost passed unnoticed or because of last night's debate in the House."

The Irishman rose.

"I'd better start in right away," he said, "You don't need me for anything else, I suppose?"

"No," Roche replied, "You might as well begin on the job at once. The other matters we have to discuss won't interest you."

Meldrum handed the papers he held to Gilmartin who with a nod which embraced everybody started for the door.

"Do you want any help?" the Assistant Commissioner stopped him.

"Not yet," Gilmartin replied, "I want to have a look round on my own first."

"Right!"

II. The Vanished Laybrothers

A WEEK'S investigation of what the newspapers called the Waterloo Bridge Murder brought no results. Gilmartin spent most of the first morning examining carefully the body of the murdered man and the scanty garments which had covered it. He was intrigued by the underclothes, whose poor quality and strange cut seemed to indicate that the wearer—too poor to purchase the conventional type of underwear—had made them himself, for the sewing was decidedly amateurish, and in the opinion of a seamstress and a tailor whom the detective had consulted, the work of masculine fingers. Contrasted with this was the fact that the body though thin was that of a sufficiently well nourished man. The teeth had been meticulously cared for—there was clear evidence that the dentist had been visited at the least sign of caries. The finger and toe nails were those of a man who, without being effeminate, was careful in these details.

Inch by inch Gilmartin examined the clothing through a lens. The soles of the black stockings, examined first, were clean and practically free of dust. It was obvious that they had not been placed on the ground. It seemed even that they had never been pressed against the inside of a shoe or boot. Suddenly Gilmartin started and carefully extracted from between the strands of wool a tiny white particle which on close inspection proved to be a minute splinter of deal. The examination of the other garments produced similar splinters, one of them from the shirt sleeve near the wrist as tiny as that from the stocking, the other, however, which Gilmartin found in the drawers on a level with the hip bone was a sliver about as long and as thin as a sewing needle. The army blanket gave up three more slivers. Having carefully placed them between the pages of a small notebook the Irishman examined the features of the body. He could not have said why he thus peered through a lens at the skin of a corpse. In all probability if asked he would only have answered: "You never know!"

"Ah!" he exclaimed suddenly, "What's this?"

He took a matchbox from his pocket and ran the end of a match inside the curl of one of the ears. It came away covered with a greasy substance faintly tinged with red.

With these meagre exhibits Gilmartin went to the analyst usually employed by New Scotland Yard. The substance found in the curl of the ear, he thus discovered, was merely vaseline mixed with a substance which the analyst called erythrosine. The splinters of wood proved to be slightly greasy and though the trace was very small the fatty substance proved to be simply oleo-margarine.

"I can't understand it!" Gilmartin reflected, "I wonder if he was brought there in a packing case."

"But no, hang it!" he told himself, "Somebody would have noticed it. Besides, margarine is not put up in such big cases as all that. At least I think not. I must find out!"

The examination, belated as it was, of the seat in the embrasure of Waterloo Bridge gave nothing. A scratch about six inches long on the parapet parallel with the pavement and about a foot above it did not seem to have any bearing on the case inasmuch as it might have been made by anybody before or after the placing of the body there.

At the end of a week during which the Press at the request of Scotland Yard had daily published photographs of the number marked on the linen, of the dead man's face together with a minute description of every feature,

including measurements, Gilmartin had to report to the Assistant Commissioner that he had made no progress whatsoever.

“First time I’ve ever known you to confess that,” Roche commented, “But it certainly does seem pretty hopeless I must admit.”

“I can’t make it out,” the Irishman exclaimed, “Generally you find dozens of people coming forward to identify a body, but in this case not a single man, woman or child has done so.”

“I’m afraid we’ll have to leave it at that,” the Assistant Commissioner declared, “We must, of course, put somebody on the case to continue the inquiries, but we can’t afford to have a Chief Inspector’s time occupied solely on it. You’d better—— Oh! Yes! Wait a minute! You’re Roman Catholic, aren’t you?”

“Yes, sir.” Gilmartin replied with some surprise and a considerable stiffness in his manner, “It’s pretty generally known that I’m a Catholic.”

“I’m not trying to be impertinent, old man.” Roche laughed, “As a matter of fact my question was purely rhetorical. I know you’re a Catholic, though it’s no business of mine if you were a Buddhist.”

As he talked the Assistant Commissioner was rummaging among the papers on his table.

“Ah!” he went on, “Here it is! The reason for my remark is this letter from an old school friend of mine.”

The Irishman looked inquiry.

“Here!” Roche said, “Read the letter. The writer is the rector of the parish mentioned.”

“Church of England?” Gilmartin asked, wondering what this had to do with his own religious beliefs.

“Yes,” the Assistant Commissioner replied, “And as Protestant as they make ’em! No new prayer books for him! He’s a broad-minded fellow, though. No bigot by any means!”

Gilmartin read aloud:

“The Rectory
“Alderborough, Hants.
“12th November, 192—

“MY DEAR DICK,

“On behalf of a friend of mine I wish to ask your advice and possibly your help on a matter which is worrying him. A common interest in early Christian archeology has gained me the privilege

of the friendship of one of the foremost authorities on the subject —no other than Dom Bruno Chavasse, Abbot of the Benedictine Monastery of Alderborough, which, as you know, is in my parish, one of the most broad-minded members of the Romish clergy that I have ever met. I often have lunch with the monks—they are no sybarites, I might add, but the guest within their walls is indeed a guest. To-day was one of the occasions, and Dom Chavasse over a cup of coffee afterwards told me a strange story.

“I had noticed that a centre table in the refectory at which the laybrothers sat seemed to have fewer brothers than usual and I commented—merely by way of small talk—on the fact. I could not help noticing that the guestmaster and the Abbot exchanged troubled glances after my innocent remark, but I naturally said nothing. However, later the Abbot himself returned to the matter and told me that he was very worried about the disappearance of several laybrothers. It appears that on the 7th November one of the laybrothers did not turn up in Chapel for Matins. Being charitable to human frailty Dom Chavasse, if he thought of it at all, concluded that the brother had slept on in spite of the bell, which rings at the unearthly hour of four in the morning. Later in the day, however, the laybrother was still absent not only from his duties in chapel but also from breakfast, which, it seems, is merely a snack taken standing. The sub-prior, who is as it happens a qualified medical man, visited the brother’s cell to see if he were ill, but found that his bed had not been slept in. He reported the matter to the Abbot who investigated the business, when it transpired that Brother Paul had not been at Compline—that is, night prayers—the night before.

“They appear to have come to the conclusion that he had simply tired of the monastic life and had left without telling anybody, and though they wondered why he had gone in such manner they thought no more of it as the man was free to do as he wished in that respect. It does not seem to have occurred to the Abbey authorities at the time to wonder why he left in his monkish habit instead of in his civilian clothes which were stored in the linen room. It was only when on the following day another laybrother disappeared in similar fashion that things began to look strange to them, for he also had gone in his cassock—or tunic as they call it—and scapular. The Abbot explains to me that he has had experience before of such departures from a monastery on the

part of laybrothers—who, by the way, are the manual workers and as a rule quite uneducated men—one departure often influencing another, so that even this second disappearance did not cause undue alarm.

“The matter now seems more serious, for only last night two more brothers disappeared in the same mysterious manner and the Abbot is frankly afraid that some accident has befallen them. On the other hand, he is, if I mistake not, just a little apprehensive that they may have gone on what your son Jimmy calls the ‘razzle-dazzle’ and that a search for them might reveal a scandal which would give rise to a lot of ignorant and injurious comment. However, he has consented to my writing unofficially for your advice on the subject. Personally I am very fond of the old man and should be very much obliged to you for any help you may find possible to give him. I cannot suggest how, but perhaps you could send one of your discreetest officers to interview Dom Chavasse personally—if among them you have a Roman Catholic he would be best I think. The Abbey is not rich but I think they would willingly pay expenses if they are not too big. In any case, if that is the only hitch, I myself, as you know have quite as much money as is good for me. Write and let me know what you think.

“Kindest regards to Ethel, and to my godson Jimmy, whose visit, please remind him, is due.

“Yours,

“J. BRINSLEY-SEALE”

“Well?” said Roche when Gilmartin had finished. “How would you like to look into that little matter?”

“M’m!” the Irishman murmured thoughtfully, “It’s a funny business!”

“I think you’d better travel down into Hampshire and see this Abbot,” the Assistant Commissioner went on, “Especially as you’re an R.C. At any rate there’s no fear of you playing at matchmaking down there!”

This was a standing joke at New Scotland Yard where it was said that all the Irishman’s big cases invariably ended in a series of marriages between the people involved. Somebody had in consequence nicknamed him, “The Fairy Godfather.”

Gilmartin laughed.

“Good! Well, that’s settled, eh?” Roche went on, “When can you go?”

“Any time to-morrow.”

“Good! Hand over this Waterloo Bridge business to—let me see, now—yes! To your friend Peters. Give him all you’ve got and let him muddle along from there.”

“I shouldn’t be surprised if he solved the mystery, sir,” Gilmartin smiled, “You underrate Peters.”

“Humph!” the Assistant Commissioner grunted, “It’s a good thing we have room for all sorts here. And by the way, if you think it advisable call on the local police to help you down there in Alderborough—but not unless it’s absolutely necessary. There may be nothing in the thing at all!”

Gilmartin nodded and rose. He was half-way to the door when he stopped dead, his hand in the air.

“What is it?” Roche asked.

“By Jove!” the Irishman exclaimed, “I’ve got it! That underwear!”

“What the dickens are you talking about?” the Assistant Commissioner inquired in surprise.

Gilmartin came back to the desk.

“You remember, sir,” he said, “That I tried to recollect where I had seen such a shirt as that Waterloo Bridge body wore?”

Roche nodded.

“Well?” he said, “Have you remembered?”

“Yes. It was in a monastery—a Trappist monastery, it is true,” Gilmartin replied, “But I’m a blooming Dutchman if that dead man wasn’t a monk! One of the vanished laybrothers as sure as a gun!”

III. Abbot and Guestmaster

DOM BRUNO CHAVASSE, ABBOT of Alderborough was not at all the type of ecclesiastic which the modern world associates with Benedictine monasteries. Standing over six feet in height, erect as a guardsman, with clear blue eyes and bushy grey eyebrows, close-cropped greying hair, aquiline nose and firm chin, he approached more the popular conception of a Knight Templar. One could, indeed, easily picture the swing of the heavy sword accompanying the swish of his habit as he strode along the silent cloister with firm, unhurried step. His community—especially the younger members of it—might now and then have been heard to refer to him jokingly as “the colonel,” since the day when a new laybrother, an old ex-soldier of *Infanterie Coloniale*, had responded to an order with a click of hobnailed boots and a “*Bien, mon colonel!*” which resounded strangely in

that abode of peace. The Abbot himself had joined in the laugh that followed and with twinkling eye reminded the abashed monk that though they both belonged to an Army which was for ever on active service, military titles of the sort could be dispensed with. The laybrother, chaffed later by his brethren in their little recreation room had, however, growled in excuse:

“But he has a right to the title, *ma foi*! Did I not serve under him in three African campaigns?”

When Chief Inspector Gilmartin, awaiting him in the reception room just outside the cloister, saw him enter the room he also felt inclined to give the military salute. Dom Chavasse, however, held out his hand so quickly that the Irishman could only surrender his own to a hearty clasp, remembering later that as a Catholic layman he might have been expected to kiss the Abbot's ring. The two men studied each other frankly for a moment. Gilmartin saw, parenthetically, from the habit that this was not an English Benedictine, for the cut and texture of the black tunic and scapular had none of the smartness of those he had seen worn by the monks of Downside or Ampleforth. Dom Chavasse smiled into Gilmartin's Irish eyes and waved him to a chair. When they were both seated the Abbot spoke in perfect English with hardly a trace of alien accent.

“I see,” he said, “that the influence of my friend Mr. Brinsley-Seale with Scotland Yard is great, since they have so promptly sent a Chief Inspector.”

He glanced at Gilmartin's card which he held in his hand.

“He is an old school friend of my Chief's,” the Irishman replied. “But in any case, Father Abbot, we should not think of sending an officer of low rank to interview you.”

“I appreciate the compliment,” the Abbot smiled. “Then you think that the disappearance of our laybrothers is probably a serious matter?”

“Personally,” Gilmartin declared, “I am inclined to think that it is very serious indeed.”

Dom Chavasse pursed his lips in a very unmonastic whistle and abstractedly swung his pectoral cross to and fro. “What are we to do about it?” he asked.

“Perhaps,” the Irishman suggested, “you would kindly tell me with as many details as possible what you know of each disappearance in turn.”

“I will do better than that,” the Abbot replied. “I have had the whole thing put into writing. The Fathers Prior, Sub-Prior and myself have conducted an inquiry into the matter and you will find the statements of every father, novice and laybrother who knew anything of the movements of the brothers before their disappearance taken down *verbatim*.”

He went to the door and called from a little room opposite the old laybrother who had admitted Gilmartin.

“Go, brother,” he ordered, “To Father Prior’s cell and ask him to give you the papers we were reading together this morning.”

He turned back to the detective.

“I don’t know,” he said, “If you appreciate fully the delicacy of the situation, but — —”

“I think I do,” Gilmartin interrupted with a smile. “I am a Catholic and not altogether unacquainted with ecclesiastical establishments.”

“Ah! Good! Then you see how we are situated. It is quite possible, of course, that these laybrothers have left us in this irregular fashion of their own free will. If so, in instituting a search for them we are likely to arouse a great deal of needless—perhaps not very charitable comment outside, for there are, I believe still people living in the twentieth century who believe that a monastery is a place from which one has to escape over the wall rather than by the front door.”

“M’m!” Gilmartin smiled, “I’ve met ’em!”

“Then again,” the Abbot continued, “I must not ignore the possibility—though personally I think it extremely unlikely, to say the least—that the laybrothers are absent on some not very creditable escapade which would bring us as a community into disrepute. There may still exist people who on the strength of one bad monk’s misdeeds are capable of stigmatising all monasteries as dens of iniquity. In that case, of course, I should like to find the laybrothers so that they might be definitely—even publicly—expelled from our midst. The third possibility is that something serious has happened to them, in which case it is the province of the civil arm. I must say that I cannot imagine why any harm should come to them individually or collectively. I am seriously perturbed and mystified, Mr. Gilmartin, and it is this third possibility which has made me confide in Mr. Brinsley-Seale, the Anglican rector of this parish, who is the only Englishman—if I except the bishop of the diocese who is absent in Rome—whom I know capable of advising me. You see, being an alien, I am rather ignorant and perhaps even afraid with that fear which ignorance engenders, of your English methods of procedure.”

Gilmartin had only nodded now and then in appreciation of the Abbot’s points.

“Well, Father Abbot,” he said now, “I am ready to help you—in fact, I have orders to do so—whatever may be the reasons for these disappearances. I am inclined to think that the third of your — —”

He stopped as Dom Chavasse held up his hand. The old laybrother then entered the room and drew from under his scapular a foolscap envelope which he handed to the Abbot. At that moment the deep boom of a bell sounded from somewhere near. The laybrother bowed and left them. The Abbot rose and gave the envelope to Gilmartin.

"I must go now," he said, "We have a Chapter to-night. You will, of course, stay with us. I have given instructions to the Father Guestmaster to have your room prepared. You will find a fire and a writing-desk there."

"I had not intended — —" Gilmartin began.

"Later," Dom Chavasse interrupted, "If you find it more convenient to lodge elsewhere, of course you must do so, but I beg you will be our guest for the present. Nobody—not even Father Prior—knows that I have called you in, consequently no one will have the faintest idea of your identity."

"Very good, Father Abbot!" the Irishman replied. "Thanks! I shall go and get my bag from the station cloakroom at once and then read these documents if I may."

"A laybrother can get your bag," the Abbot said crisply with a smile, "Give the ticket to Father Guestmaster. We need all your energies for ourselves, Mr. Gilmartin. Dinner—or rather supper—will be in one hour from now. Come with me and I will put you in the hands of our guestmaster. He will look after you."

In the cloister they found a solitary monk walking sedately up and down with arms folded under his scapular. The Abbot made a sign and the monk approached.

"This is Dom Massey," he said with a smile, "A fellow-countryman of yours, I think, Mr. Gilmartin, and our guestmaster. Will you show Mr. Gilmartin his room, Father Massey, and come to Chapter later."

Dom Columba Massey, who was of about the same age as Gilmartin and built on much the same fairly generous proportions, shook hands with his guest, and led the way up a staircase to a room where a fire burned brightly.

"There's your cell, son," he said whimsically, "It's just a little bit warmer than mine, but then you chose the flesh-pots of Egypt instead of going on with your theological studies."

Gilmartin started and looked sharply at the monk.

"You seem to know me," he said, "But I can't place you."

"No," the guestmaster laughed softly, "I don't suppose you'd know me, but I knew you as soon as Father Abbot named you. I was in First Divinity when you were in the Junior House."

“What! Maynooth?”

“Where else?” Father Massey replied characteristically. “Man! They lost a fine centre-forward when you left! But I must be going. I’ll come up to bring you down to supper, but first of all what about your things? Are they at the station?”

Gilmartin nodded and gave the monk the cloakroom receipt.

When the guestmaster left him the Chief Inspector sat down in front of the fire and read the documents which the Abbot had handed him. There was scarcely anything in them of essential importance which the rector had not already written in his letter to the Assistant Commissioner. One fact, however, was brought out: that at least two of the vanished laybrothers had been in the habit of taking a walk in the abbey grounds every evening after supper.

“Humph!” Gilmartin reflected when he had finished reading, “I must see these grounds! Too late now to do it to-day!”

He returned to the papers.

“Just like the proceedings of a military court of inquiry!” he mused, “I’ll bet the Abbot’s an old soldier!”

Again the bell boomed forth.

“Supper, I suppose!” the Irishman said to himself, “And I’m hungry!”

He was still splashing water when the guestmaster returned and knocked at his door.

“I presume,” that worthy said as Gilmartin was twisting his moustache into shape before a mirror, “You’ve come about these disappearances. I seem to have heard somewhere that you were a policeman of sorts.”

“You know too much altogether, Father Massey,” Gilmartin laughed, “Your Abbot has just told me that nobody here is aware of my identity.”

“Oh! I see!” Dom Columba exclaimed, “It’s a secret, is it? All right! Nobody will learn it from me. Ready?”

Gilmartin nodded and followed the monk downstairs. In the refectory they found the monks, each standing with folded arms in front of his place. When the detective had been shown to his place at the guest table the community sang grace in a plainsong recitative and the meal began. Gilmartin from his place could see practically the whole community. The Abbot sat in lonely state at a table on a raised platform at one end of the room. The guest table was immediately in front. Round the walls were seated the thirty odd black-clad figures of the fathers while at the farther end of the room were half a dozen novices whose status Gilmartin identified

from the fact that they wore knee-length scapulars instead of the full-length ones worn by the fathers. At a table which ran down the centre of the room were seated a dozen brown-clad laybrothers. All were waited upon by two monks who wore over their black habits long white aprons.

The Irishman could not help noticing that the meal served to the community was less copious than that which was set before him by the guestmaster who interrupted his own meal to put the dishes before him, and he saw that while they drank water he was given a pitcher of generous brown ale. His ears only half attentive to the voice of a monk who read aloud in the pulpit in one corner the detective studied the faces of the monks.

“A rum crowd!” he mused, “And of half a dozen nationalities I’ll swear!”

When grace after meat had been sung he followed the Abbot out of the refectory, the rest of the monks coming behind. Dom Chavasse drew him along the cloister and asked:

“Have you read the papers I gave you?”

“Yes, but there is very little in them that I didn’t know already,” Gilmartin replied. “I should like to have an opportunity, however, of asking you a few questions which they have suggested to me.”

“Let us walk up and down!” the Abbot proposed, “Ask me anything you like. If I can answer I will, and if we haven’t enough time before Compline I shall have to break our silence rule and continue then, that’s all.”

“Before I ask anything else,” the Irishman said, with his hand in his breast pocket, “I should like to ask you to look at this.”

He handed to Dom Chavasse a photographic print. The Abbot looked at it.

“Yes?” he queried.

“You don’t recognise the face, then, Father Abbot?”

“No! It looks to me to be the face of a dead man, but I do not know it.”

“It bears no resemblance, then, to any of the missing brothers?”

“Not the slightest!”

Gilmartin’s face fell.

IV. The Broken Silence Rule

THE detective attended the short but impressively severe service of Compline in the Abbey chapel, not only because night prayers were a habit with him, but also with the object of getting a better view of the monastic community than he had obtained in the refectory. The chapel was also a place of public worship, and he took his place beforehand in the darkness of the nave in order to watch the monks, all—except the novices—clad in voluminous cowl over their habits, file through the door behind the altar into the choir. The laybrothers did not enter the choir, but occupied stalls somewhere behind the altar. Gilmartin found his expectation of seeing the monks disappointed from the beginning, for the only lights were those of the hanging sanctuary lamp before the altar, and of two candles which illuminated a lectern where a novice read in English from the *Imitatio Christi* until stopped by a signal given by the Abbot's gavel on his *priedieu*, when he broke off and intoned the opening request for a benediction:

"Iube, domne, benedicere!"

The Abbot's voice as clear as a bell responded:

"Noctem quietam et finem perfectam concedat nobis Dominus omnipotens."

Before going to his place in the stalls the novice extinguished the candles and the service went on in almost total darkness, for the monks from long practice were word perfect.

As the final echoes of the Antiphon *Salve Regina*, sung to the traditional Gregorian air by the rough, untutored, but by no means unpleasing voices of over thirty monks died away in the vaulted emptiness of the Gothic chapel Gilmartin's Celtic soul could not repel a presentiment that the peaceful tenor of the lives of these men of prayer and study was to be rudely disturbed as a result of his inquiries into the mysterious disappearances. These Benedictine monks, as they stood in their rows of stalls singing the praises of the Divine seemed so remote from all the trouble and strife of the outside world with its accompaniments of pain and pleasure, sorrow and gaiety, that he experienced a poignant regret that the peace of their retreat should be ruffled by the irruption of mundane evils and anxieties.

Something of this he tried to express to Dom Bruno Chavasse later as they sat together in the Abbot's room—a bare cell containing a narrow bed, two chairs, and a writing table—after the evening prayer. The Abbot was silent for a moment.

"It may seem a curious thing for me to say, Mr. Gilmartin," he said then, "And it is probable that our Founder, St. Benedict would not agree with me, but I think that it is sometimes not a bad thing for us to have our tranquillity

disturbed from time to time. We are liable to get slack—or, what is worse, complacent—in times of peace and quietness, and like you people of the outer world, need jogging up. I could, however, have wished that the stimulant were just a little less—er—violent than this. However—you wished to ask me some more questions, I think.”

Gilmartin’s notebook was at once in his hand.

“Yes, Father Abbot,” he replied, “First of all, I wonder if you could let me have a complete list of the members of your community, fathers, novices and laybrothers.”

“Certainly,” the Abbot at once agreed, “In fact I have one here which I can let you have. But why do you want it? Surely you don’t think that these disappearances are due to any evil influence from within?”

The Irishman was embarrassed for a moment.

“W—well!” he hesitated, “One never knows. You see, Father Abbot, there may be somebody in here whom you don’t know really well yet—a novice, for instance, or a monk from another monastery.”

“M—yes,” Dom Chavasse murmured, “I see! I quite understand your point of view. As a police officer you must, of course, envisage every possibility.”

“Precisely.”

Without a word the Abbot rose and took from among his papers on the desk the list demanded.

“Another thing, Father Abbot,” Gilmartin went on, taking the paper, “Have you had any guests staying in the monastery lately?”

“No! Not for some weeks. We have had guests to lunch once or twice of course, but none of them could possibly have had any contact with the laybrothers.”

“Nevertheless,” the Irishman asked, “May I have their names? I shall not inconvenience them in any way if they are all right.”

“Very well,” Dom Chavasse consented, “I will make a note of it for Father Guestmaster.”

“Oh! By the way,” Gilmartin exclaimed, “Your guestmaster knows who I am, Father Abbot.”

“Indeed? How?”

The Irishman smiled.

“I am,” he replied, “What we call in Ireland a ‘spoiled priest,’ that is to say— —”

"I understand the expression," the Abbot interrupted returning the smile, "You were studying for the priesthood and gave it up. Ah! So Dom Massey knew you at Maynooth? He is a Maynooth man. He joined us several years after his ordination."

"Yes," Gilmartin nodded, "I understood him to mean that he knew me or heard of me there."

"H—m!" Dom Chavasse commented, "He should have told me. I hope he has said nothing to the other fathers."

"I don't think so," the detective declared, "I told him that it was a secret—for the present at any rate. And, Father Abbot, I'm afraid it cannot remain one very long. I shall probably have to question the monks who made the statements which you gave me to read."

"I realise that," the Abbot replied, "But I think that we had better keep it up as long as possible—just in case there is some sinister influence inside the cloister itself."

"I agree," said Gilmartin, again consulting his notebook, "There is just another point, Father Abbot. I notice that in the statements I have read the fathers are all referred to by their surnames, whilst the laybrothers are called 'Brother Paul,' 'Brother Adrian' and so on."

"Yes, that is our custom."

"I should like," the Irishman continued, "To have the surnames of the laybrothers as well."

"You will find them," the Abbot informed him, "In the list I have given you—in brackets after their names in religion."

"Another thing," Gilmartin went on, "I will ask you to do, and that is to give me—in strict confidence, of course—some idea of the laybrothers who have gone, I mean their characteristics, etcetera. I shall also want, naturally, a personal description of each."

"H'm!" the Abbot said slowly, "I can give you the result of my own observations, of course, Mr. Gilmartin, but you will realise that I do not know them quite so intimately as I know the others—the choir monks. Father Cresson, our organist, is in charge of the laybrothers and will be able if necessary to supplement and possibly amend my remarks."

Gilmartin's pencil was poised.

"Brother Paul," Dom Chavasse went on after a pause, "The first to disappear, is a Londoner, a little thin man of—well—about five feet four inches in height, with a very red face, blue eyes and reddish hair. He has a birthmark on his left cheek about the size of a broad bean and about the same shape. He was, I believe, a costermonger before he came to us. He is a

widower. That is all I can remember of his superficial attributes, except that his nose is what I think you call in English a snub nose.”

“Quite an adequate description, Father Abbot,” Gilmartin smiled.

“His disposition,” the Abbot continued, “Is cheerful. In fact he is always getting into trouble on account of his exuberance. Suddenly, for example, in the middle of his work during silence hours he will forget himself and burst into song—not always sacred song by any means. Though I have often rebuked him in Chapter I am afraid I am never able to do so with the requisite severity because of the difficulty I have in repressing a smile. His very contrition is so comic.”

The Abbot was smiling as he spoke.

“He was sorely tried for a long time,” he went on, “By a terrible temper, and his efforts to govern it were pathetic. However, he has been with us now for four years and I think that he has succeeded on the whole very well.”

“What was his special work in the monastery?” Gilmartin asked.

“He takes his turn at the usual routine duties,” Dom Chavassee replied, “But his special task is the garden—the vegetable garden. He was given that work at his own request. As he quaintly put it to his novice-master at the time: ‘I’ve been selling vegetables for so long that it’s nearly time I knew which end grows uppermost.’ I may add that he speaks with such a decided Cockney accent that I have considerable difficulty in following him.”

Gilmartin silently admired the Abbot’s insistence on the present tense as he spoke of the vanished brother.

“Then,” Dom Chavassee went on, “There is Brother Adrian—also English, but of a very different type. He, like Brother Paul, was in the Army during the War, in a Yeomanry regiment—the Worcestershires, I believe—mostly in Egypt and Palestine. He is a tall fair man, very slow of speech, and as placid as Brother Paul is vivacious, rather stupid, perhaps, but good-humoured. I do not know if you have ever heard of the traditional monastic joke about St. Michael. On a feast of the first class as you probably know, relics of the saint honoured, if we have any, are exposed. Invariably on Michaelmas day some wag—for we have wags, Mr. Gilmartin—is sure to send a newcomer to Father Prior for the relic of St. Michael. Poor Brother Adrian was an obvious victim; he went solemnly and asked for the relic and only realised what had happened when Father Prior asked him when he thought the Archangel had shed a feather from his wing. He took it very well and was seen to laugh quietly to himself several times during the day that followed. There is nothing very distinctive about his personal appearance except that a wound in his knee sometimes gives him trouble and then he

walks slightly lame. He attends to our few cows and horses for he is very fond of animals.”

“M’yes!” Gilmartin mused aloud, re-reading what he had written, “There is very little to go on in that.”

“Very little indeed,” the Abbot agreed, “As for Brothers René and Denis, their disappearance mystifies me more than the others. They are both Frenchmen, and only speak enough English to make themselves understood by their *confrères*. They are remarkably alike physically and temperamentally. Both are dark and small, both rather stout but very active, though curiously enough their trades are indoor; Brother René is our tailor and Brother Denis our shoemaker. One thing that differentiates them is that Brother Denis is bald while Brother René has a thick black head of hair. They are intelligent men, considering their education, and very alert. But I think, on the whole, you would be well advised to see Dom Cresson if you want more intimate details.”

“Yes,” Gilmartin agreed. “I will do so if it becomes necessary.”

He unfolded the list of monks and scanned it.

“Are all these—novices of course excepted—monks of long standing in your community, Father Abbot?” he asked.

“Hardly that, Mr. Gilmartin,” Dom Chavasse replied, “The professed monks vary from those who have not yet been ordained priests and therefore as a rule generally young, to those who have been in the monastic life twenty years or even more. Then there are some who, though monks for many years have come to us from other monasteries either for a long or a short time for some special reason.”

“For example?” Gilmartin inquired.

“Well,” the Abbot explained, “Take the case of a monk from Maredsous—in Belgium—who is engaged in historical research. He finds in the course of his work that some of the authorities he requires to consult are most accessible at the British Museum, so his Abbot asks us, who are nearest to London of all the abbeys, to extend hospitality to him. He then becomes a temporary member of our community, is subject to our Rule, except that he may go up to the Museum Reading Room for his work.”

“I understand,” Gilmartin nodded.

He held out the paper to the Abbot.

“You are tired, Father Abbot,” he said, “But if you will kindly tick off on this the names of those who are temporary members of your community, and note the name of their parent house I shall leave you for to-night.”

The Abbot took a pencil from his desk.

"M'yes." He murmured half-aloud, as he marked the sheet, "There is Dom Gatard from Solesmes, Dom Cammaerts from Maredsous, Dom Baumgartner from Einsiedeln— —"

"What!" the detective could not help interrupting, "Not *the* Baumgartner who— —"

"The same." Dom Chavasse replied, continuing to mark off another name or two, "The 'wireless monk' as your papers quaintly call him. He has come over to talk to the Marconi people about some new invention of his."

"I thought he never left his monastery," Gilmartin commented, "That is what I read in some paper at any rate."

"Well," the Abbot smiled, "You cannot expect a Benedictine monk to show himself to the public and advertise his goings and comings in the same way as a society lady, can you?"

"No! I suppose not."

"As a matter of fact," Dom Chavasse continued, "It is through no desire of his own that he has come over. Were it not for the fact that his invention is likely to be taken up by Marconi's and to bring in money for his Abbey he would be quite content to go on inventing for the mere pleasure of it."

"Yes," Gilmartin laughed, "Inventors are often not practical men."

"And Dom Baumgartner is notoriously unpractical," the Abbot added, "His Abbot tells me also that he is just as notoriously absent-minded. He proved it on his arrival at Victoria, for he had his suitcase stolen. Fortunately there was nothing in it except some linen and a tunic and habit. It would have been rather terrible if his diagrams and plans had been in it."

Gilmartin was sitting up in obvious excitement.

"When did he arrive?" he asked, "Recently?"

"Yes," the Abbot replied, "He came on the—let me see! To-day is the 14th—yes, he came on the 5th."

"And the first laybrother disappeared when?—on the 7th?"

"Yes, or on the evening of the 6th, but— —" Dom Chavasse was now startled out of his calm. "Then you think— —"

"Father Abbot," the Irishman replied slowly, "I'll lay you anything you — —"

The Abbot smiled.

"Sorry," Gilmartin resumed, "I mean, that as sure as God made little apples, some gang of crooks is after those wireless diagrams of Father Baumgartner's."

V. The Attack

"BUT—BUT," DOM CHAVASSE objected, "Why should such a gang of—what is your word? Crooks?—Why should they harm my poor ignorant laybrothers?"

The Irishman had a theory ready.

"My idea is," he replied, "That the gang has been hanging round the grounds of the abbey on the chance of getting hold of Father Baumgartner. Perhaps they don't know him by sight, and seeing your laybrothers taking a walk, pounced on them in the dark on the chance that one of them might be the Father."

The Abbot considered this for a moment.

"No," he decided finally, "I don't think, Mr. Gilmartin, that that is what happened. In the first place if they are the same persons who stole Father Baumgartner's suitcase they must know him by sight; besides, the laybrothers are dressed in brown whilst—"

"*La nuit tous les chats sont gris!*" Gilmartin quoted irreverently in the Abbot's own language. "They would not be able to distinguish colours in the dark. Until we find a better theory I'll stick to that one, I think. You see, disappointed in their expectation of finding the plans in the suitcase, they — Oh! By the way, where are the plans kept? In a safe, I hope."

"They have not yet arrived," Dom Chavasse replied, "Dom Baumgartner's assistant at Einsiedeln is making the final copies and specifications and is sending them on by registered post."

"At what time do the mails arrive here?" the detective asked excitedly.

"The first comes about eight o'clock; the others at various times in the course of the day. Brother Gregoire can tell us exactly."

"H'm!" Gilmartin reflected, "I wonder when a registered letter from Switzerland would arrive—by one of the later deliveries, I suppose."

Then he asked:

"Does the postman bring the letters right up, or does he leave them at the lodge?"

"The lodgekeeper—a laybrother—takes them in at the lodge."

"In that case," the Irishman decided, "If you don't mind I shall be at the lodge to-morrow and until the package comes. I shall bring it up here myself. Have you a safe?"

"The Father Procurator has the Abbey safe in his office," the Abbot replied.

"Good! The plans must *not* be put in it. It's too obvious! Now, Father Abbot, I am convinced that these wireless diagrams or plans, or whatever they're called, are behind the disappearances, and we must find your laybrothers. The only way to do that is to catch the gang or some member of it. They are evidently desperate enough to attempt to burgle that safe. If so, I'll get them."

Gilmartin was now walking up and down the Abbot's cell. He stopped suddenly when Dom Chavasse remarked in his quiet even voice:

"And what, Mr. Gilmartin, if the package has already been stolen?"

"What? How? Oh! Lord!"

"It may very well be," the Abbot continued, "That Brother Gregoire was not at the lodge when it came and that one of the brothers who has disappeared—Brother Denis was the last, on the eleventh—signed for it, and was attacked on his way up here with it."

"Oh!" Gilmartin repeated helplessly, "Oh, Lord!"

He turned suddenly and faced the Abbot.

"But," he said, "How would they know that the plans were coming by post?"

"If your theories are correct, Mr. Gilmartin," the Abbot retorted, "How did they know of their existence?"

"That's a fair question," the detective admitted and was silent for a moment.

"The only thing to do," he said then, "Is to find out to-morrow if your theory is a possible one, and then to wire to the Abbot of Einsiedeln and ask him if the things have been sent. I'll do that myself and sign your name, Father Abbot. At the same time I shall make inquiries at the local post-office."

When he left Dom Chavasse the detective lay awake thinking over their conversation, and wondered if he had not jumped to conclusions too quickly in making the inference that the disappearance of the laybrothers was connected with a criminal plot to get hold of the plans and diagrams of Dom Baumgartner's wireless invention. With the coming of drowsiness his mind

wandered off in speculations as to the importance of the invention itself. He knew the Swiss monk's reputation in the radio world; he had laughed to himself on reading the ambiguous sobriquet of "The Wireless Monk" given him by some enterprising young journalist on the staff of one of the Sunday papers, and he knew from his omnivorous reading that the Benedictine had been responsible for many of the improvements which had led to the extension of radio-telephony over the greater part of the civilised—and some of the uncivilised—world. He smiled at the thought that this modern invention owed something to a member of a mediæval monastic order and was drowsily amused at the recollection that the first conversation—widely blazoned in all its details—between San Francisco and Cape Town consisted of sweet nothings between the two most popular idols of the cinema-going public of the English-speaking world.

"Humph!" Gilmartin mumbled disjointedly as he dropped off to sleep, "Sign of the times, I suppose! Wonder which of those monks was Baumgartner. Must have a talk with him to-morr—"

A light sleeper, he jumped up as he heard the Abbey bell boom forth, but turned round contentedly on the other side when by the light of a match he saw that it was the call to Matins at what the Rector of the parish had called the "unearthly hour of four."

"Heavens!" he reflected, "Who would be a Benedictine monk! And—oh, hang! I kept the poor old Abbot out of bed until the Lord knows when!"

In spite of this interruption of his slumbers he was at the lodge gates before the pale November sun had attempted to pierce the misty air. He found that Brother Gregoire, the laybrother in charge, had already been instructed to hand over the mail to him. He questioned him as to the possibility of any of the vanished brothers having taken the letters up to the monastery on the day of his disappearance. Brother Gregoire—a very corpulent little Frenchman who was glad to find that his questioner spoke fluent French—admitted the possibility but was vague as to dates.

"You see, Monsieur," he said, "I am responsible, and I make a point of being here when the postman comes. Of course, if the postman comes at an unusual hour it is another matter. And even then, before leaving here, a brother would have to be relieved by me and would probably tell me if he had taken in any letters."

"I see," Gilmartin nodded, "But have you no recollection of a case when the brother has not waited to be relieved?"

"Oh! That happens sometimes, Monsieur, if the brother knows that I am coming down from the Abbey. Sometimes the porter telephones down when

I am coming.”

After a short silence Gilmartin remarked:

“I presume, Brother, that you know why I am here?”

“I have an idea, Monsieur. I know nothing for certain, but Father Abbot has ordered me to answer all your questions as if it were he who asked them.”

The Irishman said nothing more, noticing that the laybrother returned to a book of devotions which he had laid down on the detective’s entrance. He drew from his own pocket a little book whose contents were far from devotional and until the postman came they sat in the little front room of the lodge, the lips of the one moving in silent prayer, of the other curling now and then with amusement at some of the jokes of his favourite Aristophanes. The crunch of footsteps brought the laybrother to his feet. Gilmartin followed more slowly to the door.

“‘Mornin’, Brother Greegore!” Gilmartin heard outside, “Coldish sort of a mornin’! Not a big post this mornin’! G’mornin’!”

“Hi!” the detective called after the postman as he was leaving, “Just a minute!”

“Yessir!”

“Are you the postman who delivers the registered letters?”

“Yessir! Ten o’clock, sometimes five o’clock,” the man replied jerkily.

“Do you remember delivering any registered packages to this lodge during the past week?” Gilmartin asked.

The postman looked at the laybrother before answering. The latter nodded.

“Eet ees all right, George,” Brother Gregoire reassured him, “Ze gentleman ’as ze Fazzer Abbot’s permission to ask.”

“Ah!” the postman exclaimed, “That’s O.K. then! Yes, sir, I delivered a registered package ’ere the other evening—what day was it now?—yes, Sat’d day it was. I was a bit late, too. But it wasn’t Brother Greegore as signed for it. It was another one—a little bald-’eaded one—I ’eard ’is name—now — —”

“Not Denis?” Brother Gregoire asked.

“Denis it was, Brother Greegore!” the postman replied, nodding emphatically, “Denis and no other! That’s right!”

“Did you notice what he did with the package!” Gilmartin went on.

“Yes, sir, partickler I did! There was another brother—it bein’ darkish I didn’t see which—just a-goin’ up the drive to the monastery and ’e called

after 'im to take it up. I see 'im runnin' after 'im as I goes out o' the gate. Why, sir? Is the package missin'? No trouble about it I 'ope."

"Oh, it has been mislaid somewhere," Gilmartin evaded, "Nobody seems to know where it's gone so I thought I'd ask you about it—just to refresh people's memories."

"I see, sir. Well, g'morning, sir!"

"Just a minute," the Irishman stopped him, "I'm sorry to keep you from your round but I want to know if it is the package I think it was. Did you notice the postmark? Was the package bulky or not?"

"Bulky it was, sir," the postman replied, "An' the stamps! Now I didn't notice partickler. They was furrin, I know. French, likely as not; most of the letters here is French."

"They weren't Swiss by any chance?"

"Now, there you 'ave me, sir! They might 'a' been an' yet they might not. But I'll tell you what, sir! They could tell you at the post-office. Bein' a registered package they'd 'ave a record—like—of it."

"Right! Thanks very much, I'll inquire. And just one thing more: the Abbot authorises me to tell you not to take anybody's signature in future except Brother Gregoire's or mine, that is to say until further orders."

"Right you are, sir! I'll remember that! G'morning, sir."

When the obliging official had disappeared Gilmartin turned to the laybrother and smiled ruefully.

"I don't know how much you know, Brother Gregoire," he said, speaking English without thinking, "But I'll tell you this: things look pretty blue to me."

"I do not know, per'aps, as moch as you, sair," Brother Gregoire replied in the same language, "But I sink sings looks black—not blue."

"I shouldn't be surprised," the detective agreed, "And now let's see what sort of a mail we've got."

The laybrother handed him the half-dozen letters. Gilmartin read the addresses aloud.

"H'm! Dom Columba Massey, O.S.B." he muttered, "Irish Free State stamp! The Father Procurator! H'm! Two for him! Dom Augustin Gortaud! Who's that?"

"Ze Fazzer Prior, sair!"

"Ah! Le Révérendissime Père, Dom Bruno Chavasse! Two for him also. Right! Brother Gregoire, I'll take these up."

"*Bien, monsieur!*"

Gilmartin strode up the drive toward the monastery. Holding the letters openly in his hand he was apparently careless, but his eyes darted from side to side towards the wood on one side and the sunk garden on the other.

“Jolly good spot for an ambush!” he reflected, “Especially at night!”

He started as a rustling from the wood on the left struck his ear.

“Ah! There you are!” he heard, and then he saw the guestmaster coming down a path towards him, “I was looking for you to take you in to breakfast.”

“Thanks very much,” the detective answered, “I was just coming up to look for some food.”

“I see you’re acting postman to-day.” Father Massey went on joining him on the drive.

“Yes, I thought I’d save Brother Gregoire the walk.”

The guestmaster was silent for a minute.

“Father Prior usually takes the letters and hands them out,” he volunteered as they entered the cloister.

“Father Abbot is going to do it to-day.” Gilmartin replied, and his tone was a little sharper than he had intended.

“Sorry,” the monk apologised, “I am evidently interfering with something that doesn’t concern me.”

When the detective had seated himself at a table which had been laid for him in a little library he placed the letters beside his plate, and whether by accident or by design that addressed to Father Massey was uppermost. The guestmaster, however, who was attending to his wants, made no sign that he noticed it. Half-way through the meal the Abbot came in, and at his signal Father Massey left the room.

“Nothing this morning, Father Abbot,” Gilmartin reported after greetings, “And I’m afraid we are too late.”

He recounted his conversation with the postman, and handed over the letters, at which the Abbot barely glanced.

“H’m!” Dom Chavasse reflected, “I wonder! The delay is certainly strange, but there is a possibility that the registered package you mention is something quite different—proofs to be corrected or something like that.”

“I hope so,” Gilmartin replied, “I shall inquire at the post-office.”

“If it is not impertinent of me,” the Abbot said, “May I ask what you are going to do to-day?”

“First of all, I am going to send a telegram in your name to the Abbot of Einsiedeln, then, as I have said, inquire into this registered package

business. And then, Father Abbot," the detective added apologetically, "I'm afraid I shall have to take the local police into our confidence to some extent."

Dom Chavasse shrugged his shoulders.

"If you must, you must," he said philosophically, "I should perhaps have done so myself from the beginning. I was perhaps wrong in saying nothing."

"That," Gilmartin replied with a smile, "Is a matter which is very difficult to decide, but I shouldn't worry about that if I were you, Father Abbot. My object now in wishing to tell the local police is simply to ask them to have an eye on all strangers who come in and out of your grounds."

"They would need a small army to do that efficiently," the Abbot reflected, "There are nearly two miles of road on three sides of the wood. Then there are the fields which march with those of various farmers and others around."

"It won't be easy," the Irishman admitted, "But we'll see what can be done. By the way, what is your procedure with regard to letters? The prior distributes them, I believe."

"Yes," Dom Chavasse replied, "In theory, you see, we have a censorship of correspondence. In practice, it consists of reading letters addressed to novices and distributing the other unopened, unless there is suspicion of unauthorised letter-writing. I delegate all that to Father Prior."

"I see! Then — —"

There was a knock at the door followed by the rather hurried entrance of a tall monk whose fiery red hair and steel blue eyes would have made him conspicuous anywhere. He was panting with either exertion or excitement.

"What is the meaning of this, Father Prior?" the Abbot asked severely, "Why this — —"

"Sorry, Father Abbot," the prior apologised in English with a slight foreign accent, "But I—I thought I must report immediately."

"Yes? What is it?"

The prior looked doubtfully at Gilmartin.

"Don't mind Mr. Gilmartin," the Abbot directed, "What is wrong?"

"Father Baumgartner has just been attacked in the upper wood by two laybrothers!"

"What!" Dom Chavasse exclaimed incredulously, "By two laybrothers? Which laybrothers?"

"I should have said," the prior amended, "Two men in laybrothers' habits; they are not any of ours."

"I don't understand."

"Perhaps," Gilmartin suggested mildly, "With your permission, Father Abbot, Father Prior will sit down and explain as rapidly as possible."

The Abbot nodded and Dom Gortaud sat down.

"I went out," he began rapidly in French, "To take my usual short walk after breakfast when I met coming from the wood one of the novices— Brother Guthrie—supporting Father Baumgartner, whose habit and face were stained with mud. I asked what had happened, and Brother Guthrie explained. He was walking in the wood and as he turned the corner near the Farnshot road he saw Father Baumgartner walking in front of him. Further ahead he saw what seemed to be two laybrothers coming in the opposite direction. He thought it strange, he says, as generally at this hour they are all occupied with their duties, and also because two were together during Silence. When they came up to Father Baumgartner, Brother Guthrie saw them stop and then suddenly throw themselves on the Father. He ran forward at once to help Father Baumgartner, but did not reach them, for the two attackers fled when they saw him coming. He found that Father Baumgartner was not seriously injured, beyond a slight sprain caused by the fall, and some abrasion of the skin on his face."

"Where is Father Baumgartner now?" Gilmartin asked.

"In his cell. The Brother Infirmarian and Father Sub-prior are attending to him."

"May I see him?"

"Certainly, Mr. Gilmartin," the Abbot replied, and turned to the prior. "Will you please, Father Prior, assemble the community in the Chapter Room at once. I wish to give orders that nobody is to leave the cloister after dark, and that in the daytime nobody is to go out of sight of the cloister except in case of urgent necessity."

"And even then," Gilmartin interposed, "If I may advise, he should be escorted by another monk or laybrother. If he has to go outside the grounds, I suppose that will not always be easy, but then it is not very probable that an attack will be made on a frequented road. However, we must devise some means of protecting your people, Father Abbot, and your measures seem to be the best we can do for the present at any rate."

"Yes. Later in the day we may be able to supplement these measures. And now, Father Prior, ask Father Guestmaster to show Mr. Gilmartin to Father Baumgartner's cell."

Gilmartin hurriedly finished his coffee.

As he left the room he thought he saw the old Abbot's lips moving in prayer.

VI. The Rector's Opinion

THE detective found Father Baumgartner sitting in an arm-chair which had been moved into his cell. The infirmarian had just finished his ministrations.

"A little rest, Father, and you will be all right," he was saying as the guestmaster introduced Gilmartin into the cell.

"I hope you haven't been seriously injured, Father Baumgartner!" Father Massey asked in a tone which struck the detective as insincere.

"No, it is only a scratch on de fa-ace," the Swiss monk replied in an atrocious accent, "And a liddle tvisd of de leg wen I vos against de dree knogged. It is noddng."

The guestmaster introduced the detective.

"Would you mind telling me exactly what happened, Father Baumgartner?" the Irishman asked, and sat down on the edge of the monk's narrow bed.

Father Massey discreetly withdrew.

"I vos in de vood valking," the monk began in a deep guttural growl, "Ant I see doo laybrudders who towards me kom. I know dem not but I greed dem mid de usual greeding. Von of dem say: 'You are Fadder Baumgartner from Einsiedeln, yes?' I admit de fact ant von of dem—de odder von—said: 'you have your blans received, no?' I answer dat such madders the concern of laybrudders are not, and den de first von hit me ant I fall. Den dey run away ant de Brudder Novice koms and to my feet helps me. I understand not dist'ing."

The monk shook his head and looked at Gilmartin in bewilderment. The detective privately thought him something of a comic sight as he sat—a lank, bony figure—in the arm-chair with his hands under his scapular. His bulging short-sighted eyes seemed to be trying to come out of his head. A broken pair of spectacles lay on the table beside him, and their absence from his nose made him lean forward as if anxious to scan every line of Gilmartin's face.

"In what language did these men speak?" the detective asked.

"In English."

"Could you describe them?"

“Von vos dall ant de odder vos small,” Father Baumgartner replied, “Bud deir faces I notiss not.”

“That’s a pity,” Gilmartin reflected, “Are these plans of yours very important?”

“Vell!” the monk said philosophically with a smile made crooked by the court plaster on his cheek, “World-like speaking, I subbose dey are very imbordant indeed, but ve can midout dem de Gingdom of Heaven reach.”

The Irishman laughed.

“But not the Republic of Argentina, I presume,” he replied without a pause, “By wireless at any rate.”

“Haw! Haw! Haw!” the Swiss father laughed throatily, “Ver’ goot! Ver’ goot! Bud nod kvite droo! Von can already de Republic of Archentina reach, bud von musd von’s turn wait. My infention vill anywere all togedder to reach possible make.”

“What do you mean exactly, Father?” Gilmartin asked, now interested, “Do you mean that with the help of your invention several people will be able to speak—say to New York from London—simultaneously from the same station without jamming each other?”

“Dat is vot I mean. You have it ver’ glearly said.”

“H’m! Like multiplex telegraphy. I don’t wonder thieves want to get hold of your plans!”

“Bud I have dem not,” the monk lamented, “De Vater Abbot of Einsiedeln has to send dem bromised, bud they have not yet gekommen. Unt I musd de Margoni directors at de end of de mont’ meet.”

Gilmartin made no reply to this.

“Have you any idea, Father,” he asked, “Who might want to steal your diagrams?”

“None. Absolute none!” Father Baumgartner replied dolorously.

“By the way,” the detective went on, “How did you lose your suitcase on your way here?”

“I do not know,” the monk replied, “At Dover it vos dere ant at London it vos not.”

Gilmartin rose.

“Well, Father Baumgartner,” he said, “I must go now. We will do what we can to see that you get your plans all right.”

As he closed the cell door after him he noticed a curious clicking noise and turned round to look. On the door about five feet from the bottom was a little oval piece of wood which swung to and fro on a nail. The detective,

puzzled, moved it with his finger, and found that it covered a little hole in the door, seemingly for the purpose of looking into the room. He could not resist the temptation to peer in and almost burst out laughing when he saw the Swiss monk still sitting in his arm-chair staring disconsolately at the broken spectacles which he now held in long, bony fingers. Gilmartin checked the laugh, however, before its inception, and gently replacing the cover, moved away. As he walked down the corridor towards the stairs he noted that similar holes were pierced in all the cell doors.

“Humph!” he muttered, “No privacy!”

As he passed down to the cloister he heard the voice of the Abbot addressing his community in the Chapter Room.

Gilmartin moved on towards the front door. The old laybrother porter was there and let him out.

“Where is the local post-office?” the detective asked.

“I don’t know, sir,” the old man replied, “I haf neffer zeen it, bud Brudder Krekoire at the lotch can tell you.”

“I see you are a fellow-countryman of Father Baumgartner,” Gilmartin said in German.

“*Aber nein, mein Herr!*” the old porter replied in the same language, “I am a German—a Bavarian. He is German-Swiss.”

“I see! Well, good morning, Brother. Would you tell the Father Guestmaster when you see him that I shall probably not return for lunch.”

The laybrother bowed.

Gilmartin smiled when he found that the post-office was not a hundred yards from the Abbey gates. Evidently the old porter was not observant—perhaps he was not even interested. The Irishman considered a few minutes before composing his telegram. He decided that a seat of learning like Einsiedeln would be sure to house a monk with a knowledge of English, so he used that language. He had begun to write when an idea suddenly struck him which made him add more than he had at first intended to send. In a few minutes the postal clerk was counting the number of words in the following:

“Abbot Einsiedeln.

“Inform if and when Baumgartner plans dispatched. If not sent address dummy package and send secretly monk carrying plans. Wire date arrival, Gilmartin, Scotland Yard, London. Making arrangements protect.

“ABBOT, Alderborough.”

This dispatched, he held a conversation with Assistant Commissioner Roche by telephone to whom he announced his probable arrival in London on the following day.

A policeman directed him to the police station, where he was lucky enough to find a superintendent who had come on inspection duty. To him Gilmartin made himself known, and confided part of what he knew of the state of affairs at the Abbey.

"Now that is very funny," the superintendent said, "For as I was coming here this morning I met a civilian and two monks in brown in a Ford van."

"Monks in a Ford van!" Gilmartin exclaimed.

"Yes," the local man confirmed, "When you say it like that it sounds funny. I never gave it a second thought myself. Imagined they were going somewhere for their provisions or something like that. A monastery must get its food somewhere, and in any case, nobody round here gives them a second look, though they do go out in their funny clothes."

"Well, superintendent," the Irishman said, "I'd be very much obliged if you'd send out an 'All Stations' call to find those two birds. In my opinion they are no more monks than you or I are, but damned daring crooks."

The superintendent waited for nothing more, but gave his orders to a sergeant who saw to their execution at once.

"I've told them where I saw them," he said, when he returned to Gilmartin, "And the direction they were going, but Lord knows if they'll be found. I don't suppose they'll keep on the monkish clothes after they get out of this neighbourhood, and they're the only means of identifying them that we've got. You see, I didn't take any particular notice of them."

"There's only one thing about them that I know," Gilmartin replied, "And that is that one of them is small and the other tall."

The superintendent ran out and added this to the information his sergeant was broadcasting. On his return Gilmartin told him what measures he wanted adopted, and asked him to give the necessary orders. The local officer promised to have a discreet watch kept on the Abbey, and declared that he could manage to have the grounds thoroughly and minutely searched within twenty-four hours.

"You never know," he added, "It might be murder and freshly moved earth might need investigating."

"Unfortunately," the detective informed him, "The wood is covered with dead leaves which can easily be moved and replaced, especially as there has been so much rain lately to beat them down flat."

When he left the police station Gilmartin suddenly decided to visit the Assistant Commissioner's friend, the Rector of the parish.

"Yes, a bad business!" Mr. Brinsley-Seale, a stout, grey-headed man with a humorous gleam in his eyes, said, "Poor Dom Chavasse is very worried, though he tries not to show it. I can't make the thing out."

The rector listened carefully while Gilmartin told him of his theory. The ancient inscriptions which he had been deciphering were forgotten.

"By Jupiter!" he exclaimed, "I believe you're right, Chief Inspector! That's what it is! But why the poor laybrothers? There seems to be no point in interfering with them."

"I cannot make that part of it out myself," Gilmartin admitted, "Unless they were attacked when carrying letters. One of them almost certainly was, but it seems far-fetched to conclude that all the others disappeared in the same way. There's something more than that in it."

"H'm! Yes! What do you think of the crowd up there?"

"I haven't had much time to judge," Gilmartin replied with a smile, "They seem to me to be very holy men, but then, you see, I'm possibly prejudiced; I'm a Catholic."

"That's nothing to do with it," the rector declared. "They *are* holy men! I say so in all sincerity, and I'm far from being a Romanist! They *are* holy men, but— —"

"But what?" Gilmartin insisted as the rector hesitated, "Won't you finish, Mr. Brinsley-Seale?"

"Well, I don't like that Irish guestmaster," Mr. Brinsley-Seale said emphatically, "Too much soft sawder for my taste, and he's too inquisitive altogether."

"Yes. I didn't altogether cotton to him either," Gilmartin replied, "Though he is my fellow-countryman. But I think he is really harmless."

"He's my fellow-countryman, too," the rector went on, "For I'm a Galway man, but I don't like him, and—Oh!"

The exclamation was followed by a silence.

"What?" Gilmartin asked.

"He is a wireless fanatic too," Mr. Brinsley-Seale explained, "He has an experimenter's licence. A job he had to get the Abbot to consent to let him apply for it! I must not be uncharitable, but I cannot help wondering if he doesn't know more than a little about this business."

"I wonder!" Gilmartin echoed, "Strange that nobody mentioned that experimenter's licence to me!"

“Oh! Massey wouldn’t of course!” the rector declared, “And it would never enter the Abbot’s head.”

On leaving the rector, Gilmartin lunched at a local hostelry, and then made a survey of the Abbey grounds. He found that Dom Chavasse had correctly estimated the difficulty of watching the goings and comings from them by any but a small army of police.

The bell was ringing for Evensong when he returned to the monastery. At the front door the old porter gave him a sealed envelope with a message that the Abbot wished to see him as soon as he came in. Gilmartin opened the envelope and found that Dom Chavasse had enclosed a telegram which was the Einsiedeln Abbot’s reply to his own of that morning.

“Phew!” the detective exclaimed as he read it. “This is a nice business!”

The telegram was as follows:

“Plans not yet sent. Torn during attempt robbery. New copies being made by Father Kleinmichel. Ready to-morrow. Will act as requested. Explain Father Baumgartner. Writing.

Abbot, Einsiedeln.”

VII. The Struggle in the Wood

KNOWING that the Abbot would have to pass through the cloister on his way from chapel, Gilmartin decided to await him there. As he walked up and down he could hear the faint strains of the psalmody in the distance. The chapel being on a slightly higher level than the rest of the monastery, it was connected with the cloister by means of an underground corridor just wide enough to allow two people to walk abreast, and lighted by a single gas jet. The detective from one end of the cloister had a straight view to the crypt under the chapel, and he so manœuvred that as soon as his eye caught the glitter of the Abbot’s pectoral cross at the head of the procession of monks, that they should meet at the entrance to the cloister.

Dom Chavasse joined him immediately and led him to the little library where he had breakfasted that morning. There the guestmaster, who, Gilmartin noticed, was dressed in ordinary clerical attire underneath his habit, brought them tea, and excusing himself on the plea that he had to go to a neighbouring school to hear confessions, withdrew.

“Take a heavy stick with you, Father Massey,” the Abbot directed as the monk went out, “And when you come back stay at the lodge until somebody is sent from here to accompany you up the drive.”

The Irish monk bowed.

"You may smoke in here," the Abbot continued with a smile, noticing that the detective drank tea without eating anything, "I have observed that those who do not eat usually smoke at teatime."

"I didn't dare to suggest it," Gilmartin replied, "Though I must confess I wanted to do so. I was afraid it would smell in the cloister."

"Oh!" the Abbot laughed, "If the brethren are tempted, they must move farther away, though as a matter of fact by a curious oversight our founder omitted to forbid smoking."

"Indeed!" the detective smiled, "Considering that St. Benedict died sometime round A.D. 543, the oversight was perhaps pardonable."

"You are not to be caught, I see," Dom Chavasse commented as he watched Gilmartin fill his pipe, "You know your Church History too well."

"I'm afraid I'm a bit of a fraud," the detective confessed, "There is a copy of the Rule of St. Benedict in my room, and I simply read Cardinal Gasquet's introduction to it. But you are a busy man, Father Abbot, and I mustn't keep you. You wished to see me, I presume, about the telegram from Einsiedeln!"

"Yes. What do you think has happened?"

"I think that it is pretty clear," Gilmartin replied, "It confirms my theory at any rate. The gang which is after Father Baumgartner's plans is evidently well organised, and they wish to make sure of them either here or at the other end. I wish I had some clue to the identity of the people at the bottom of it. Father Baumgartner knows nothing."

"Oh! He is perfectly hopeless," Dom Chavasse exclaimed, "He is interested only in the invention itself. A child could steal the plans from him! But perhaps you have a theory as to the identity of the would-be thieves."

"N—no!"

"You do not think that they might be a rival organisation to Marconi's? I do not know if there is such a thing, but that is an idea which entered my head."

"There is absolutely nothing to give a clue," Gilmartin answered prudently.

"True!"

"Who is this Father Kleinmichel mentioned in the telegram?" the detective asked.

"He is Father Baumgartner's assistant—a very competent draughtsman, I believe."

"I don't like to suggest it, Father Abbot," the Irishman said after a pause, "But what do you think of the possibility of an accomplice of this gang being a member of the Einsiedeln community—or of yours?"

The Abbot hesitated.

"Of this community," he said then, "I do not think it likely, nor Einsiedeln either, but—there is another possibility."

"What is that?"

"I don't know if you are aware," Dom Chavasse explained, "That Einsiedeln is one of the most famous pilgrim resorts in the world. You may have heard of the miraculous black wooden image of Our Lady there. The guest-house of the Abbey is usually full, and it is quite possible that amongst the guests is—or was—somebody who heard—from the idle chatter of a laybrother perhaps—of Father Baumgartner's journey to London and its object. That would be quite enough, I think, considering his reputation in the radio world."

"I suppose the police of the Canton of Schwyz would hardly know if any well-known criminals were among the guests?" Gilmartin asked.

"Hardly!" the Abbot thought, "But perhaps this attempted robbery will make them look into things there."

"I shall 'phone to the yard to-night," the detective declared, "And ask the Assistant Commissioner to wire them."

"Yes. A good idea, but I hope he will give the affair as little publicity as possible."

"Don't worry about that, Father Abbot!" Gilmartin reassured him, "He knows how to keep things quiet when necessary. Though, mind you, Father Abbot, I'm afraid publicity would be advisable—even necessary—if the plans did disappear."

"I would almost rather have them lost," the Abbot declared, "Than have a scandal. And yet, on the other hand, that is a matter for the Abbot of Einsiedeln. What really worries me is the fate of my poor laybrothers."

Prelate and layman were silent for some minutes.

"None of all this would have happened," Gilmartin suddenly remarked, "If Father Baumgartner had only protected his invention."

"I know," Dom Chavasse admitted, "There is a Patent Office in Berne, I am sure, but Father Baumgartner for some reason wanted to secure a British patent first—probably because he was offering his invention to a British concern. Not that it would have mattered, I presume."

"I suppose," Gilmartin said, "That any monies accruing from the invention would go—not to him but to his Abbey."

"That is so. The vow of poverty forbids individual property."

"To come nearer home, Father Abbot," the detective changed the subject, "May I ask you about a member of your own community?"

"Yes," the Abbot replied, "You mean Father Massey—the Guestmaster?"

"Yes."

"The idea occurred to me before Evensong," Dom Chavasse went on, "And I am afraid it was a source of considerable distraction to me at prayer. But I think that with all his faults he is incapable of such terrible perfidy."

"I must confess," Gilmartin declared, "That I was surprised to hear from Mr. Brinsley-Seale that he was a wireless experimenter, and I wondered why you had not mentioned the fact."

"It simply never occurred to me," the Abbot replied, "You must remember that I have never connected the arrival of Father Baumgartner with the disappearance of the laybrothers, that is, not until you propounded that theory. And even then I did not think of suspecting Father Massey. In fact, I blame myself for thinking of such a thing. What could be his object? He is a monk under the same vows as Father Baumgartner. He could reap no personal benefit from the invention, and we—his community—could certainly not profit from it if it were stolen."

Gilmartin thought he could suggest at least one object, but he refrained from doing so rather than wound the susceptibilities of the Abbot who loved and was loved by his community.

"Mr. Brinsley-Seale doesn't like him," he said instead.

"I know," the Abbot smiled, "But isn't that easily explained by the temperamental clash between Irish protestant and catholic? They are both your fellow-countrymen, Mr. Gilmartin."

"It might be that," the detective said cautiously, "But then I'm an Irish catholic myself and I must confess I don't like him."

Dom Chavasse laughed.

"Ah!" he replied, "Another consideration enters there. You are a Northern and Father Massey a Southern Irishman. As a matter of fact, however, I will admit, between ourselves, that Father Massey is not popular even in the community, but I think that it is merely because of his unfortunate manner."

"Oh!" Gilmartin dismissed the point, "This is not a question of likes and dislikes. Such things are not evidence, and I should have more sense than to

discuss it with you, Father Abbot. I have seen too many good men who looked like criminals and criminals who looked like plaster saints to take much stock in that sort of thing.”

“Yes,” the Abbot laughed, “I have met monks who looked like gargoyles. And as far as Father Massey is concerned, I have known him for some years now, and with the exception that for a contemplative monk he is somewhat inclined to be talkative, I have seen nothing but good in him. No! I don’t think he is involved in this miserable business.”

“I hope, Father Abbot,” Gilmartin changed the subject, “That you approve of my step in having a dummy package addressed here and having the real plans sent over by hand.”

“Is that what you are doing? I wondered. Yes. I approve entirely; it is a very good idea.”

“There is only one thing, Father Abbot,” the detective warned, “Let it be a secret between you and me.”

“Certainly,” the Abbot replied, “As a matter of fact, I have told Father Baumgartner that I deduced from his Abbot’s telegram that you were having the plans addressed elsewhere. That is what I thought, for your ruse would never have entered my head.”

“There is no harm in him thinking that,” Gilmartin answered, “So long as he knows that we are going to see that the diagrams are not stolen. Nothing would be gained by telling him any more. Besides, I have no doubt that even in a monastery where you have silence for twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four, things have a way of getting round.”

“Oh! We have our frailties like everybody else,” the Abbot smiled.

“I’m sorry, Father Abbot,” Gilmartin apologised, “If my precautions look like a reflection on your monks, but in my job we learn to distrust rather than the contrary—merely as a matter of precaution. Even among ourselves we policemen are not communicative.”

“Oh! I pray you, Mr. Gilmartin, do not apologise,” Dom Chavasse said heartily, “You are quite right. Do not think that I do not appreciate your difficulties. I do, fully.”

Gilmartin finished his pipe, and the Abbot rose.

“I should like to have a further talk with Father Baumgartner if I may,” the Irishman requested.

“Certainly,” the Abbot agreed, “I will have him sent down here at once. And by the way, you spoke of telephoning. There is an instrument in the porter’s room with extensions to Father Procurator and me. You had better

use that one for you can cut us both off while you are speaking. I will tell the porter to leave the room when you wish to use the telephone.”

“Thanks, Father Abbot.”

The detective strolled down the now empty cloister thinking over the curious case which had brought him to these strange surroundings. He was still there when the Abbot redescended the stairs.

“Father Baumgartner is not in his cell,” Dom Chavassee whispered, “He was, of course, absent from the Chapter Room this morning when I ordered the brethren not to go out of sight of the buildings alone. He is quite capable of going out again into the wood in spite of his adventure of this morning.”

“H’m! And it is growing dark!” Gilmartin reflected. “Is it not possible that he is in some other monk’s cell?”

“No,” the Abbot replied, “In that case the monk’s door would be open. I will send a laybrother round to look for him nevertheless. He is perhaps in Chapel.”

“Meanwhile,” the Irishman declared, “I am going out into the wood. I must get my torch.”

“Take a laybrother with you,” Dom Chavassee said to his disappearing back, and without waiting for his consent went towards the laybrothers’ quarters. Thus when Gilmartin came down from his room with a torch and a truncheon he found waiting for him at the foot of the stairs an enormous figure in brown holding a stout stick—a laybrother at least six feet six inches in height and built in proportion.

“Father Abbot says I’m to go wi’ ye, sir,” the brother told him, “I’m a fair hand wi’ me fists, and I’ve got this.”

He held up his cudgel.

“Good man!” Gilmartin laughed, “Come on! You’ll be able to show me the most likely paths at any rate.”

“Aye, aye, sir!”

“What!” the detective exclaimed as they ran out through the quadrangle, “An old blue-jacket?”

“That’s right, sir! Warrant Shipwright, last rating!” The laybrother replied, loping along easily, “Now carpenter on board the Lord’s Training Ship!”

“Seems to agree with you!”

“A good ship, sir!” the brother chuckled, “A seaworthy craft! This way, sir!”

He led the way down a path off the main drive, and ran on in silence for about twenty yards at a pace which Gilmartin, long out of training found difficult to maintain. Suddenly the laybrother stopped.

“There’s two ways here, sir,” he whispered, “How about it if you went one way an’ me t’other? We’re both hefty and we’ve got sticks. The paths meet t’other end.”

“A good idea!” Gilmartin agreed, “How shall I call you if I want you?”

“Just you shout ‘Cubert,’ sir! That’s my name in religion.”

“Hubert?”

“No, sir! Cubert! Cornish name, I believe, sir! How’ll I call you?”

“No use calling my surname,” Gilmartin told him, “I don’t want it shouted. Call me ‘Larry’!”

“Aye, aye, sir!”

They separated. Gilmartin noticed that the big laybrother had left him almost noiselessly and endeavoured to imitate the silence of his movements. Darkness had now fallen, and in the wood it was even blacker than on the drive. He stumbled once or twice and decided to flash his torch. Every now and then he stood still to listen for footsteps.

“The old ass!” he exclaimed irritably once when he barked his shins against a stump. “You’d think he’d have more sense.”

He continued on his way and then laughed to himself.

“Perhaps I’m the ass!” he reflected, “I should have waited. As likely as not the good monk is putting in a few extra prayers in the chapel.”

Suddenly to his left a stentorian roar rent the air.

“Larry!” he heard, and dashed in the direction of the sound, his torch gleaming.

“Larr-ee-ee-ee!” the roar came again, and there was an urgency as of despair in its long-drawn-out final note.

“Coming!” Gilmartin shouted, and ran on.

In less than half a minute, above the noise he himself was making he could hear the threshing of the bodies of several men through the underbrush; the breaking of twigs sounded like revolver-shots. A few more steps and the detective heard language more often associated with the lower deck than with the monastery, and the panting of struggling men. He tried to focus his light on the threshing mass, but it swayed and swerved in an indistinguishable medley from side to side.

“Come on, sir!” the laybrother’s voice rang out, “Ah! Would you? Come on! I—ve got the b— —the hounds! Yah! A-h-h!”

Gilmartin dashed in, his truncheon raised. The laybrother now seemed to be on the ground.

Crash!

A heavy stick, wielded with a sure hand, had thrown the electric torch into the undergrowth, where it lay throwing up a useless ray into the trees.

"Now!" the detective thought, wincing from the pain in his wrist, "I won't know whom I'm hitting!"

Nevertheless he charged forward.

"Where's Father Baumgartner?" he shouted.

"Holding him, sir," a muffled voice came, "They're pullin' him awa-a-ay! Ah! My leg's broke! Get up, ye devils! Get up!"

Gilmartin was now striking right and left, reckless whether he hit friend or foe.

Crunch!

He saw a brilliant light before his eyes, blinding him—then all was darkness.

He woke to see a ray of light shining up into the bare branches of the tree above him. Somebody was slapping his hands.

"What the hell!" he exclaimed in bewilderment, and then groaned as he moved his head.

"Exactly, sir!" came from the form beside him.

"What happened?" Gilmartin asked.

"They knocked you out, sir, and pulled the Father away. I got half his scapular left in my hands, that's all!"

"Are you all right, Brother Cubert?"

"In a manner o' speaking, sir! My leg's broke!"

"Good Lord!"

Gilmartin stumbled to his feet, but his head was spinning. He managed, however, to reach his torch which was still burning, and directed the ray on the laybrother. His habit was torn and muddy, and the poor fellow's leg lay limply bent over. He was perspiring with agony.

"Good Heavens, man!" the detective exclaimed, looking at a trail in the muddy path, "You hauled yourself from over there! What for? Good God! To help me?"

"'Sall right, sir! Thought they'd killed you!"

"What's all this about?"

Gilmartin turned the torch in the direction of the voice. Its rays crossed those of another, and the detective distinguished the helmeted figures with the badge of the Hants County Police.

“Why, blast your eyes!” he shouted, still under the influence of the laybrother’s act of abnegation which made him want to relieve his feelings by some violence or other, “Why the hell didn’t you come ten — —”

“Whoa! Belay there, sir!” the man on the ground called feebly, “They couldn’t help—o-o-h!”

“Come on!” Gilmartin said more calmly but peremptorily to the constables, “I am a Chief Inspector of Metropolitan Police. Don’t stand there like stuck pigs. We must see about getting the brother up to the Abbey; his leg is broken.”

He turned the light on Brother Cubert. A constable swept the surrounding path with another torch.

“Oh! Lord!” Brother Cubert exclaimed, “I was holding the wrong man!”

Then he fainted.

Gilmartin stooped and picked up the torn scapular. It was the brown garment of a laybrother.

VIII. The Guestmaster Returns

THEN DOM BRUNO CHAVASSE stepped into the circle of light and knelt down beside the unconscious laybrother.

“You were so long,” he said apologetically to Gilmartin as he ripped away Brother Cubert’s underclothes, “That I was afraid something like this had happened. I had to come! Ah! A compound fracture!”

The Abbot turned to one of the policemen.

“Run up to the Abbey,” he directed crisply—every inch “the colonel,” “Ask for the Sub-prior and the Brother Infirmarian. Bring them here with a stretcher.”

“At the double!” Gilmartin added.

Dom Chavasse rose to his feet and took the torn scapular from Gilmartin. It was the back half of the garment, and the Abbot at once looked at the inside under the hood. The constable busied himself with first-aid to the prostrate Brother Cubert.

“Look!” said Dom Chavasse, pointing to a piece of tape sewn at the back of the scapular neck, “It is Brother Adrian’s scapular!”

"Brother Adrian wasn't wearin' it, Father Abbot!"

They turned towards the laybrother who had regained consciousness.

"Who *was*, then?" Gilmartin asked.

"'E was a Boche! That's why I thought it was Father Baumgartner! 'E spoke Boche. But Lordy! their 'eads must be sore! You got one of 'em a lovely clip, sir!"

The gallant fellow's chuckle was of pure amusement.

"It would 'a' been a lovely mill if they'd 'a' fought fair!" he mumbled, and again slid into unconsciousness.

The Abbot's eyes met those of the detective in the feeble torchlight. They smiled at each other through a mist. The constable blew his nose violently and resumed his ministrations. Voices and the light of a powerful lantern announced the stretcher-party.

It was much later in the evening when a visiting surgeon with the help of the Sub-prior, a qualified medical man, had made Brother Cubert sufficiently comfortable to allow of his answering the questions which Gilmartin, himself still very shaky, wished to put to him. The detective meanwhile had been very busy in the porter's room spreading a net round the district, though he had little hope of its efficacy.

Dom Chavasse, who had been more distressed than even the wounded man himself, was present in the sickroom during the interrogatory. The laybrother was pale under his healthy tan, but he was as cheerful as ever. The Abbot, who always preferred even a cheerful sinner to a moping saint, smiled affectionately at him as he sat down beside the bed where a bulky cage protected the injured leg.

"I never thought to see you in a sick bed, Brother Cubert," he said.

"Ah! Father Abbot," the laybrother replied, "Life's a funny thing! The strongest man I ever knowed was killed by the littlest dart you ever see blowed at him from a thing called a sumpitan. I'm a lucky man to be only in the sick bay."

"Do you think," Gilmartin asked him, "You have the strength to tell us exactly what happened after you and I separated in the wood?"

"Strength? O' course I have!" Brother Cubert declared, "Only I'll want a sip o' that water now an' then. That chloryform leaves a funny taste."

The Abbot handed him a glass which stood on the table, and when the laybrother had sipped a few drops held it in readiness for use again.

"When I left you, sir," the brother began, "I walked as quietly as I knew how as far as that spot where you came up. There I thought I heard a voice,

and I stopped, but it had stopped too, and I thought I had made a mistake. Then there was a rustlin' in the bushes, and I called out kind o' softly-like: "Is that you, Father Baumgartner?" Somebody answered 'Yah!' and then it seemed as if someone else had clapped a hand over his mouth. There was someone breathin' hard and a noise like as if someone was tryin' to get loose from someone else. I didn't say a word, but sort o' closed in in the direction of the sounds. All of a sudden someone shines a light in my face, and I couldn't see a thing. 'Is that you, Father Baumgartner?' I says again. The one as was shinin' the light says something in a foreign language—I'm nearly sure it was Boche because I heard a word as sounded like '*ferfluckt*'—and you'll know better'n me, Father Abbot and you, sir, but I believe that word means—axin' your pardons—somethin' like 'Damn!'"

"Near enough," Gilmartin smiled.

"I thought so," Brother Cubert continued, "Then to one side I heerd what I thought was Father Baumgartner's voice—sort o' muffled—and I lunges out and grabs. I catches 'old of a scapular, but somebody else was doin' some grabbin' too. The light went out an' afore I knew some'un caught my scapular behind. That made me bite my tongue, I can tell you, sir, an' it nearly choked me too. A scapular's a tricky thing to play with. I landed out backwards with the stick I had and some'un yowled an' let go. It was then I shouted out to you, sir, like you told me and wi' that they were all on top o' me."

"How many were there all told, do you think?" Gilmartin asked.

"I couldn't rightly say, sir," the laybrother replied, "It felt like half a dozen, but thinkin' it over I should think there was four—countin' the one I was holdin'. I think I called again, sir, an'—an'—I'm afraid, Father Abbot, I called them rascals some names you wouldn't like to hear out o' me mouth."

"I shouldn't like to think," the Abbot replied with an indulgent smile, "What names your Abbot might let out in the same circumstances."

"Army an' Navy!" the other chuckled with a wink at the detective, "Anyhow, I stopped Mr. Gilmartin when *he* started, an' he was beginnin' well. But I must get back to my tale. When I saw Mr. Gilmartin's light I didn't know if it was him or another of the—the what-you-may-call-'ems—an' I fought harder, but one o' them as I'd knocked down caught hold o' me leg an' threw me. But I didn't let go o' that scapular, though it seemed as if some'un was pullin' at the other end of it. I wonder I didn't choke him—whoever he was! I fell crooked an' just as you sailed in, Mr. Gilmartin, somebody came down on me an' my leg snapped like a twig. Phew!"

He paused and the Abbot gave him another sip of the water.

"You hit somebody an awful clip with that truncheon o' yours, sir," Brother Cubert went on, "For there was a groan. I couldn't see very well what happened then because the only light there was then was your torch on the ground and besides I was feelin' kind o' faint. One of the blokes kep' sittin' on me an' you all moved away a bit. Next thing I knew they was all runnin' away, draggin' somebody wi' them sort o' protesting. All I know is that a scapular—or part o' one—was left in my hands, and Mr. Gilmartin was lyin' moanin' on the ground."

"Yes," the detective turned to the Abbot, "And in spite of his broken leg he crawled over to help."

"Just what I would expect from Brother Cubert," Dom Chavasse replied, "And of course that is the one part of the story he would not mention. Charity is not puffed up."

"Humph!" the big laybrother muttered whimsically, "Between you, beggin' your pardons, you're doin' your bestses to puff *me* up. Why, Father Abbot, an old sailor who's got anythin' in him does his level best to help the man as fights on his side as long as he's got a breath in him. An' I'm afraid I wasn't much use."

"Look at the odds against you!" Gilmartin retorted.

"Ah! Time was, sir, when six to one was about my—but I mustn't glory in such things."

The Abbot laughed.

"I suppose," he remarked, "That there is no doubt that they have taken Father Baumgartner away with them?"

"They hauled some'un away, Father Abbot," Brother Cubert replied, "Dragged 'im they did."

"That might be a man that one of you had disabled," Dom Chavasse surmised.

"It might be," the laybrother agreed doubtfully.

"In any case," Gilmartin added, "Father Baumgartner has not turned up."

"It's funny!" Brother Cubert mused, "I could 'a' sworn it was Father Baumgartner's scapular I had a holt of. The voice was like his."

"To an Englishman," Gilmartin replied to this, "All these deep Teutonic voices are alike, and there is very little doubt that we have to do with a gang of Germans or German-Swiss."

"Teutonic? That's Boche, isn't it?" the laybrother asked.

The detective nodded.

"Then at least two of them was Boches," the sick man declared, "They was talkin' Boche—or somethin' like it—all the time o' the rough an' tumble, at least up to when you came along, sir."

"Yes," Gilmartin assented, "I have no doubt they were. It seems fairly evident, Father Abbot, that whatever plot this may be, it was hatched at Einsiedeln. They are all Teutons."

"No, sir," the man in bed contradicted respectfully, "I don't know, o' course, what's at the back of all this, my business bein' only to obey Father Abbot's orders as long as I'm aboard this cra— I mean as long as I'm here, but one o' them thugs to-night was English. Anyway he was talkin' English, because when they was haulin' the—whoever he was—away I heerd 'im sort o' whispurin': 'Take his feet! Take his feet!'"

There was a knock at the door and the old porter laybrother came in.

"A policeman wishes to see Mr. Gilmartin," he announced with a bow in the Abbot's direction and went out.

Gilmartin rose.

"That must be one of those I ordered to search the wood and follow the tracks with his torchlight," he said, "I'd better see what he has to say."

"I shall await you here, Mr. Gilmartin," the Abbot told him.

Gilmartin found a police sergeant in the reception room.

"We have done what we could, sir," that worthy reported, "The monks lent us a couple o' them petrol lamps and we searched the wood. We found that the tracks led out to the fence on the Pirley road, and we covered up some clear ones with boards. There was a hole in the fence and tracks of a car outside. On the inside of the fence we found these two articles."

He handed the detective a piece of brown material which Gilmartin recognised as the other half of the torn scapular, and a blood-stained and soiled handkerchief. The Irishman looked closely at this latter.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "This may be useful! It has a laundry mark! Good work!"

"The Inspector asked me to tell you, sir," the sergeant went on unemotionally, "That with the Abbot's permission he will have a man patrolling the grounds until further orders."

"That's all right as far as it goes," Gilmartin said, "Tell him he may take the Abbot's permission for granted. But it looks like a case of the stable door. By the way, how did those two fellows come to turn up as they did?"

"One was going off duty, sir," the sergeant replied, "The other was on his beat on the Farnshot road. They had just met when they heard the

shouting.”

“I see!” Gilmartin nodded, “Pity they didn’t get there a couple of minutes sooner. We might have bagged somebody then.”

“They report, sir, that they ran as fast they could,” the sergeant averred in the tone of a man the honour of whose corps has been impugned, “And the shouting having stopped when they were half-way there it took them some time to locate you.”

“Oh! It can’t be helped now,” Gilmartin dismissed the subject, “But I had arranged with your superintendent for a closer watch to be kept on these grounds. However, I don’t suppose it’s your fault or theirs that it wasn’t.”

“Will there be anything else, sir?” the policeman asked.

“No, except that you’d better get your fellows to go over the ground carefully again as soon as it is daylight. Then somebody should make casts of those tracks you covered. I will call at the station to-morrow.”

“Very good, sir. Good night, sir.”

Gilmartin smiled as he heard the old German porter solemnly announce to the sergeant on his way out that the Father Cellarer had given orders that refreshments be given to him and his men in the kitchen. The Irishman pretended not to have noticed the policeman’s gesture of anticipatory pleasure, and went slowly up the stairs towards the sickroom. He found the Abbot coming out of it, closing the door softly behind him.

“He has fallen asleep,” Dom Chavasse whispered, “Will you come up to my cell? I have something to tell you. But what is that?”

He pointed to the objects Gilmartin was carrying.

The detective told him, and explained on the way to the Abbot’s room the significance of the laundry mark on the handkerchief.

“M’yes!” the monk replied shrewdly, “But if the laundry is German or Swiss it won’t be very easy to get hold of it.”

“True!” Gilmartin admitted, “But I’m banking on its being English. Remember Brother Cubert says that one of them is English.”

“Yes,” Dom Chavasse replied as he opened his door, “Come in. After you left Brother Cubert added something to what he told you. It may mean much or nothing.”

“Yes?”

“He told me that when he lay on the ground he was looking towards where you were. You were then between him and the ray of light which your lamp threw up. I understand that it was lying on the ground.”

“Yes, yes!”

"He says that he saw the silhouette of yourself and of the man who hit you and he believes—in fact I gather that he is sure that that man was clean-shaven and that he was in a monastic habit, but that the white of a Roman—that is to say a clerical collar showed at the neck."

"Hum!" Gilmartin reflected, "That's not much to go on."

The Abbot said nothing.

"You seem to think it important," the detective went on, observing the expression of the monk's face, "Oh! I see!"

Dom Chavasse remained silent.

"Why didn't Brother Cubert mention this to me?" Gilmartin asked, "And then why did he tell it afterwards to you?"

"Because, Mr. Gilmartin, I am afraid he has the same suspicion which you now have yourself."

"Oh! But there's nothing conclusive in what he saw," the detective demurred. "Any sort of collar—a civilian one—would give the appearance of a Roman collar in that light and in those associations, so that —"

A knock at the door interrupted. Again the red-headed prior—judging by his expression—was the bearer of bad news.

"Father Massey has come back, Father Abbot," he reported, "He is cut and bleeding about the head and says that he was knocked down by a motor-car driving without lights on the Pirley road."

The Abbot and the detective exchanged looks.

IX. A Reappearance

GILMARTIN paid a visit to the guestmaster's cell before Compline. He found his fellow-countryman in bed with a bandage on his head and a compress over one eye, but still fairly cheerful.

"You look as if you'd been having a night out, Father Massey," the detective laughed.

"Yes," the other replied, "A stormy night too at that."

"How on earth did it happen?" Gilmartin asked, his voice full of solicitude.

"I was walking back from the college," Father Massey told him, "About two miles from here, when a car—or it might have been a small van—ran me down."

"It was without lights, I hear," the detective said.

“Yes,” the monk replied, “That is to say, it had lights—bright ones too—until it came within ten or fifteen yards from me. Then they went out and the car seemed to skid right across towards me, and before I had time to jump out of the way one of the mudguards hit me and I fell. I don’t know how long I lay there.”

“Were you walking on the road, then? Not on the footpath?”

“There isn’t any footpath there,” the guestmaster replied, “It is just a country road.”

“How on earth did you get your head bashed in?” Gilmartin asked.

“I think I was knocked against a wall. There is a little bit of wall at that spot with a letter-box built into it. You know the sort of thing?”

The detective nodded.

“You weren’t in monastic habit, were you?”

“No. I was in ordinary clerical dress. Why?”

“Oh, nothing! Only I noticed that you had your habit on at teatime.”

“Yes, but I had on my other clothes underneath. You see, I always change before Vespers on the afternoons I have to go out, but I must go to choir in habit and cowl, so I put them on over the others.”

“I see.”

“Look at the state of my clothes,” Father Massey said, pointing to a heap of garments on the floor, “And it’s the only suit I’ve got.”

Gilmartin lifted the trousers and saw that one leg was plastered with what was undoubtedly road mud. A large rent at hip level might indeed have been caused by the edge of a mudguard. The coat was equally soiled on the left side—corresponding to the left side of the trousers, and the left sleeve was also torn. The detective replaced the clothes over the back of the chair.

“You had a nasty spill by the look of things,” he remarked, “Were you picked up afterwards, or what?”

“No. I must have lain there for some time unconscious,” the priest told him, “I awoke to find myself lying in the mud. Then I limped home—very slowly because my left leg hurt abominably. It is all black and blue.”

“What time was it approximately when this happened?”

“You can see for yourself.” Father Massey replied and pointed to his table. “There’s my watch! It must have stopped when I came down with such a crash.”

The glass face of the watch was broken and the position of the hands indicated twenty-five minutes past five.

"You can't have been very long at the college," Gilmartin commented.

"About half an hour or a little more."

"Humph! Well, this place is more like a hospital than a monastery just now!" Gilmartin exclaimed.

"With a bit of madhouse thrown in," Father Massey added, "I hear you've been having stirring times here too while I was away. You look a bit washed out yourself."

"Yes, I've had a knock on the head too."

There was a moment's silence.

"Do you know what I'm wondering?" The Guestmaster said suddenly, "I wonder if I wasn't knocked down by the car—or van—that carried the same people who attacked Brother Cubert and you!"

"I shouldn't be surprised," Gilmartin murmured, "It would be about that time! Yes! Very likely!"

"Then perhaps they knocked me down of set purpose!"

"What on earth for?"

To this Father Massey made no reply and it seemed to Gilmartin as if the question embarrassed him. The detective did not press it and after a mumbled hope that the monk would soon recover he left the cell. He was policeman enough to peer back into the room through the little hole in the door when he reached the corridor. The guestmaster was smiling but the smile was quickly followed by a frown, and Gilmartin, allowing the cover to fall back over the spy-hole, went down into the cloister, his own brow deeply furrowed.

The monks were walking up and down the corridor in two rows abreast—one row walking backwards facing the other. The Abbot who was in the middle of his community left them and joined the Irishman. Only his eyes asked a question, but Gilmartin understood.

"The story is a probable one," he said, "Possibly even a true one."

"What do you advise, Mr. Gilmartin?" Dom Chavasse asked anxiously.

"Nothing, Father Abbot," Gilmartin replied, "You will be happier, I'm sure, if you believe Father Massey and if you act towards him as though you never had any suspicions."

"And you? Do you believe him?" the Abbot pressed.

The Irishman laughed.

"That's a nasty question to ask a detective," he said, "We are suspicious by nature or by training and often don't know ourselves whether to believe a story or not. As a matter of fact, however, Father Abbot, I think you will be

quite safe in believing that Father Massey was knocked down by a motor van.”

The Abbot looked relieved for a moment and then frowned.

“M’yes,” he murmured, “But that’s not the whole question.”

“Don’t probe any deeper, Father Abbot,” Gilmartin advised, “We used to say as youngsters: ask no questions and you’ll be told no lies. It’s very good advice to follow when you’ve got a detective round doing all the questioning.”

“How am I to apply that?” the Abbot asked. “To you or to Father Massey?”

“Oh! Ask me what you like!” the detective laughed, “If I can’t tell you the truth for any reason, at any rate I’ll tell no lies. I reserve the right to be guilty of *suppressio veri*, when it seems necessary.”

“But not of *suggestio falsi*, I hope.” Dom Chavassee added.

“N-no! I don’t think that would be justifiable in the circumstances, but I can imagine the possibility of my not correcting a false inference you may make from the fact of my silence.”

“I see,” the Abbot replied, “But with regard to Father Massey? Don’t you think I might be justified in questioning him?”

“From your point of view, Father Abbot,” Gilmartin conceded, “You would be justified in doing exactly as you please, but I am looking at it from another point of view, Father Massey’s as a matter of fact, as well as from mine. He has undoubtedly something on his mind, and equally without doubt—in my opinion, that is—he will eventually confide in you. I am banking on that. Things look that way to me.”

“I wish I knew what you are driving at, Mr. Gilmartin.” Dom Chavassee exclaimed in perplexity.

“I hardly know myself,” Gilmartin confessed whimsically, “But I think I see a light as a result of this evening’s doings. As I say, I think Father Massey will come to you soon. He probably does not feel able to do so just yet. When he does, I will ask you to take no action until we have talked things over. I request that in the interest of justice. You naturally want to find your missing laybrothers, but if I am not mistaken, I shall want to find a great deal more than that, and precipitate action might hinder me and not help you.”

“I understand that, Mr. Gilmartin,” the Abbot, who seemed to the detective already much older than on the previous day, answered, “I put myself entirely in your hands, for I am afraid that the only help I can give you is through prayer. You will have that, not only mine but those of the

community. To-morrow morning before Mass we will sing the *Veni Creator* to ask for light and guidance in this matter.”

The Irishman, himself a firm believer in the efficacy of prayer, was strangely affected by this statement. He coughed before saying:

“I am sorry that I shall not be here for it. I have a very busy day before me.”

“Oh! You are leaving us?”

“For the present, Father Abbot. I am going to make certain arrangements with the local police, though I don’t think you will be worried any more for the present at any rate. Then I must go and visit the scene of Father Massey’s accident. After that I shall go up to Town. There is a big machinery to be set in movement in order to find your missing brethren.”

“You do not think that the people who were in the wood were my laybrothers?” the Abbot asked anxiously.

“Certainly not,” Gilmartin affirmed, “They are criminals who are wearing the brother’s habits in order to move about in the neighbourhood of the Abbey without exciting suspicion locally.”

“Then what can they have done with my laybrothers?” the old man sighed.

“That is another matter,” the detective evaded, “I’m afraid it’s a serious matter too. By the way, do you know if there are any photographs of the laybrothers or of Father Baumgartner in existence?”

“Of Father Baumgartner, I do not know,” the Abbot replied, “As for the laybrothers, I can have their effects searched. They may have photos of their pre-monastery days. They certainly have had none taken since their entry here.”

“Perhaps their people may have some if you don’t find any,” Gilmartin suggested.

“That is an idea!” Dom Chavasse exclaimed, “I shall write and ask.”

“Perhaps you’d better leave that to me, Father Abbot,” the Irishman advanced, “If you give me the addresses I can find a way of getting the photos without arousing any suspicion. As to Father Baumgartner’s, if you would kindly write to the Abbot of Einsiedeln about it I should be obliged. A man of the Father’s eminence in the scientific world is sure to have been photographed.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” the Abbot demurred, “He never wanted any publicity. However, I shall write at once. The laybrothers’ home addresses I shall have left in your room to-night.”

“Thanks,” the detective said, “And—oh! by the way, the registered package which was delivered at the lodge and never reached you was sent from Paris and was addressed to you personally. I saw the post-office employee who dealt with it locally and she is under the impression that it bore the label of a French publishing house.”

“Oh! Then that is all right!” the Abbot declared, “They were merely proofs of my book on the Syro-Maronite liturgy. I can have duplicates sent. I will leave you now, Mr. Gilmartin, and write to the Abbot of Einsiedeln. My letter will catch the early collection to-morrow.”

“Whilst you are writing, Father Abbot,” Gilmartin asked, “Will you ask him to wire the name of the monk who is bringing over the plans, and the exact time of his arrival. We must make arrangements for his safety, you see.”

“Certainly, Mr. Gilmartin.”

The Abbot had scarcely finished his letter when the bell for Compline sounded. Gilmartin made his way ahead of the monks to the chapel. During the service the detective listened with closed eyes to the singing of the monks in whose voices was no indication that the habitual calm of their lives had been in any way disturbed. The Abbot’s silvery tenor could be heard as clear and steady as that of the youngest of his novices. Suddenly the Irishman opened his eyes. Dom Chavasse had stopped suddenly in the middle of the doxology at the end of the hundred and thirty-third^[1] psalm:

“Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sanc —”

[\[1\]](#) Ps. 134, R.V. & A.V.

Gilmartin peered through the semi-darkness and it seemed as if the Abbot were stooping in conversation with somebody. The singing of the other monks continued without a break. What was happening? Dom Chavasse was leaving his place and hurrying out through the door at the rear of the sanctuary. A figure was now approaching the detective himself. It was the lodgekeeper, Brother Gregoire.

“Father Abbot asks you to come to the reception room,” the laybrother whispered.

Gilmartin rose and without hesitation crossed between the choir stalls. The monks were now singing:

*“Te lucis ante terminum,
Rerum Creator, poscimus,
Ut pro tua dementia
Sis praesul et custodia.”*

He overtook the Abbot at the door of the reception room. Two policemen were standing there, an inspector and a sergeant. Behind them in the parlour itself Gilmartin could see another policeman.

“What is it?” the Irishman asked.

“Sorry to trouble you, Father Abbot,” the Inspector addressed the Abbot and then turned to Gilmartin, “You are Chief Inspector Gilmartin of New Scotland Yard, sir?”

“Yes, yes,” the detective replied impatiently, “What’s wrong?”

“I have to report,” the man in uniform said, “That at Frimberley, five miles from here, Constable Bolton when cycling home came into collision with the body of a man in the middle of the road outside the village. He found that the man was dressed in monk’s clothes, but that he was alive for he had groaned when the wheel hit him. The constable drew him to one side of the road and ’phoned to the Station. Having had a memo this morning from the superintendent about matters in the Abbey I motored out to the spot myself.”

Gilmartin’s foot was drumming on the floor in impatience at the prolixity of the country inspector, but he said nothing lest by speaking he prolong the report still more.

“We placed the man in my car,” the inspector went on, “and drove back to the station where we administered first-aid and sent for a doctor. I also ’phoned to the superintendent who ordered me to bring the man here if the doctor would allow, and report to Chief Inspector Gilmartin.”

“Right? Where is he? Alive?”

“Yes, sir, only he is still dazed. He is in here.”

He stood aside and allowed the Abbot and the detective to pass into the reception room. A policeman who was on one knee before a couch rose to his feet, a wet handkerchief in his hand, and they saw the figure whose heavy breathing had reached them as soon as they had entered the room.

“*Mon Dieu!*” the Abbot exclaimed, “What have they done to you, my poor Father Baumgartner?”

X. Corroborative Evidence

WHILE GILMARTIN conferred in whispered tones with the police inspector, who seemed, now that he had reported, to stand in considerable awe of him, the injured monk was carried up to bed. The Sub-prior in his capacity of medical attendant took charge of him. The Irishman having bidden the uniformed man “good night” went up to his room. He was still sitting on his bed plunged in thought when the Abbot—a very much troubled man—came in softly.

“This is awful!” he said sadly, “A monastery to be the scene of such violence!”

“Were you able to get anything out of him?” Gilmartin asked.

“No, Father Sub-prior will allow no questioning,” Dom Chavasse replied, “He says that Father Baumgartner has received a blow on the head from some heavy object, but that he will probably suffer no evil effects if he is allowed quiet now.”

“Which means that I shall not be able to see him before I leave tomorrow!” Gilmartin reflected.

“Yes,” the Abbot confirmed, “But I don’t think he could tell you much. I understood him to say before Father Sub-prior stopped all talk that he remembers nothing from the moment he was attacked in the wood until he found himself in the police station. He spoke very indistinctly, and what with his injuries and his accent I could understand nothing more. Then Father Sub-prior forbade any questioning.”

“Three injured men—four if you count me—in a monastery—in a cloister!” Gilmartin mused aloud, “What a mess!”

“Terrible!” the Abbot echoed dolefully.

Gilmartin straightened up.

“Look here, Father Abbot,” he said, “I’ve got to go up to Town tomorrow, but can I count on you to see that from now onwards Father Baumgartner is so accompanied by at least two monks that no one from outside can come near him. I should even like if possible to have a guard on his door while he is in bed. And if it is not against rules or anything like that, let them carry some arm. Here!”

He rose and put his hand into the pocket of a coat which hung on the back of a chair.

“Here’s my truncheon,” he went on, “I’ll get the local police to lend you another. And let there be no mistake about it! They must be used if the necessity arises.”

“Yes, I think it would be justified,” the old man consented. “I will take the precautions you suggest.”

"Justified!" Gilmartin exclaimed, "I should just think so. Christ said: 'To him that striketh thee on one cheek, offer also the other,' but, Father Abbot, He never said what to do after that. And, by Jove, it's a long way past that stage."

The Abbot smiled through his worried frown.

"The truncheons will be used, Mr. Gilmartin, if necessary," he said, "But I sincerely hope the necessity will not arise."

"So do I," the detective replied, "And now, another thing! I have told that inspector to tell his people at Farnshot that when that registered dummy package arrives it is to be re-registered and sent to me at Scotland Yard—not given to you. Do you approve?"

"Anything you like, Mr. Gilmartin," Dom Chavasse agreed, "What is your object, though?"

"Simply," Gilmartin explained, "That you may let it be known where the package is."

"Known to whom?"

"To anyone you like, the more widely the better," the detective replied, "So that your monks may no longer be molested in attempts to get possession of the plans."

"How am I to explain to Father Baumgartner?" the Abbot asked, "He has been worried enough and—"

"He won't bother about plans for a few days at any rate," Gilmartin interrupted, "If he does, tell him they are being kept in a safe place until he gets better. That will be no lie, for as soon as the Einsiedeln monk arrives they'll be put into one of the safest safes in London. If necessary the interview with Marconi's people can be put off for a few days. I can explain to them personally."

"Very well, Mr. Gilmartin. Now I must say good night!"

"Good night, Father Abbot! And don't worry any more! I have a feeling that we are going to pull this thing off all right. I shall probably see you again in a couple of days."

In the morning Gilmartin was up betimes and after an early breakfast which the deputy guestmaster—a little Frenchman whose English was very broken—provided for him, he paid a visit to Father Massey who had been dispensed from attendance at the early Offices.

"How are we this morning?" he asked.

"Not so bad," the Irish monk replied, "A bit stiff. I slept soundly from after you left until the bell for Matins. I woke automatically then, from habit

I suppose.”

“Then you haven’t heard what happened after Compline?” the detective said, looking hard at him.

“No. What is it?”

“Father Baumgartner has turned up again.”

“What!”

In the exclamation, which came like a pistol-shot, was surprise, incredulity and—Gilmartin thought—chagrined disappointment. It seemed then that Father Massey himself suddenly realised the incongruity of the outburst for he lay back again and asked calmly:

“What on earth happened? Did they let him go?”

“Did who let him go?” the detective shot back.

“Whoever hauled him away,” the monk replied, “The people you had the fight with in the wood.”

Gilmartin then told without comment the story as the police inspector had told it to him the night before.

“Strange!” the guestmaster said musingly.

“Why?”

“Why?” was the typical Irish answer, “Why did they take him and then drop him?”

“Oh! They may have thought that he was dying and didn’t want to have a corpse on their hands.”

“I wonder,” said Father Massey, “If he saw any of their faces.”

“I should hardly think so,” Gilmartin replied, “It was too dark. However, I haven’t been able to question him. I’m leaving that to Father Abbot when the Sub-Prior thinks it safe. I’m off to Town.”

Gilmartin smiled at his fellow-countryman’s reply.

“What? Giving it up? Beaten?”

“Oh! Hardly that! Though I’ve been beaten before now,” he said.

“I see,” his shrewd compatriot nodded, “That means you’ve still got your nose to the trail. Well, I’m not very badly disabled and shall get up to-day. And let me tell you, Gilmartin, I’m keeping my eyes open from now on. Maybe I’ll solve the great mystery before you do.”

“I shouldn’t be at all surprised,” Gilmartin replied, lapsing as he nearly always did when speaking to another Irishman into the intonation of his youth.

The monk looked sharply at him, a fact which did not escape Gilmartin's watchful eye.

"And if you do," the detective added, "Just go hotfoot to your Abbot and confess."

"Confess?"

"Well, it's as good a word as any. And now, good-bye, Father Massey. I must get a move on. I hope to meet you again very soon."

As he left the room the monk stared after him and then smiled to himself. Gilmartin was grinning as he strode along the corridor. There was nobody in the cloisters as he passed through them and the faint drone of the recitative of the psalms came along the underground passage from the chapel.

A garage near the outer gates of the Abbey supplied him with a car in which to the bewilderment of the driver he drove out to a post box on the Pirley road. He studied the ground at the place described by the guestmaster and then began to examine the wall into which the red letter-box had been built. The chauffeur who had left his seat and was following his movements also stared at the wall.

"I dunno what you're after, sir," the man said suddenly, "But if it's where somebody fell against the wall, there you are!"

He pointed to a corner stone at his end of the masonry. Gilmartin followed his finger.

"Good man!" he exclaimed, "That's exactly what I was looking for. I was wondering if I'd find it."

He pulled from the stonework a tiny piece of hair and scalp. Drops of congealed blood had made them adhere tightly.

"You've got sharp eyes," Gilmartin said to the chauffeur.

"Seems to me," the latter volunteered, "As if somebody 'ad been knocked over there by a car. Look at them tracks!"

"By Jove! You're right!" the detective nodded, as he saw a track which, running along the grass edge as it did, had not been obliterated by passing traffic, "Yes! Curiously enough, son, you're right! Somebody *was* knocked over by a car."

"Driver must 'a' been drunk," the man muttered, measuring with an expert eye the sweep of the curved rut.

"Don't you believe it, lad!" Gilmartin exclaimed, tapping the astonished chauffeur on the middle button, "He was sober—cold sober!"

He got back into the car and directed the man to drive him to Farnshot police station. There he was closeted with the inspector in charge for several minutes. The arrangements they made between them for isolating the monastery in general and Father Baumgartner in particular from further contact with the mysterious gang were as complete as they could be made and the local inspector whistled as he realised the inferences to be drawn from them. He said nothing, however, of his thoughts, contenting himself with a remark about the strain which their plans would put on his resources.

"It won't be for long," Gilmartin reassured him. "And I'll see you get the credit for good work."

"We'll do our best," the man in uniform promised.

"And about that registered package," the Irishman continued, "When it comes, re-address it to me and re-register it, and not a word about it to anybody for— —"

"What, not to the Abbot up there? Nor to the— —"

"Wait a minute!" Gilmartin checked him, "Twenty-four hours after you have sent it to me—not a minute sooner—go and tell the Abbot and anybody else up there at the Abbey you like that you have just dispatched it. Then for another twenty-four hours keep closer watch than ever. You will hear from me in the meantime."

"I see," the inspector nodded sagely, "You think they may make another attempt to get the monk—to get the idea from him personally before you have time to do anything with the plans. Wouldn't it have been better to have given it out that he was so seriously injured that he could do nothing?"

"I don't know that that would stop them," the detective reflected, "And in any case I want this business put through with as little publicity as possible. The Abbot—poor man—is worried enough without that."

"He's a nice old gentleman," the inspector declared, "I'm not a Papist, but I have a respect for those monks, though they do pray a lot, I will say. I don't know how they get any work done at all. And yet I'm told they write books and all that sort of thing."

"Oh!" Gilmartin smiled, "Their time is mapped out for them."

"They're quite popular round here," the inspector continued, "During the war they kept a hospital going in that big red brick house on the other side of their grounds."

"I didn't know that house was their property," the detective exclaimed, "Who lives there now?"

"Nobody. General Urquhart used to rent it from the monks, but he's gone to Colchester and I hear that it's been let to a foreign count or somebody like

that—a Hungarian I've been told."

"H'm! That's interesting!" Gilmartin mused.

"Do you think—" the inspector began excitedly, but the Irishman interrupted.

"I don't think anything—yet," he said, "But as I haven't time to go into it, would you find out from the Abbot what he knows about his tenant! Ask him to write to me about him."

The inspector made a note and Gilmartin took his leave.

XI. The Vanished Lodger

ON leaving the police station Gilmartin was just able to catch a train to London. On arrival there he lunched hurriedly at Waterloo for he knew that Assistant Commissioner Roche, warned of his coming, would await him in his office at New Scotland Yard. He found his little Chief enjoying an after-luncheon cigar in the arm-chair usually reserved for visitors, and whilst he filled and lighted his own pipe the Irishman reported all the facts and happenings of the preceding days and even communicated his suspicions. Arrangements were rapidly made for photographing and circulating copies of the laundry marks on the handkerchief found in the Abbey wood. The Assistant Commissioner himself arranged by telephone with the police forces concerned for the tactful extraction of photographs from the relatives of the missing English laybrothers, while Gilmartin as the better linguist spoke to his friends of the Paris Sûreté asking for similar action with regard to the Frenchmen.

"What are you going to do with those plans when they are brought over?" the Assistant Commissioner asked when this had been done.

"They are going to lie in the big safe upstairs until the whole business is cleared up," Gilmartin replied.

"H'm! That would of course be best, but I'm not sure that we have any right to do that."

"I shouldn't worry about that," the Irishman declared, "I am certain that Abbot Chavasse will be only too pleased to let them lie."

"Then that's all right," Roche approved, "And now, I've something to tell you."

Gilmartin sat back to listen.

"You remember that body on Waterloo Bridge?"

The Irishman nodded.

“Your friend Peters thinks he has a clue. He’s very cheerful about putting one over on you—you of all men, his little tin god.”

Peters was a stolid detective inspector whom Gilmartin had recommended for promotion despite his superior’s objections.

“There’s more in Peters than you think, sir,” Gilmartin laughed.

“He won’t say what his clue is,” the Assistant Commissioner went on, “But he seems pretty confident.”

“I hope he makes good,” the Chief Inspector said heartily.

“M’yes! But that’s not what I wanted to talk about,” Roche resumed, “You remember how you were ready to bet that that dead man was a monk? Well, I circularised every monastery in the country except Alderborough and sent copies of the photograph, but there isn’t a Benedictine in England who can identify him. You say that your Abbot down at Alderborough doesn’t know him. The Abbot of Erdington has volunteered to send copies to the German monasteries. The French and Belgian police have been supplied with some copies for the monasteries in their countries. There has been no reply from them yet. Not time enough.”

“Don’t forget, sir,” Gilmartin replied, “That there are more sorts of monks than ordinary Benedictines. There are Carthusians, Cistercians and others, as well as Friars and other religious congregations. Then again, there are similar communities in the Church of England, I believe, though I doubt if they would wear such linen as that man had.”

“Heavens!” Roche exclaimed, “I didn’t know there were so many of them. However, we’ll circularise them all. Nothing like being thorough. Why couldn’t somebody have told me before, though?”

The Chief Inspector smiled.

“But that is all by the way,” the Assistant Commissioner resumed, “It’s a matter of routine. I’m interested in it merely to test your idea. Oh! Don’t laugh! I know you’re a clever lad and all that, Gilmartin, but—however, perhaps this will interest you more. There has been a case here in London of theft—not merely attempted theft—of plans of a wireless invention, reported here this morning.”

“Oh?”

“Yes, and a funny thing about it, in view of what you’ve told me, is that the thief—the alleged thief, I should say—is a German of sorts, who seems to have disappeared off the face of the earth.”

“What do you mean by that exactly, sir?” Gilmartin asked, “Disappeared off the face of the earth? There’s only one way of doing that.”

The Assistant Commissioner fingered a small batch of papers on his table, then took them up and looked at them.

"I'd better tell you all about it," he replied, "And then you'll see what I mean. As it happens, owing to the fact that it was the theft of wireless plans that was in question and that I was interested in this monastery case, I saw this young man personally."

Gilmartin laughed.

"I wish you were one of my men, sir," he said, "You'd hear something about the way to make a report."

The Irishman was a privileged subordinate and Roche smiled at him.

"Shut up, you ruffian," he said, "I'm not making a report to you. I'm just having a talk."

Gilmartin sat back with a gesture which seemed to indicate that he would be indulgent—this time.

"You're quite right, though," Roche went on, "I'm wasting time. Here are the facts: A young man, Gilbert Wylie by name—you'll find his address here in these papers, it's over there near Victoria Station—came here and asked to see 'somebody in authority.' Inspector Stanley saw him, and heard his story, and then reported at once to me as Superintendent Meldrum was not in the building. So I had the young man up here. It appears that he is part owner of an electrical shop or workshop or something like that in the West Central district which specialises in radio. In his spare time he reads a lot about wireless and experiments on his own. Lately—more by chance, he says, than anything else, he happened on an idea which, he thinks, is worth money. Something to do with radio-telephony. He explained it, but I don't quite get the hang of it. Something to improve and cheapen these transatlantic conversations at five pounds a minute, I believe, by eliminating land wires. Anyhow, it doesn't matter."

"Except to the young man, I suppose," Gilmartin murmured into his pipe-bowl.

"Humph!" the Assistant Commissioner grunted and went on, "This Wylie lives in lodgings, and some time about the middle of October there arrived a new resident in the boarding-house—a German with whom he got very friendly owing to a common interest in radio-telephony. It would seem that this German—his name, by the way, is Gottschalk—knew quite a lot about the subject and young Wylie was fool enough to let him know something about his idea. He didn't actually shew him the drawings, but told him that he had made them, and as Gottschalk had been in his room he must have known what were the only likely places to keep them. The last time

Wylie saw Gottschalk was on November the fourth at dinner when the man talked about having to go back to Germany soon. Then the young fellow had to travel down to Nottingham on business for his firm—to superintend their exhibit at a wireless exhibition or something like that—and only came back three days ago. When he arrived at his lodgings the landlady in answer to an idle question told him that nothing had been seen of his friend Gottschalk since the morning after the evening he had talked to him last. Curiously enough though, he states that she is nearly sure that he came back late that night—some time after midnight—for she sleeps in a room directly above the bed-sitting room he occupied. She declares that he was moving about in the room for she recognised his cough.”

“Yes, sir,” Gilmartin interposed, “But what about Wylie’s drawings?”

“I’m coming to that,” Roche went on, “Young Wylie didn’t pay much attention to the landlady’s talk and went up to his room. Looking for clean underclothing he noticed that his drawer was unlocked and the shirts and things in it disarranged. The drawings, which had been hidden between the folds of a shirt, were gone. Of course anybody might have taken them for the lock was like most of the locks on cheap furniture, you could force it with a safety pin, and Wylie didn’t for some time connect the theft with Gottschalk’s disappearance. It was only the next evening that his fiancée suggested the idea and acting on her advice he came here.”

“H’m!” Gilmartin murmured as the Assistant Commissioner paused and looked up at him, “There doesn’t seem to be much of absorbing interest in that. It is a coincidence, of course, that wireless plans are in question, but otherwise it is a very ordinary case of theft—I mean, from our point of view—because whether it is wireless plans or brass buttons doesn’t matter, and the obvious thing to do is to get a description of the German and look for him in the ordinary way, and I presume that all this is being done. It is only a matter of time before he is caught.”

“If he hasn’t slipped off to the Continent,” Roche added.

“Then there’s sure to be a record of him at the passport barrier.”

“Quite! And if his name isn’t really Gottschalk?”

“What about the Aliens Restrictions Acts?” Gilmartin countered.

“What about your grandmother?” the Assistant Commissioner retorted with more force than elegance, “You know as well as I do that anyone could drive a ten ton lorry through every paragraph of them with the greatest of ease.”

“M’m!”

"Take this Gottschalk!" Roche went on, "Suppose he came to this boarding house where there was a card up in the window, took a bed-sitting room, paid in advance, gave his name to the landlady, said that he had just arrived from abroad. If the woman thought of it at all she thought that she was bound to see that he was registered only at the end of two months, and didn't worry. Suppose Gottschalk took that name on her doorstep, having come into the country under the name of Schmidt or Schneider or anything you like. She is a respectable woman, no policeman worries her, and there you are! Who's going to trace the Herr Schmidt or Schneider who passed the immigration officer weeks before?"

"True!" Gilmartin agreed, "But on leaving the country the immigration officer would see from his papers whether he had complied with the regulations or not."

"He might," Roche replied dryly, "But if the man had really been here less than two months, what then? It's not so easy as all that to trace the stranger within our gates! It's certainly a free country, this England of ours! Why, we've even got policemen who are not English at all."

"Quite!" Gilmartin laughed, "Foreigners like you and me!"

"But," he went on, "I presume, sir, that you haven't told me all this for nothing."

"No, not quite," the Assistant Commissioner replied, "I have an idea somewhere at the back of my head that this theft might possibly be connected with your monastery affair."

"M'm!" Gilmartin nodded—not very enthusiastically. "It is of course a possibility, but —"

"Wait a minute, though," Roche interrupted, "I've got a description of Gottschalk here, compiled from the statements of everybody in the boarding house. Would you like to hear it?"

The Assistant Commissioner was grinning as he asked the question.

"What's the joke?" Gilmartin asked, "I suppose it is the usual perfectly useless description in such cases."

"Wait and see!" Roche laughed, turning over a sheet of paper, "Here it is! About five feet eleven inches in height—pretty tall that—about forty years of age, grey eyes, high forehead, drooping grey moustache and pointed beard slightly yellow round the mouth, long grey hair thin on top but thick behind and all brushed back—just like an artist, the servant said, but the landlady who is more interested in politics than in art declares that it was just like Lord Oxford and Asquith—frail and slightly built, fingers stained yellow as if with nicotine though he has never been seen to smoke, wore

high 'choker' collars, black made-up tie and grey flannel shirt, was generally dressed in a frock coat rather shabby and stained down the front, black double-breasted waistcoat and dark grey baggy trousers. Speaks English with a slight foreign accent but correctly. Very quiet in manner. Walks with a slight stoop but is active on his feet."

Roche stopped and looked up at Gilmartin.

"Good Lord!" the latter exclaimed, "I could find you a round dozen in half an hour who would answer to that description. I know an old clothes dealer in Chiswick, who tallies with every word of it, including the foreign accent and the quiet manner. Absolutely useless as a description."

"As a description, yes," the Assistant Commissioner replied.

"It's worse than useless," Gilmartin went on, "For just look at the most noticeable points! Every one of them can be altered. The hair—cut short! Moustache and beard—one or other or both altered or removed. Clothes! Put him into a Savile Row suit and there's nothing left of Gottschalk except his yellow fingers, and they can be rubbed with pumice stone. No good at all!"

The Assistant Commissioner was reading one of the sheets in front of him and made no reply. Gilmartin had the impression that there was something there which had not struck his chief before, but which now seemed to have acquired some special significance, for Roche was rapidly scanning the page from the beginning running his finger along the lines as he read.

"Ah!" he exclaimed at last, "Here it is! What was the laundry mark on that handkerchief? I noticed it had one."

"I don't remember," the detective replied, interested, "But I can run along to the Photographic Section and get it."

"No, no!" Roche demurred and lifted the receiver of his telephone, "Hello! Photographic Section. Right! That you, Robbins? Have you photographed that handkerchief yet? Yes, Gilmartin's case. What's the laundry mark?—Thanks! Blue thread, you said?"

He hung up the receiver and looked at Gilmartin.

"It's a sporting chance!" he said and lifted the receiver again.

"Inspector Stanley!" he ordered, and after a few seconds, "Stanley? Find out from that landlady where that German Gottschalk sent his linen to be washed. She's on the 'phone? Good! Report as soon as you know."

The Assistant Commissioner looked at Gilmartin.

"Robbins thinks that the laundry mark on the handkerchief you found," he said, "Is X375X in blue thread."

“Thinks?” Gilmartin interrogated.

“Yes, because he is not sure that the 3 isn’t an 8 and the 5 isn’t a 6. That leaves how many combinations?”

“Four,” the Irishman at once replied, “But what is the point? Have you found Gottschalk’s laundry marks?”

“Yes. His linen was marked X375X!”

“Phew! Wasn’t he a fool to leave a garment behind?”

“The foolishness, if any, consisted in taking that handkerchief with him,” was Roche’s enigmatic reply.

The muted telephone bell buzzed.

“Yes?” he said lifting the receiver, “What? The Greenery Laundry, Acton! Good. Now look here, Stanley. Will you get from the Photographic Section a handkerchief which has been left there by Chief Inspector Gilmartin, and find out at Acton if it is Gottschalk’s. Report as soon as you get back. Your case may link up with another. See?”

“What exactly did you mean by your last remark to me, sir?” Gilmartin asked.

“Oh! That?” the Assistant Commissioner smiled, “I was keeping that little tit-bit for the last. When Stanley forced the door of Gottschalk’s room he found that he had left there every stitch of clothes he was known to possess.”

“I don’t see — —”

“Of course you don’t,” Roche interrupted, “Because you don’t understand me. I said ‘every stitch’!”

“You mean, including those he had been wearing?”

“Exactly.”

Gilmartin looked almost incredulous.

“Stanley—with young Wylie’s help, for he is accustomed to travel with small luggage—tried to pack them into the man’s suitcases—he had come with two of them tightly packed and had never bought another, the servant says—and they fitted in with some difficulty, with the exception of the man’s everyday wear. I tell you everything was left, including the famous frock coat and ‘choker’ collars, clean linen, dirty linen, even socks and boots. Every blessed thing!”

Gilmartin was thoughtful for a moment. Another buzz from the telephone bell under the table prevented him from speaking.

“Right, sir!” Roche was saying, “Coming at once.”

“Hang these Communists!” he exclaimed, reaching for his hat, “And hang the people that are afraid of them! Another conference with the Home Secretary!”

“Oh! I say, sir!” Gilmartin called out, “Did you show that Waterloo Bridge photo to the — —”

But the Assistant Commissioner was already half-way down the stairs.

XII. A Resemblance

GILMARTIN on his way out of the building encountered his friend and former subordinate, Inspector Peters, a burly, red-faced man with the appearance of a prosperous farmer.

“Hello, Peters!” the Irishman exclaimed, “I hear great things of you!”

“Humph!” the other replied morosely, “Seems to me I spoke too soon to old Cocky.”

“Why? Things going wrong?”

“No! Not exactly wrong!” Peters declared, “But somebody made me a present of a bright idea—a great idea, I think, but I’m having a dickens of a job to prove that it’s correct.”

“How is that?” Gilmartin asked, “What sort of an idea was it?”

“I’m not going to say—yet, because you’d laugh at it,” the inspector replied, “But it’s about that corpse that was found on Waterloo Bridge—the case you were on. I’m trying to trace how it got there and from that establish its identity. It’s no use trying to find out who murdered him till we find out who he is.”

“Not much,” the Irishman admitted, “And to tell you the truth I’m rather wondering about that case myself.”

“Why? Are you coming back to it? Have you finished the one you’re on?”

“No, Peters, I haven’t,” Gilmartin replied ruefully, “I’m only beginning on it.”

“A teaser, eh?”

“No, I think I see my way about in it now. I’ve simply got to go slow—just *got* to go slow.”

“I see,” Peters divined, “You think you’ve got the man you’re after but you can’t get the evidence.”

“Very nearly that,” the Irishman replied, “I can’t say exactly that I’ve got the man—or rather men—that I’m after but I’m fairly sure of one of them. And he’s a clever beggar.”

“He’d need to be,” the Inspector declared emphatically, for he was a great admirer of Gilmartin’s detective prowess, “To beat you, Chief!”

“Soft sawder!” Gilmartin laughed and left him, “Best of luck to you!”

Under the archway of the Yard the Irishman paused and looked at his watch. Then with sudden decision he turned back again to the Assistant Commissioner’s room where he found the file relating to the Gottschalk case still on his chief’s desk. He seated himself in Roche’s chair with his notebook open in front of him and began to read rapidly through the manuscript and typewritten pages. There were statements from all the people connected with the boarding-house where Gottschalk had lived, records of telephone conversations with immigration officers, and reports in the typical clerkly hand of Inspector Stanley. Every now and then the Irishman made a note. He was about to rise when the telephone buzzer sounded. He decided to answer the call.

“Hello! No! This is his room but Chief Inspector Gilmartin is speaking. Oh! Stanley? Yes?—H’m! No doubt of it, I suppose? Good! Listen then! Give me the ’phone number of that boarding-house. It isn’t in the report you put in. Thanks.”

The Assistant Commissioner’s conference had evidently not lasted long for he entered the room as Gilmartin hung up the receiver.

“Hello? Anything for me?” he asked.

“Stanley reports, sir, that the laundry people identify the handkerchief as Gottschalk’s. The number was sewn on by one of their marking machines.”

“H’m! That establishes the connection which I thought existed between the two cases. You’d better get on to it.”

“Yes,” Gilmartin agreed, “Old Gottschalk is evidently a member of that gang that is stealing wireless plans.”

“It doesn’t follow,” the Assistant Commissioner demurred.

“Why not?”

“For a man who has been trained to detect the faults in a syllogism, Gilmartin,” Roche laughed, “You perpetrate some funny ones. Mind you, I don’t say that your conclusion isn’t the right one. It probably is, but it isn’t the only one that might be drawn. There is also the possibility that the man who dropped the handkerchief down in Hampshire may be the man who did away with Gottschalk. Remember that all Gottschalk’s clothes were left behind. It would be funny if he left all the rest and took a handkerchief.”

"A more likely thing to happen than that his murderer should be using it," Gilmartin retorted, "Gottschalk may have bought a complete change of clothing and changed into them when the landlady heard him at night. Can't you imagine him having forgotten to buy handkerchiefs and taking one of his old ones?"

"Oh! I can imagine it all right!" the Assistant Commissioner replied, "But to tell you the truth I can't imagine why he should voluntarily leave his clothes behind at all."

"No. That is certainly strange," the Irishman conceded, "Unless it means that he had intended to come back, but then he wouldn't have stolen that young fellow's drawings. By the way, sir, I asked you a question as you were going out, but you didn't hear me, I think."

"Yes? What was it?"

"Did you show that photograph of the Waterloo Bridge body to young Wylie?"

"Yes."

"And—"

"He didn't recognise it, though he went so far as to say that if the hair and beard were there it might bear some resemblance to him."

"Oh! He did, did he?" Gilmartin mused, "I wonder if young Knox is in the building!"

"I daresay. Why?"

"He's a bit of an artist, isn't he?"

"I believe so, but— Oh! I see! You want him to doctor up that photo!"

"Precisely, sir."

"Anything you like," the Assistant Commissioner approved, "It seems to be a case of doing anything that enters one's head. There's so little to go on."

Roche took the seat vacated by Gilmartin and the latter, taking the file with him, went out to look for the Sergeant Knox who was "a bit of an artist." On being found that officer promised to do his best to do what he called the "hair-restoring operation" according to the description given in the statements which the Chief Inspector left with him. The Irishman then busied himself with the telephone for some minutes and departed.

Before going to his home he paid a visit to an acquaintance at Southampton Buildings—one of the Comptrollers of the Patent Office. At his flat in Ealing afterwards he seemed to forget everything pertaining to crime and detection, for having talked for some minutes to his wife he calmly took his ease in a deep arm-chair with a pipe and "The Knights" of

Aristophanes—for he had been one of the best classical scholars who had ever entered Maynooth—whilst awaiting the dinner which his North Country wife with the aid of their “daily help” was preparing for him.

After the meal, on the other hand, he could scarcely take the time to gulp down the strong black coffee which was almost his only stimulant, and in less than an hour he was ringing the front-door bell of a boarding-house near Victoria Station. He was shown at once into a room of the typical “drawing-room” pattern where he found himself face to face with a young fellow in the late twenties who was accompanied by a remarkably pretty and self-possessed girl a few years younger than her companion.

“Chief Inspector Gilmartin?” the young man queried.

“Yes. And you are Mr. Wylie, I presume,” Gilmartin replied.

“Yes. I got your telephone message and I have here a letter for you which was left with me by a policeman with instructions to hand it to you.”

Wylie handed a package to the detective.

“Thanks.”

“May I introduce Miss Cannan?” the young man then said, “She is very interested in this business of mine.”

Gilmartin smiled and shook hands with the girl.

“Well, Mr. Gilmartin,” she said, laughing, “Considering that I am preparing for the job of looking after him it is only natural that I should be interested, don’t you think so?”

The Irishman noticed that her low, well-modulated voice had an intonation which betrayed her transatlantic origin. He had the firm conviction that—with an individual exception in favour of his own wife—the voice of the cultured American woman was the most beautiful in the world.

“Quite right, Miss Cannan,” he laughed in reply, and then added with the Hibernian gallantry of the old school which was his, “And I am sure that you will look after him very well, too. You wouldn’t be the good American you are if you didn’t.”

“Why!” the girl exclaimed in astonishment, “That’s a compliment I never expected to get over on this side.”

“Why?” Gilmartin asked with a smile, “Have people the bad taste over here not to know a good thing when they see it?”

“Well!” the girl retorted merrily, “There seems to be one exception anyway, two now. But everybody here seems to have such a bad opinion of American women.”

"Y-yes," the detective admitted, "That is so, but you must blame your American novelists who have given you all the reputation of being very exacting. However, I'm sure that if it is true it is good for the American men. We have quite a few—er—dictatorial ladies over here too, but I'm afraid the English men are not educated up to them yet."

"You're a philosopher, Mr. Gilmartin," Miss Cannan laughed and then became serious, "But we are wasting your time. You wanted to question Gilbert about the theft of his drawings."

"No," Gilmartin replied, "I'm not going to put Mr. Wylie through any more of that. If there is anything fresh of course I should like to hear it."

"No, I'm afraid I have nothing to add to what I have already told your Assistant Commissioner and Inspector Stanley," Wylie rejoined.

"Then," the detective went on, "I've nothing more to ask you about the case except this."

He tore open the envelope which Wylie had given him and looked at the enclosure. He handed this to the young man.

"Is that anything like Gottschalk?" he asked.

Wylie stared at the "doctored" photograph for fully a minute.

"N—no!" he replied, "And yet—there is something."

"Let me see!" the girl asked and took the photograph.

"I only saw him two or three times," she said, "But—do you know, Gilbert! There is something of him in this. That is his forehead, and that, as far as one can see, is very like his funny broad nostrils. The eyes, though, are not— —"

Gilmartin took the photograph from her and looked at it.

"Ah!" he said, "He hasn't touched the eyes. These are the eyes of a dead man, Miss Cannan."

"Oh!"

"Pity, Jean," Wylie interposed, "That you didn't see him oftener. You might have drawn him from memory."

He turned to Gilmartin.

"Miss Cannan," he explained, "Is an art student and she is wonderfully good at catching resemblances."

"I wonder if you could make a shot at it now, Miss Cannan!" Gilmartin suggested eagerly.

"Well! I don't know," the girl hesitated, "Perhaps I could. Have you a pencil and some paper, Gilbert?"

Wylie produced from his pocket a little leather case containing several pencils and a pad of detachable writing sheets.

"I always carry these," he said to Gilmartin. "One never knows when an idea will strike one."

Jean Cannan sat down under the light and closed her eyes as if to bring the vanished man's features before her. Then she began to draw with rapid strokes. In a few minutes she handed the result to Wylie.

"Is that a good resemblance?" she asked.

"Why, it's perfect!" the young man exclaimed, "It's the old boy absolutely true to life."

He handed the sketch to Gilmartin who stared at it without saying a word, and then began to cover up with his hand now this and now that feature. Then he compared it with the photograph.

"Yes, Miss Cannan," he said finally, "If one gave these eyes a living expression and added that high collar you have drawn, there is certainly a resemblance between these two."

The girl herself compared the two pictures.

"Y-yes," she murmured slowly, "There is something, but—well, I don't think it is the same man."

"I am inclined to agree with you," the detective declared, "For more reasons than one."

"Who is that?" Wylie asked, pointing to the altered photograph in his fiancée's hand.

"You have seen it before, I believe," Gilmartin replied, "It's the photograph of a man who was found dead on Waterloo Bridge, with a few additions."

"What? The one they showed me at Scotland Yard?"

"Yes."

"I hope they are not the same," the young man muttered, "Because if they are it's a blue look-out for my drawings."

"Well, I don't know about that," the Irishman replied, "But in any case you'd better make new drawings and get them protected by the Patent Office at once—before anybody else does. Tell me when they are ready and I will give you a letter for somebody there. Otherwise you might find certain difficulties and delays."

As GILMARTIN left the boarding-house some sixth sense seemed to tell him that he was the object of attention. He stopped and looked round, but in the darkness—only partially penetrated by the few street lamps in this by-way—he could distinguish nobody. No footsteps broke the silence of the damp evening. The Irishman moved on.

“What next?” he muttered, “Imagining things?”

Again, however, the impression that he was being followed returned to him. This time he did not look back but turned brusquely to the left into a small side street, and concealed himself in the first doorway. Nobody followed. He waited nearly five minutes—in vain.

“Humph!” he said to himself then. “Either I’m going dotty or there’s an old hand on the job!”

He resumed his walk towards Victoria. When he came to the more frequented Buckingham Palace Road he hastened on until he reached the entrance to the main line station. There he slowed down and entered the long refreshment bar where an empty table behind the door drew him like a magnet. Without taking his eyes off the entrance doors at either end he gave his order to a waiter whom he paid with no knowledge of the coin he gave except that it had a milled edge. Men—and women—passed in and out, mostly travellers to and from the South Coast, with a few stragglers on their way home to the suburbs, but nobody who seemed a probable shadower. At any rate none of them threw him more than a casual glance.

Gilmartin at the moment had no desire to throw a follower off the track—an easy task in his present surroundings. On the contrary, though he had just had a long and tiring day he would have taken a delight in leading such an one over half the Metropolis, provided that he could at the end lay hold of him, or failing that get a glimpse of him for future reference. He now came to the conclusion that either his suspicions had been unfounded or the “shadow” was too wary to show himself in the glare of the electric light of the refreshment room. The bar had only two doors—one at each end—both of which could easily be kept in view by a single observer posted in the station hall, who in his turn would be inconspicuous among the many who strolled about waiting for their trains or for fellow-travellers.

The detective reflected for a moment. The after-theatre rush had not yet begun. What would be the least frequented line at that moment? His decision was quickly made. A District train going eastward! Gulping down his hitherto forgotten drink he headed straight for the stairs to the Underground Railway a couple of hundred yards away. Walking slowly after his descent to the subway, without a glance behind he chose a moment when one of the booking offices was deserted and asked for a ticket to Aldgate East. Then as

if in a hurry to catch his train he ran to the Eastbound platform. It was almost empty so Gilmartin sat down and began to fill his pipe, studying meanwhile the movements of those who were waiting. Nothing distinguished them from the ordinary run of evening travellers. A couple of tired flower-sellers returning home after their long day in the open, a man who looked like a docker, a few Jewish-looking youths, and a police constable without his armlet puffing away at a cigarette. A train rushed in. Gilmartin sat on, keeping his eye on the entrance to the platform.

Just as the head conductor gave the signal for departure a man rushed on to the platform and dashed for the door of one of the coaches. Too late! They were the new type of automatic doors which closed as soon as the train was ready to start.

"Damn!" the young man exclaimed as he saw the impossibility of boarding the now moving train. Gilmartin, lighting his pipe, studied this thwarted passenger. Not a man likely to be interested in the movements of a Chief Inspector of New Scotland Yard. One never knew, however, and this well-dressed young man with all the appearance of a Public School and 'Varsity man, carrying an innocent-looking attaché-case, might well be anything save what he seemed to be.

"Hang it!" the Irishman said to himself, "I'd probably be better employed in travelling Westward towards bed."

Nevertheless, he continued to watch the young man, who seemed to be in doubt as to whether he should retrace his steps or await the next train. Meanwhile other arrivals were trickling on to the platform, fully as nondescript a lot as those who had boarded the preceding train, and seemingly equally unconscious of Gilmartin's existence. The Irishman gave each a passing look but saw nothing to interest him. The young man, now walking up and down the platform with quick, nervous steps, finally arrived opposite the detective's seat. Gilmartin rose. Another train rumbled in. He was the first to board it. The young man followed on his heels and occupied a seat beside him, but paid no attention to him. Instead, he studied the names of the stations on the diagram on the ceiling of the car, and then seemed lost in study. Gilmartin, now doubtful, resolved on a test. Instead of getting out at Aldgate East on arrival there he decided to remain on the train. At St. Mary's, however, he rose and made for the door muttering aloud: "Hang! Overrun it!" The young man, after a look at the station list on the ceiling, at once followed him.

Gilmartin, instead of leaving the station, went over to the Westbound platform and was just in time to enter a moving train. The young man—some paces behind—was just too late to enter behind him.

“Well, my son!” the Irishman muttered, “I’d much rather you’d caught it! But I’ll know you again.”

At Aldgate East he left the train but remained on the platform. A few minutes later another train rushed in. The young man was already by the open door of the first car. Gilmartin then ran for the exit and before the train had stopped he was half-way up the stairs. Somewhat out of breath he reached the top and dashed out into Goulston Street where a door sheltered him while he watched the station entrance. The young man came out and looked round him, then turned out into Whitechapel High Street. The detective followed him, smiling at the reversal of the roles. Without looking to right or left his quarry turned eastward and then to the left into Commercial Street. Cautiously Gilmartin also turned the corner. The man had taken the right-hand pavement. The Irishman decided to remain on the other. At last, before a Gothic doorway the young man stopped and fumbled in his pocket. A moment later a click told the detective that a door had been opened. A bang followed. It had been shut again. Gilmartin crossed the street to look at the number.

“Damn!” he exclaimed, “I’ve been an ass!”

The door was the entrance to the courtyard of the University Settlement of Toynbee Hall.

Gilmartin slowly retraced his steps towards the Underground, half-angry, half-amused that he should have been led on a wild-goose chase by a mere impression. In the middle of the pavement he stopped dead.

“And yet!” he said to himself, “Why not? There’s no reason why an inmate of Toynbee shouldn’t be a criminal. I must look into this to-morrow.”

He moved on. In the High Street he had to push a way through a knot of men and women who, whilst arguing out some topic which had been interrupted by the closing of the public-house opposite, were obstructing the foot path. Suddenly the Irishman clapped his hand to his breast pocket. His fingers closed on a wrist. As quick as thought, without even looking at the owner, he pushed his index finger hard into the wrist bones. A roar was the reply from a man as big as himself, whose face seemed vaguely familiar.

“Come on, son!” Gilmartin said calmly in a tone which the other evidently recognised, “I want you.”

“Gawd!” a woman screamed in half-drunken amusement, “Bill tried to swipe a ‘busy’s’ leather! Bill ‘Oskins turned dip! Ho! Ho! He! He!”

The little crowd scattered and Gilmartin saw a uniformed policeman approach. He held on to the now cursing pickpocket, who, judging by his shouts, was suffering acute pain.

“What’s all this about?” the man in blue asked.

“Oh! Nothing much!” Gilmartin answered, “I found Bill here— whoever he is— with his hand in my pocket.”

“Do you wish to charge him, sir?” the policeman asked, catching hold of the thief’s arm.

“Yes,” the detective replied laconically.

“‘Course ‘e does!” the man called Bill now exclaimed, “Isn’t ‘e a ‘busy’?”

The constable looked inquiringly at Gilmartin who showed him the edge of his warrant card. The policeman became all activity.

“Come along,” he addressed his prisoner and promptly handcuffed himself to him.

“If I’d a’ knowed you was a ‘busy,’” the pickpocket whined, as they went towards the police station, “I’d never ‘a’ listened to— —”

He stopped suddenly.

“What’s that?” Gilmartin asked sharply, “Go on! You’d never have listened to— —?”

But the pickpocket would say no more.

When they reached the police station a man who was talking to an inspector in uniform at the door stared at Gilmartin.

“Hello, Chief!” he exclaimed, “We don’t often see you down here! And why Bill Hoskins? I thought you went after bigger game!”

Gilmartin laughed.

“Oh! I’m here merely as a victim,” he replied, “Your friend Bill took me for a greenhorn and tried to pick my pocket. Made a mess of it too!”

“What! Bill a ‘dip’! Never! Bill’s our star burglar in these parts!” the inspector in uniform exclaimed, “Isn’t that so, Gibbs?”

Hoskins, still handcuffed to the constable, growled inarticulately. The man addressed as Gibbs looked at him quizzically.

“Come on, Bill!” he said. “Out with it! There’s something funny at the back of this.”

“Oh, there’s a good deal at the back of this—more than Bill himself knows,” Gilmartin declared, and then turned to the constable, “Unlock those handcuffs.”

The policeman obeyed and the Irishman addressed the inspector in uniform.

"This young man of yours," he said, indicating the constable, "Was very prompt. Wasted no time asking unnecessary questions. I like that, and I don't forget it."

Then to the constable himself.

"That'll do for the present, son. I want to have a word with Bill here."

The young stalwart, red with pleasure and embarrassment saluted and went out.

"Can you give Inspector Gibbs and myself a corner where we can talk to our friend quietly?" Gilmartin asked the station inspector.

"Certainly, sir," the officer replied, "Use my office; I shall be outside here."

"Thanks. Yes, perhaps you'd better remain outside," Gilmartin smiled, "You mightn't approve of my actions."

In the inspector's office the Irishman turned to the prisoner and offered his cigarette case.

"Smoke while the smoking's good, Bill," he said.

"Don't smoke them things!" the man growled.

Gilmartin promptly handed over his tobacco pouch.

"Fill up, in that case," he said, "While I'm having a talk to Inspector Gibbs."

"Well, anyhow," Bill Hoskins muttered in lieu of more formal thanks, "That's more'n Gibbs'd do."

He accepted the pouch and pulled out a pipe. He was a big man, this Bill Hoskins, dressed like any one of the thousands of dock workers in the neighbourhood, but Gilmartin rightly judged him to be simply a lazy, not very intelligent, nor very ill-natured criminal who would rather steal than work. A cleverer man, in his opinion, would have refused the proffered tobacco.

In the far corner of the room the Irishman was giving the divisional detective an outline of the case which occupied him and told him his suspicions with regard to the attempt at robbery.

"M'm! Very likely!" Gibbs murmured, "Bill has been keeping very good lately. We've been wondering about him as a matter of fact."

"Has he been flush of money?" Gilmartin asked.

"Yes, but we thought that he was living on the proceeds of a previous burglary."

"H'm! I doubt it. Does he usually work with a gang?"

“Well!” Inspector Gibbs replied, “He doesn’t work alone, I believe, as a general rule. If so he has never been caught at it. But neither does he always work with the same lot.”

“Likely to squeal?” Gilmartin asked.

“I doubt it.”

Gilmartin turned to Hoskins who now seemed more resigned and even happy, surrounded by a nimbus of tobacco smoke. He appeared to be totally unaware that he was the subject of the low-voiced conversation between the detectives. He handed back the tobacco pouch.

“Thank’ee, sir,” he said, “Good baccy, that.”

“Not bad,” the Irishman admitted, “Always makes things look brighter, doesn’t it?”

Bill merely growled in answer to this.

“But we’d better get to business.” Gilmartin went on, “I’m waiting for you to finish what you were saying in the street, Bill.”

“Wasn’t sayin’ nothin’.”

“My mistake!” the Chief Inspector laughed, “I dreamt that I heard you say that if you’d known I was a ‘busy’ you wouldn’t have listened to the lad who put you on to pick my pocket.”

Gilmartin waited for a moment, but the man said nothing.

“Now listen here, Bill,” the Irishman continued, “You tell me the name of the man who’s behind you and you can walk out of that door any time you like. Refuse and up you go before the beak as an habitual criminal.”

“Yer carn’t do that, guv’ner,” the man replied, “I ain’t been convicted three times.”

“Oh! So you know the law?” Gilmartin laughed, “That’s the stuff to give the police, eh? All the same, I’m afraid you’re for it, Bill, if you don’t talk.”

“I ain’t said as I won’t talk,” Bill muttered.

“Ah! That’s different!” Gilmartin seated himself to listen to what the man had to say.

“But I carn’t tell yer ’is full nyme,” Hoskins went on, “’Cause I don’t know it. ’Is first nyme is Otter.”

“Otter? H’m! Well, tell us what you do know,” the Irishman directed.

“But,” Bill objected, “Will yer let me go if I do?”

“If I’m convinced you’re telling all you know, yes!” Gilmartin agreed.

Hoskins seemed to consider this a minute.

"It isn't like squealin' on a pal," he said finally as if to excuse himself, "So I'll tell yer, guv'ner, on the level."

"Right you are, Bill," the Irishman approved, "And you will find that I am on the level, too. But before you start, just tell me why it isn't like squealing on a pal."

"'Cause 'e isn't a pal!" Bill replied forcibly, "'Cause 'e made me do w'at I done! An'—an'—'e's a bloomin' toff! That's why!"

XIV. Bill's Story

"OH! HE's a bloomin' toff? That's why?" Gilmartin echoed, "Well, I admire your class consciousness, Bill. Now, begin!"

Bill Hoskins puffed at his pipe for a moment in silence.

"Will it be all right, guv'ner," he asked then, "If I tell yer abaht a job?"

Gilmartin looked blankly at him for a second.

"A job? Oh! I see! You mean, will I rope you in for something you did in the way of business, if it comes out in the course of your story?"

"That's it, guv'ner!"

The Irishman looked at Inspector Gibbs interrogatively. The latter nodded.

"Very good, Bill," Gilmartin then agreed, "Provided it's nothing in the way of personal violence. If it's that, well—you'd better—"

"Oh! No!" Gibbs interrupted, "Bill doesn't do that sort of thing. In fact when he has been collared it's because he knew a 'fair cop' when he came up against it."

"That's right," Bill nodded, "Mister Gibbs knows me. I never 'its out for fear I'd kill a man, not since I was nineteen, when I nearly killed Bob Cobbett wiv one left-hander. I'm terrible strong."

The last words were said with an air of regret which was comic, but Gilmartin did not laugh.

"You look it!" he remarked in a casual tone, "That's why I wondered why you were a 'dip.'"

"I ain't a 'dip.'" Hoskins denied indignantly, "I ain't! I never done it afore an' it's the last time I'll ever try. I was a blurry fool, that's what!"

"All right! All right!" Gilmartin soothed him, smiling to himself at the result of his carefully calculated remark, "I believe you, and we'll wipe it out. Tell us about it."

Bill put his pipe back into his pocket and coughed huskily.

"I wish all the 'busies' was like you," he said, "'P'raps there wouldn't be so many like me then."

His look in the direction of Inspector Gibbs was eloquent, but neither of the detectives made any comment.

"This was the way of it, guv'ner," Hoskins began then, "I was runnin' short of the ready an' I looked round for a crib—you know what I mean—an' I spotted one wot looked easy out Golders Green way. Nobody but a old 'ousekeeper wot went to bed early an' a bloke wot used to come 'ome late. So I goes along abaht twelve, thinkin' as the woman'd be asleep an' the gent not 'ome yet, an' I jimmied a winder in the kitchen and went in."

"When was this?"

"It was the fourth of November, sir. I remember 'cos it was the day afore Guy Fawkes Day."

"Good! Can you give me the address of the house?"

"No, but I could take you to it," Bill replied, and went on, "The 'ole 'ouse was dark an' I lit a butt o' candle an' made for the dinin'-room o' the 'ouse. Then I 'ears somebody talkin' an' listens. 'E was in there in the dark an' it looked as if 'e was making' a speech all to hisself in some furrin langwidge—German, it sounded like to me, or Yiddish like they talks dahn these parts. I thinks to meself I'll do a bunk an' I turns rahnd to go back, an' then on goes the 'lectric lights! A feller as big as me—the toff wot alwis come 'ome late, it was—was standin' there pointin' one o' them big Mawser pistols at me! I ups wi' me 'ands! A fair cop it was!"

The man seemed to be apologising to the detectives for his easy surrender.

"'Ump!' sez the feller to me," Bill continued, "'Just a common burglar!' 'Yus, guv'ner!' I sez, an' then keeps mum. 'We'll see abaht that!' 'e sez, 'Open that door an' go in there.' I opens the door accordin' to orders an' goes in to the dinin'-room. The bloke wot was in there stopped talkin' w'en 'e 'eard us outside, an' w'en I walked in, 'e turns on the light. They'd 'eard me jimmyin' the winder an' 'e was talkin' like that o' purpose. An old buffer 'e was too."

"Just a moment!" Gilmartin interrupted, "Surely that was bad reconnaissance work on your part not to know there was somebody in there."

"I told yer, guv'ner. I was a blurry fool. If I'd 'a' gone the day before there'd 'a' been nobody. It was from that night the bloomin' 'ouse filled up like a blinkin' jail."

"Could you describe these two men?" Gilmartin, asked, "Begin with the one who collared you."

"Oh! 'im!" Bill replied, "'E was just a toff, like them as you see up West, but 'e isn't a real toff—'e's a crook, just's much as me. 'E 'ad on one o' them evening suits—short ones, not the one like a waiter's. 'E was big, an' 'is 'air was all plastered dahn an' shiny."

"What colour?"

"Darkish it was—not as dark as yours, guv'ner."

"I see—and the other man?"

"'E was old an' 'ad a choker collar on 'im. Thin an' stringy 'e was, an' 'is clo'es was sort o' poor an' badly fittin'. 'E was no toff, 'e wasn't—an' yet, sir, if you know wot I mean, 'e was more of a toff than the young 'un."

Gilmartin took from his pocket the sketch he had brought away from Miss Cannan.

"Is that the man?" he asked.

"Yus, guv'ner!" Bill replied without hesitation. "That's 'im! Ow'd ye know?"

"Oh! I'm not altogether asleep, Bill," Gilmartin smiled, "But go on! What happened next?"

"Next," Bill went on, "Them two started jabberin' away in some furrin lingo an' lookin' at me. I wanted to make a dive for the winder but the young feller kep' that pistol pointed at me stummick an' there was nothin' doin'. Then the young feller asks me what's me monicker an' me trade. I sez: 'Ted Stevens, an' I'm a shuvver.' 'Ah!' 'e sez, sort o' considerin' like, 'A shuvver! 'Ave you ever bin in prison?' 'Yus!' I sez. 'Ow often an' 'ow long?' he arsts, 'an' wot for?' 'Three times,' I sez, an' tells 'im as twice was for pickin' pockets an' once—a five stretch—for robbin' a passenger w'en I was a taxi-driver. 'E b'lieved me an' arsts me if I want to go again. I sez 'No.' 'Aw right' sez 'e, 'You do as I tell yer an' I'll let yer off.' I didn't like the look of 'im, guv'ner, an' I sez: 'Call the p'lice. I'm not goin' to make any bargains.' Them two looks at each other an' jabbers somethin'. 'Lissen 'ere!' sez the old 'un, talkin' sort o' furrin—not much, but a little—'We don't want you to do anything you haven't done already.' 'Wot's that?' I arsts. 'Robbery,' sez 'e. 'But,' I sez, 'I'm not goin' to bash anyone for you or nobody else.' 'Oo's talkin' abaht bashin'?' sez the young 'un. 'You are,' I sez, rememberin' wot I sed afore, 'I know the Lawr, an' robbery is worse'n burglary. Its stealin' *an'* bashin' rolled into one. I've 'ad enough o' that! They can flog yer for it.'"

Hoskins laughed.

“Yer see, guv’ner,” he went on, “I was stringin’ ’em, an’ edgin’ to the door, but it was no go. ’E lifts that big pistol again. ’Ere!’ ’e sez, ‘you’re goin’ to do as I sez, or I’ll put a bullet in yer an’ tell the p’lice yer went for me!’ ‘They wouldn’t b’lieve yer,’ I sez, ‘They knows as I don’t do no sich thing now.’ Yer see, guv’ner, I sort o’ knowed them blokes didn’t want no ‘busies’ nor ‘flatties’ neither round their ’ouse, an’ I was kind o’ brave. Then them two jabbers away again for a few minutes an’ —”

“You needn’t go into all the details,” Gilmartin interrupted, “What happened finally?”

“W’en they finished jabberin’,” Hoskins replied, “The young ’un sez to me, ‘Go out in front o’ me.’ I thought ’e was lettin’ me go, but ’e wasn’t. ’E pushes me aht inter the kitchen an’ shoves me inter a sort o’ scullery-larder place wiv bars on the winder, an’ locks the door. Then ’e went back, leavin’ the kitchen door into the hall open, an’ I could ’ear ’em jabberin’ again. They never searched me an’ I ’ad me tools, so I starts tryin’ to open that door, but ’e’d left the key in the lock, an’ w’en I pushed it aht it made such a bang that the feller comes again. ’E didn’t say nothin’—just bungs me one in the jawr an’ takes me tools away. I gets lookin’ round me an’ I sees a gratin’ above the door wi’ the light shinin’ in—it was dark in there—so I climbs up on a chair an’ looks out inter the kitchen. I could just see the foot o’ the stairs through the open door an’ that was all. They kep’ me there all night, but I ’ad a good feed ’cause there was bread an’ ’am an’ beef an’ beer in there.”

“Yes, yes,” the Irishman interposed somewhat impatiently, “But what happened?”

“Nothin’—that night anyway!”

“What? They kept you there all this time?”

“Yes, sir, but not in the scullery. Yer see it was this way. Nex’ mornin’ I was sleepin’ on the floor an’ I woke up wiv somebody kickin’ me in the slats. I sawr a big feller—bigger’n you, guv’ner—a ’airy bloke, ’e was, wiv a beard an’ whiskers like a bolshie. ’E couldn’t speak no lingo, that ’un couldn’t. ’E ’auls me up off the floor an’ gives me a punch in the stummick to wake me up, like. I makes a swipe at ’im, but lord love ye, ’e ’eld me off like a child. ’E takes me up to a attic an’ puts me in anuvver room up there, wiv bolts an’ bars on the winder like a bloomin’ clink. There was two beds there an’ this bolshie makes signs at me to lie dahn on one, an’ blowed if ’e didn’t tie me on it! Tied me tight too! Look, guv’ner!”

Hoskins bared one arm and showed what was obviously the mark of a rope.

"Then," he went on, "The bloke lies dahn on th' other bed an' goes to sleep. Looked as if 'e'd bin up all night. And snore! Gawd! It was like a fog-'orn! Abaht twelve o'clock the young toff comes up an' punches the bolshie awake an' sends 'im aht. 'Well, Mister Stevens,' 'e sez to me, "'Ave yer bin thinkin' over?" 'Naw!' I sez, 'Nothin' to think abaht!' 'Isn't there?' 'e sez, 'Well, p'raps you'll change yer mind afore I've finished wiv yer.' 'Wot d'yer want me to do?' I arsts. 'Anyfink an' everyfink,' 'e sez. I shakes me 'ead and sez: 'No, guv'ner, I ain't a-goin' to do any rough stuff for you or anybody else.' 'E looked at me like as if 'e was goin' to murder me, an' then 'e thinks a bit to hisself. 'Kin ye drive a Ford van?' 'e arsts. 'Yus,' I tells 'im. 'Right,' 'e sez, an' 'e laughed sort o' nasty, 'You'll be my shuvver or take the consequences of refusin'.' 'If that's all, guv'ner,' I sez, 'I'm willin', but I can't drive no van if yer keeps me tied up.' So 'e cuts me loose just like that. 'It doesn't matter,' 'e sez, 'Yakob'll be sleepin' 'ere.' Seein' as things was like that I arsts sort of impident-like, 'Wot's the screw?' but 'e wasn't 'avin' no jokes. 'E 'its me on the fyce wiv 'is gloves careless-like an' sez nuthin'."

"Humph!" Gilmartin interjected, "So it was you who drove that van down into Hampshire?"

"Yus, guv'ner, twice!"

"Only twice?"

"That's all, guv'ner. Once on the next evenin'."

"What happened then?"

"I never could make aht, guv'ner," Hoskins replied, "I druv this young feller an' Yakob an' another bloke I didn't see proper out to a place I never sawr afore. Yakob stays wiz me in the van an' the other two went off inter the wood. In abaht 'arf-an-hour they comes back wiv a bloke all dressed up in a sort of fancy dress wot was staggerin' along atween 'em. They 'oists 'im up inter the van an' we drives back to Golders Green. They carried the bloke in robes inter the 'ouse and put 'im in a room upstairs. I never see 'im again."

Gilmartin consulted his notebook.

"And the next day?" he asked, "Didn't you drive them out there again?"

"No, guv'ner," Bill replied, "I didn't like the look o' things the first time an' nex' mornin' I falls dahn the attic stairs accidental-like a-purpose an' twists me leg—I don't fink! Any'ow, I sez w'en they arsts me to drive as I couldn't, me foot bein' so bad, an' a Ford bein' all footwork. I looked aht o' the winder an' I sees as the young toff was drivin' hisself, but 'e was got up like a workin' man. That night I hear 'em draggin' some'un up the stairs an'

puttin' 'im inter the room wiv the one they brought the night afore. An' in the night I 'ears groanin' in there."

"And the next time you drove? When was it?"

"Yest'day. Twice yest'day."

"That makes three times in all, not twice. What happened then?"

"Funny that was!" Bill replied. "We druv aht in the mornin' early, an' then came back quick. In the evenin' the van was brought rahnd again an' I gets inter the seat. Yakob sits next ter me, an' the toff an' two others wot alwis kep' their fycles turned away from me gets in at the back, and we drives aht to the syeme plyce. They all 'ad bundles wiv 'em an' they takes the bundles inter the wood wiv 'em."

"By the way," Gibbs interrupted, "Why didn't you simply drive or run away when they were in the wood?"

"Wiv that there Yakob sittin' next to me?" Bill exclaimed, "Gaw! Y'oughter see 'im!"

"All right! Go on!" Gilmartin ordered.

"Well, we waits there," Hoskins obeyed, "An' arter abaht 'arf-an-hour we 'ears shoutin'. I was goin' to drive off but Yakob wouldn't let me. Then out jumps a bloke in them robes. 'E shouted somefink to Yakob an' I reckernises the toff—the others called 'im Otter, did I tell yer?—then I sees three more o' them in robes too. One o' them was bein' dragged along. They swings 'im be'ind, like they did the first time I druv 'em, an' then they all gets in an' I drives off. They was jabberin' away be'ind an' arter a few minutes Otter tells me to pull up. I stops an' it sounded like they was droppin' somebody aht on the road. I tried to look rahnd but Yakob pulled me back. Then we druv back to Golders Green, and there I sawr as the fourth bloke wasn't there an' the others all 'ad tuk off them robes. But you should 'a' seen Otter's fyce this mornin'. 'E 'ad a black eye an' a cut lip. 'E 'as 'em still."

"And what about the man you ran down with the van?" Gilmartin asked calmly.

Hoskins looked at Inspector Gibbs.

"Gaw!" he exclaimed, "'E knows everyfink, 'e does. I'd forgot abaht that, but it wasn't me, it was Yakob."

"How is that? You were driving, weren't you?"

"Yus, but as we was tearin' along I see a man walkin' towards us. Otter sez somefink to Yakob an' Yakob turns off the lights an' twists the wheel nearly out o' me 'and. I feels a bump an' I gives Yakob a punch in the ribs

wiv me elbow an' twists the wheel back. I thought we was goin' to 'ave a spill. Then Yakob turns the light on again an' I slowed dahn, but Otter gives me a dig in the back an' tells me to drive on. An' d'ye know, guv'ner, I'm nearly sure it was a parson we bumped inter. Was 'e 'urt?"

"And now about to-night!" the Irishman ordered, ignoring the question.

Bill coughed.

"I was a blurry fool," he said, "Yer see, I was locked up in that there attic room, an' it seems the 'phone went downstairs. Any'ow, up comes Yakob an' brings me dahnstairs. The 'all was dark an' some woman—I dunno 'oo she was—tells me to go in a taxi wiv Yakob an' meet Otter at Victoria outside platform number two. Yakob catches 'old o' me arm an' we finds a taxi. Otter meets us at Victoria all right an' 'e mykes me stand at the foot o' the Underground steps an' keep my eye on 'im at the top. I was ter foller the man 'e was to point aht an' get some pypers aht er 'is breast pocket. I didn't dare say I couldn't, 'cause I'd told 'im I was a 'dip,' so I done wot 'e said."

"I didn't see you, I think," Gilmartin said, "Unless you were the fellow who went in the train ahead of mine."

"That's right, sir. I was ahead o' you. I 'eard you arsk fer a ticket to Aldgate East, an' me 'avin' tuk a ticket wot would tyke me to either end o' the line I went on in front. Wen I see you stayin' be'ind I thought I'd lost yer an' I got aht next station, but you come along on the next train an' Otter wiv yer in the next car. We follered yer but I got aht at Aldgate East knowing as ye'd bort a ticket for there, and waited, and then to the corner o' Commercial Street. I see yer lookin' at Toynbee. Looked as if yer were a-follerin' one o' the gents out o' there. Then you turned back. I went ahead o' you an' w'en I sawr a bunch o' my pals comin' aht o' Evans's pub I sort o' gets 'em bunched up talkin' so's you'd 'ave to edge through 'em. I tried to get at your pocket in the crush but you was too quick for me."

"But," Gibbs again asked, "Why didn't you run for it instead of doing as they told you?"

"That's all you know," Hoskins replied contemptuously, "I might 'a' gone w'en I got inter that train, but 'ow did I know Otter an' Yakob wasn't in the nex' car? In the High Street they wasn't ten yards off all the time."

"What!" Gilmartin exclaimed, "When I caught you!"

"They was standin' there, guv'ner, lookin' on w'en you an' that slop 'auled me off—Otter wiv 'is black eye painted over too!"

"Well, Hoskins," the Irishman said in disgust, "You are exactly what you said you were—a ruddy fool! Why didn't you shout? Why didn't you tell me?"

"Now, I arks you, guv'ner!" Hoskins appealed to his reason, "'Ow was I to know ye'd b'lieve me? What 'busy'd' b'lieve me?"

Gilmartin shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," he said, "You've got to show us that house in Golders Green."

"Not now, guv'ner!" Bill almost wailed, "They'd see me. They abaht 'ere somewhere. They'd kill me. That Yakob'd think nothin' o' stickin' that big knife o' his inter me. Keep me in a cell for the night, guv'ner. I'll show yer ter-morrer in daylight."

"Yes, indeed!" Gilmartin grunted, "When they've all cleared off."

"Oh! My Gawd!" the burglar groaned, "They'll kill me! I'm certain as they're them Koo Cluckers I've 'eard of—wot they 'as in America. Them an' their robes!"

"The Ku Klux Klan is an infant school in comparison with them, I'm thinking," Gilmartin replied, "But either you show us that house to-night or I'll pin half a dozen crimes on you as well as pocket-picking."

Bill said no more.

XV. The Chase

THE SCOTLAND YARD man turned to his divisional colleague.

"The worst of it is," he said, "That we don't know where to send men from the local station."

"Wait a minute. I used to be stationed in that part of the world," Gibbs replied and turned to Hoskins, "Do you remember in what part of Golders Green this house is."

"'Course I do," Bill asserted, "I cud tyke yer there, guv'ner, but I'd rather —"

"I don't care a damn what you'd rather," Gibbs retorted, "Tell us more or less where it is. Start from some place we all know—Golders Green Underground station for instance."

"It's from there I know it," Hoskins replied, "You goes aht o' the stytion an' turns to the right, and up to the right again past that plyce where they burns the corpses."

"The crematorium?"

"Yus. That's where I mean. Then it's a street off that."

"I see," said Gibbs and went to the telephone. In a moment he was speaking to a colleague in the North West of London asking for reserves to

be ready at a spot he mentioned.

"I think," Gilmartin said when he had finished, "I'll have a flying squad car along as well."

When he had telephoned in his turn he faced Hoskins.

"You damn fool!" he said, "The next time you burgh a house get the address right."

To Gibbs he added.

"If we had known the address we could have had the place surrounded long before getting there. They'll probably have cleared off by now."

"No fear, guv'ner!" Hoskins declared, "Them two is aht there wytin' to see wot you're goin' to do wiv me."

"A fat lot they care about you!" the Irishman retorted, "They're probably cursing their luck that they didn't do you in! Come on! Get a move on! Gibbs, send somebody for a taxi. That'll be quickest."

"Oi! Guv'ner!" Hoskins wailed in a new access of terror at the prospect of immediate action, "They'll get me! For the love o' — —"

"Shut up!" Gibbs ordered and went out to obey Gilmartin's instructions.

Bill resumed his complaints to Gilmartin.

"Oh! For Heaven's sake, Hoskins!" the Irishman said impatiently, "Stop that whining and consider yourself lucky to get off so easily."

Hoskins muttered something profanely colloquial about being doubtful of the advantage. Gilmartin turned on him sharply.

"Very good!" he barked, "I'm tired of you anyway. You needn't come. I'll find the house without you. But mark my words, Hoskins, you'll find yourself in the dock on a more serious charge than just picking pockets or even burglary, and that's as an accessory to murder alongside those Golders Green friends of yours."

The burglar said no more, and when Gibbs re-entered the room the Irishman made a step towards the telephone and addressed his colleague.

"The expedition's off," he said, "Hoskins prefers to be charged with being an accessory to murder."

"Here! I'll go!" Hoskins hastily interposed, "I know you can — —"

"All right, then!" Gibbs broke in, "Don't talk about it so much! The taxi's here."

They left the police station, Gibbs in front, Hoskins and Gilmartin following. The inspector had already one foot on the running board of the cab when Hoskins suddenly yelled out and fell back against the Irishman.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Gilmartin shouted and gripped the man by the arm.

“Oi! Leggo!” Hoskins roared, “They’ve got me, the — —”

“There ’e is!” the taxi-driver exclaimed, pointing ahead.

Gibbs turned and without a word sprinted down the street. Gilmartin pulled a whistle from his pocket and blew three shrill blasts into the police station door. Several constables came tumbling out. The Irishman pointed after the inspector.

“Quick!” he exclaimed, “After Inspector Gibbs!”

“’Ere! Jump in!” the taximan called out, already on the move.

Some of the constables obeyed and Gilmartin turned to Hoskins, who was sitting on the step of the porch grunting and cursing with a vigour which did not seem to indicate that anything serious was amiss.

“What is it?” the Irishman asked.

“I dunno, guv’ner!” the man answered, “Feels like a knife stickin’ in me shoulder.”

“Can you get up? Come in to the light! We don’t want all Whitechapel looking at us.”

Late as the hour was the usual crowd had indeed collected. Hoskins rose stiffly, wincing as he moved.

“Oi!” he exclaimed again, “I’m bleedin’ all dahn me back!”

The white doorstep of the police station was now darkened with what was undoubtedly blood.

“Can’t see anything,” Gilmartin uttered, “with only this blue light. Here, sergeant, help this man in!”

A sergeant who had appeared behind the constables took hold of Bill’s arm, only to bring forth another yell.

“Hello!” the sergeant exclaimed, “He’s got a knife sticking out of his back!”

“I knowed it!” Hoskins wailed, “I knowed they’d get me!”

“’Phone up a doctor,” Gilmartin ordered, “Tell him what’s wrong!”

In the charge room he looked at the protruding knife handle.

“Gosh!” he exclaimed, “That was some throw!”

“That’s Yakob!” Hoskins replied, still full of vigour, “He was alwis practisn’ wiv a knife! Is it a big ’orn-’andled thing, guv’ner?”

Gilmartin nodded.

"It's all right, Bill!" he said, "I'm not a surgeon but I know it's not a dangerous wound. Lucky, though, that you weren't facing him. Yes, it's a horn-handled one."

"Pull it aht, guv'ner!" Hoskins pleaded, "It 'urts—not so much now but—pull it aht!"

"No," Gilmartin decided, "We'd better let the doctor do that, but perhaps we'd better try and get your coat and shirt nearly off for him."

With groans and grunts on Bill's part the garments were unbuttoned and partially removed as far as the Irishman thought prudent when a young doctor came bustling in followed by a constable carrying a basin of water. He nodded to Gilmartin who pointed to the knife.

"Hold him by the shoulders," the doctor directed, "And don't let him move. Here, you, with the basin! Over here!"

Having disposed his assistants he began to prod Bill's back. Hoskins grunted and swore into Gilmartin's waistcoat. Suddenly the doctor caught hold of the knife and drew it sharply out. A rush of blood followed.

"Oi!" Bill shouted and tried to move, but the Irishman held him firmly.

"Oh! You'll live to be hanged yet, old son," the doctor told him as he busied himself with the necessary washing and bandaging, "But it was a close one."

In a short time the flow of blood was stanchd and the young surgeon was washing his hands unconcernedly.

"Be as right as rain in a fortnight," was his verdict, "As stiff as blazes to-morrow. Better lie up!"

"Lie up be blowed!" Bill now heartened, exclaimed, "I'm goin' to show the guv'ner where them b— — wot-yer-my-call-ems lives!"

Gilmartin looked at the doctor.

"Can I take him as far as Golders Green in a taxi?" he asked, "I'll get him into hospital after that."

"If he thinks he can stand it," the doctor conceded, "It won't do him any good, though. Take some stimulant with you."

"I could do with a drink now for the matter o' that," Bill said, "But I'm goin'!"

Gilmartin signed to the constable to get the necessary stimulant.

"I wonder if they've got that blighter!" he reflected.

The doctor betrayed no curiosity, but began to study the knife.

"Curious instrument that!" he said, "Looks oriental to me!"

Gilmartin took it from him.

"I'd say at a guess that it is a Kuban Cossack knife," he declared, "But I've never known them to throw them."

Gibbs entered, sweating profusely.

"Got away, so far," he panted, "Down Limehouse way. I've put every man I can get on to looking for him."

"Did you get a sight of him?" Gilmartin asked.

"Just a glimpse!" Gibbs replied, "Fellow with a beard."

"That's Yakob!" Hoskins asserted, "Come on! Aren't we goin' to Golders Green?"

"Has that taxi come back?" Gilmartin asked.

"Yes," the Inspector replied, "Mean to say we're still going?"

"Bill's determined on it now," the Irishman smiled, "I'm afraid it's too late, though. That fellow Otto has probably gone back and cleared that house out, while Yakob waited here. However, we'd better go all the same."

The burglar having been reclothed in a policeman's shirt and his own blood-stained coat they went out again, leaving the doctor to fill in some papers the station sergeant brought in. Instinctively, as they reached the pavement they looked to right and left, but they got into the taxi in safety. Hoskins, who had lost a considerable amount of blood was not so vigorous as his attitude seemed to say, and he was eased gently into the seat.

At Golders Green station they handed Bill the speaking tube, and it was he who gave the directions to the driver. They were delayed at one crossing to allow the passage of a fire engine which tore past with deafening clangour.

"It's the next street to the right," Hoskins declared finally and dropped the tube.

"The local men should be about here," Gibbs muttered.

The effort had told on Hoskins and he was now panting. The two detectives, watching him with some anxiety, were surprised by the sudden jerk of the taxi being violently pulled up, and the sound of the driver's angry voice. Gilmartin leaned out and saw a policeman on the running board. A crowd seemed to have collected in front. A curious light shone on the brasswork of the taxi.

"What is it?" the Irishman asked.

"Traffic diverted, sir," the driver complained, "'E's takin' my number 'cause I didn't stop. I told 'im 'oo you were, sir, but — —"

“Come here, you!” Gilmartin ordered the policeman, who was now industriously writing in his notebook. The constable recognised the authority in the tones and came forward.

“Put up that damned notebook!” Gilmartin barked angrily, “Why didn’t you come to me if you didn’t believe the driver? That how you conceive a policeman’s duty? Here!”

He thrust his warrant card under the man’s nose.

“S-sorry, sir, but—” the constable began.

“Why can’t we go on?” Gilmartin interrupted.

“A fire, sir. Traffic diverted.”

“Where’s the fire, dammit?”

“Next street, sir. First to the right.”

“Gawd!” came Bill’s voice from the interior of the taxi, “They’ve burnt the bloomin’ ’ouse dahn!”

“Make a way for us to get through,” Gilmartin ordered, “We’ve business in that street and we have a passenger who can’t walk.”

They reached the corner of the street where an excited police inspector ran up to them waving his hands.

“Here! Goodman!” Gibbs shouted at him, “Keep your wool on!”

The inspector subsided and then recognised Gilmartin.

“Sorry,” he said.

The red glare was now illuminating everything, and by its light Gilmartin helped Hoskins to the door of the taxi. One look was sufficient.

“The blurry bolshies!” Bill exclaimed, “That’s the house, guv’ner!”

XVI. The Prisoner

It was not long before Gilmartin was in conversation with the responsible Fire Brigade Chief on the spot.

“Not a doubt about it!” the latter declared in answer to Gilmartin’s question, “A clear case of incendiarism! The place reeks like a Diesel engine.”

“Find anybody or anything inside?” the Irishman asked.

“No time,” the other replied, “The place was already blazing like mad when we arrived. We did run up a ladder but—however, I’ll see, if it is important to you.”

“It is.”

“Right!”

The Fire Fighter called to a subordinate and asked a question. The other nodded and went off, returning shortly with a fireman who was carrying a bundle.

“I went to the attic floor,” this man reported, “And I saw these. They were so curious that I took them away. There was also something— —”

Gilmartin looked at the bundle and grunted. It was the brown habit of a Benedictine laybrother.

“I noticed something curious,” the fireman went on, “There was two beds in that there room and it looked as if somebody had been tied to one of ’em and then cut loose, because there were ends of rope hanging to one of them.”

“H’m!” Gilmartin grunted again and turned to the Fire Brigade chief, “I suppose there is no hope of saving the house.”

The officer, sweating underneath his brass helmet, pointed to the blazing pile.

“Well!” he said, “Just look at it! Judge for yourself!”

Gilmartin looked.

“Seems to me,” he reflected, “That the neighbours are going to have a close shave.”

“We’ve cleared ’em out,” the other replied, “In case! But I think—” he added with an expert glance at the hissing jets of water as they played on walls and roofs—“I think we’ll save them. As you say, though, it will be a close shave.”

The Irishman prepared to leave him.

“Give me that bundle,” he said to the fireman, “I’ll take charge of it.”

At a nod from his own superior the man obeyed and Gilmartin pushed his way back to the taxi.

“We’ll have to get Bill to a hospital,” the Whitechapel inspector greeted him, “He’s all in!”

“Yes,” the Irishman agreed, “But first of all I want to see a local C.I.D. man or somebody like that. And Lord! I forgot all about the Flying Squad crowd.”

“That’s all right, Chief. I remembered ’em and got on a ’phone to the local station. They’ve been recalled to the Yard. And there’s your local man! Inspector Hughes, his name is.”

He pointed to a man across the way.

“Good!” Gilmartin exclaimed, “I know Hughes. Hi! Hughes!”

The divisional detective came over.

“Ah! Good evening, Chief—or is it good morning?” he greeted Gilmartin.

“Look here, Hughes!” the Irishman said without preamble, “Do me a favour. Get one of your fellows to find out whose house that is that’s burning down there, to whom it was let, what references—if any—the tenant gave, and a description of every occupant of the house. When they’ve got that, push the information on to me.”

“You’re not asking much, Chief,” the other laughed, making a note by the light from the still blazing house.

“As a matter of fact,” Gilmartin replied, “I’m not, because you’ll have to get all that in any case. It’s a case of arson.”

“Oh! That’s it, is it?” Inspector Hughes exclaimed.

“Yes, and probably much worse,” Gilmartin added.

“Right! Then I’ll get on to it at once.”

“Thanks! Good night!”

Gibbs and Gilmartin re-entered the waiting taxi where they found Bill Hoskins asleep and breathing heavily. The driver who had been listening to the conversation started his engine.

“’Ampstead General ’Orspital?” he inquired, “It’s the nearest an’ the mos’ likely. ’Averstock ’Ill, sir!”

“Right!” Gilmartin approved, “We can try there.”

They were lucky in that a bed was available and Bill Hoskins, vainly protesting, was helped into the establishment.

“I wonder if they got that knifethrower,” Gibbs said as they were leaving the hospital.

“Why not find out?” Gilmartin replied, “They’ll let us ’phone from here.”

The nurse on duty led them to the instrument and left them. Gibbs was not long in getting the connection with his police station. Gilmartin stood at his elbow.

“What?” the inspector asked on hearing the answer to his first question, “You’re not sure? What d’ye mean? I see! Well, hold on to him till I get back.”

He hung up the receiver and turned to the Scotland Yard man.

“They’ve pulled in a bearded foreigner who speaks no English,” he announced, “They think it’s the man we want but they’re not sure. Are you coming down to see him?”

“Yes,” Gilmartin replied, “Though I’d like to get some sleep.”

Neither officer spoke a word during the long run through the almost deserted streets. Gilmartin was plunged in thought and Gibbs half asleep, and both were surprised when their taxi drew up before the dingy East End police station.

“Wait a minute!” Gilmartin said as Gibbs was about to dash in, “Have the man they’ve collared brought into room, make him sit down in a chair and watch his face when I come in behind him and speak.”

Gibbs nodded and disappeared while Gilmartin paid the taxi-driver and ordered him to come the following day to sign the necessary vouchers. When he in his turn entered the station a constable in the corridor silently indicated the door. The Irishman opened the door. The setting was as he had ordered it.

“*Ah! Zdravstvui, Yakov!*” he exclaimed heartily as he entered.

The man in the chair jumped up and turned round, standing stiffly to attention.

“*Zdravie Zhelai — —*” he began and then stopped, “*A Vyi kto?*”

Among Gilmartin’s many gifts was a knowledge of Russian. He made no reply to the bearded man’s question, but addressed Gibbs.

“This is the man all right!” he said, “Shut him up! I’m too tired to deal with him to-night, but I’ll see him to-morrow.”

At a nod from the inspector, two constables who had been standing in the window embrasure led the obviously bewildered Russian away.

“What the dickens did you say to him,” Gibbs asked when they had gone, “To make him jump up like that.”

“I only greeted him,” Gilmartin smiled, “With a very ordinary formula of politeness.”

“And what did he say?” the curious inspector inquired eagerly.

“Oh! He answered as Russian soldiers in the old days used to reply to a greeting from an officer,” the Irishman replied, “That is to say, he began to do so, and then when he saw me he asked who I was.”

“But I don’t see — —”

“It’s this way, Gibbs,” Gilmartin explained, “I thought that if he was the man we want he was a Kuban cossack—I guessed that because of the knife.

If so he would have had a military training before the war and I decided to take him by surprise. I *did*."

"Gosh! Yes!" Gibbs agreed, "You did."

"But it's funny all the same," Gilmartin went on, "If he were a Bolshevik agent I wonder if he would answer like that. I don't think so somehow—even when surprised."

"What makes you think of Bolshies?" the inspector asked, "Do you think this is a Red business?"

"I'm blowed if I know what to think," the Irishman replied, "What time is it?"

Gibbs looked at his watch.

"Lord! It's almost three o'clock."

"Is it, by Jove? Then I'd better get some sleep. Where can I get a bed? I'm not going to taxi from here out to Ealing. My wife won't expect me now."

"I've got a spare room, Chief," Gibbs offered, "The missus will be waiting up for me in any case—she's like that—and we can have a bottle of beer and a sandwich and then turn in."

"Thanks very much," the Irishman accepted, "If it doesn't put Mrs. Gibbs out."

"Not a bit! Not a bit!"

The detectives talked no more of their night's adventures and in half an hour were in bed.

It seemed like five minutes later when Gilmartin opened his eyes to hear the running of taps and the rattle of cooking utensils in the small house occupied by Inspector Gibbs. He lit a candle and looked at his watch.

"Half past six," he muttered, "Mrs. Gibbs is an early as well as a late bird."

Soon the smell of frying bacon drove him from the warm sheets. Gibbs had obviously heard him move about, for he put his head into the room almost at once.

"Sorry if we woke you up," he apologised, "But the missus thought you'd like a hot bath and got up to light the fire. She's a bit on the noisy side, I'm afraid. It's her way of hustling."

Gilmartin laughed, for he had seen on the previous night that Gibbs, whatever might be his authority in his Division, was a very meek subordinate at home, where his wife—a large young Cockney—ruled supreme.

"Delighted to have a hot bath," the Irishman replied, "But Mrs. Gibbs shouldn't have got up any earlier on my account."

"Oh! She likes it," the inspector declared, "Do you use a cut-throat or a safety razor?"

"I don't mind."

"Right I You'll find both in the bathroom. I'll show you."

At breakfast Gilmartin won the heart of the hospitable Mrs. Gibbs by his praise of her grilled bacon and tomatoes, and soon afterwards they were on their way to the police station.

There, it seemed as if everybody they saw had breakfasted badly or not at all. From the inspector in uniform to the youngest constable they all wore a glum expression.

"Humph! Here's Gibbs!" the former growled, "Perhaps you'd like to see your prisoner, Gibbs!"

"He's my prisoner," Gilmartin interposed before his companion could reply, "And I'll thank you to drop your facetiousness if that's what you're trying your hand at. It doesn't suit your peculiar style of beauty so early in the morning. What's wrong about Gibbs seeing the prisoner? Where is he? Escaped? If he is I'll have you sacked."

The inspector, unaware of Gilmartin's identity, not having been on duty on the evening before, nevertheless recognised that he had now to deal with a superior.

"N-No, sir!" he stammered, completely subdued, "He's dead! Poisoned himself somehow!"

XVII. Bill Causes Trouble

BEYOND a muttered exclamation of disgust, directed mainly against his own slackness in postponing the examination of the dead Russian, Gilmartin wasted no time in anathematising the police in charge of the cells.

"A nice mess!" he said to the inspector in uniform, "Let me see what was found on the prisoner when he was searched."

"He had nothing on him of any importance and — —"

"Let me be judge of that!" Gilmartin snapped irritably, "Give me the things."

The inspector hurried away and came back at a run with the contents of the dead man's pockets, wrapped up in a newspaper. They consisted of a reel of thread and some needles, a small metal box shaped somewhat like a soap

box containing a coarse kind of dry tobacco known to Russians as *makhorka*, together with some cigarette papers. There was also an old penknife of Solingen manufacture, a ten-shilling Treasury note and some loose silver and copper coins.

“Humph!” Gilmartin grunted, “Had he a handkerchief?”

“No, sir.”

“How the devil did he hide the poison? What poison was it?”

“We don’t know yet. The doctor is in there now.”

“Where? When did it happen?”

“Half an hour ago, sir,” the inspector replied, “The constable on duty heard him shriek, and then fall. When he went into the cell the man was lying on the floor unconscious. His eyes were wide open, and he was purple. He was frothing at the mouth and just breathing. By the time we got the doctor he was dead.”

“Humph! Sounds mighty like prussic acid!” the Irishman remarked. “Let’s go and have a look at him!”

The inspector led them to a cell. At the door they met the young doctor who had treated Hoskins the night before.

“I never thought,” he said to Gilmartin, “That I’d have all this business when I took on *locum* for the divisional surgeon.”

“What’s the cause of death?” the Chief Inspector asked.

“Oh! Poison!”

“Prussic acid?”

“Well, more probably potassium cyanide. The postmortem will tell us, I suppose.”

“How the dickens did he hide the stuff?” Gilmartin asked.

“Oh! Five grains of potassium cyanide don’t take up much room. A corner of a waistcoat pocket would hold it and you’d never think of taking any notice of it.”

Gilmartin entered the cell and unceremoniously lifted the sheet which covered the body. Carefully he went over the clothes. Suddenly he straightened up and turned to the others.

“Look!” he said.

The doctor and the inspectors came over and peered at the spot indicated by Gilmartin.

“Was that place torn last night?” the latter asked the man in uniform.

He was pointing to a rent in the lining of the pocket flap.

"Nobody thought of noticing," the inspector replied, "They are often torn, these linings."

"Not in a nearly new coat," Gilmartin barked, "If you people had any powers of observation at all you'd know that and *note* it."

He turned to the doctor.

"Look, doctor," he said, "There's a little piece of paper adhering to the inside. Could the presence of cyanide on it be detected by analysis?"

"I daresay it could."

"Then this had better be taken. If you can find any on it, it'll be a help to the inspector here—or to whomever searched the man. If not I'm afraid the Commissioners will talk of carelessness."

It was comic—and perhaps a little pathetic—to see how the inspector eagerly made preparations for the collection of all the matter contained between the cloth and the lining of the pocket flap.

Gilmartin went back to the inspector's room where a young constable was idly fingering the objects found on the deceased Yakob. In his perturbation at the entrance of Gibbs and Gilmartin the policeman dropped the tobacco-box on the table with a clatter, spilling the dry *makhorka* broadcast.

"Clever lad!" the Irishman said and then stooped, "Hello! What's that? Did that fall from that box?"

"Y-yes, sir! I think so," the constable replied, busily engaged in collecting the tobacco.

"H'm! Funny searchers you all are!"

"It looks like a season ticket," Gibbs said, looking at the piece of cardboard the Irishman had picked up.

"N-no!" Gilmartin replied, "It isn't a season ticket—at least not on any authorised railway. It's better than that, I think."

"Funny looking thing!" the local detective inspector commented, "What lingo is that? Russian?"

"M'yes!" Gilmartin was staring out into the street, "It's an Underground ticket all right."

"Underground be blowed!" Gibbs exclaimed, "They don't issue tickets like that."

"There are more Undergrounds than one, Gibbs," the Irishman declared, "This isn't the sort you think."

"I don't get you," Gibbs replied, "Let's have another look at it!"

With a laugh Gilmartin handed the piece of cardboard to his divisional colleague.

The latter stared for several seconds at the lettering which was as follows:

Bce-Mip. Co. Cbo.
Pyckk. Cek.
KOM. No. 8
CT. YHT. O. No. 684.

“Lord!” the inspector exclaimed finally, “No wonder they say Russian’s a difficult language. How could anybody get his tongue round these words?”

He began to spell out what was on the card. Gilmartin took it from him.

“In the first place these are abbreviations,” he said, “And in the next you haven’t even got the letters right. That first letter’s not a ‘B,’ it’s a ‘V.’”

“Gosh!” Gibbs exclaimed, “That’s a funny way to make a ‘V.’ I suppose you’ll tell me that the next letter is not a ‘c’?”

“As a matter of fact it’s an ‘s.’” Gilmartin laughed, “At a guess I’d say it was some sort of identity card. Translated the words mean something like: ‘Universal Union of Freedom. Russian Section. Committee No. 8.’ The rest looks like ‘Senior Under Officer No. 684,’ but I wouldn’t say definitely.”

“Well, you know best, Chief, I suppose,” the inspector conceded, “It seems gibberish to me.”

Gibbs had all the Englishman’s contempt for foreigners and their crazy “lingos.”

Gilmartin put the card in his pocket.

“I wish I knew how I could make use of this,” he said. “I must go off to the Yard now. Good-bye.”

“Let me know what happens, Chief,” Gibbs called after him.

The Irishman nodded and hurried off to the Underground station. On his way westwards he tried to disentangle the threads of all the ravelled skein of events through which he had passed since the preceding evening, but when he reached Westminster he summed up his mental state in one short sentence:

“Hanged if I can make it out!”

He decided to talk the matter over with his friend Superintendent Meldrum whose speciality was cosmopolitan crime and criminals. That

officer was, however, out and Gilmartin went to his own room, for he was one of the few men in New Scotland Yard who had a room to himself. He found on his table a telegram from the Alderborough police inspector announcing the dispatch that morning of a registered package from Switzerland. He was busy for the next hour writing up the events of the past few days. He found when he had finished that he had covered several sheets of foolscap, but he re-read every word that he had written, and every now and then jotted down a few words on a separate slip of paper.

"H'm!" he said to himself finally, "I'm not much wiser than I was before, but things look a little bit brighter all the same. Let's see what I've got!"

He took a fresh sheet of paper.

"Firstly," he said, "It seems clear that there is a gang of which one Otto is the most active spirit whose object in life is to obtain plans and drawings of new wireless inventions. Bill's identification of the sketch provides a link between the attempt on Father Baumgartner's plans and the theft of young Wylie's drawings, but that's all. Is Gottschalk the dead man of Waterloo Bridge or is he still alive and working with the gang? Note! Ask Bill if he saw Gottschalk after his first interview with him and Otto. I'm afraid Otto's a bad lad!"

This reflection accompanied the note which he made.

"Now," he continued, "What is this gang? They are evidently aliens, for we have indications of Germans and Russians. Communists? Bolsheviks? Universal League of Liberty—or words to that effect? H'm! I wonder. And why do they want these inventions? What do they gain? They must know that they cannot patent them now! And why kidnap a lot of ignorant Benedictine laybrothers? Did they think each was Father Baumgartner? Note! Hustle Hughes with those particulars of the Golders Green house! Once we can put a name to them there's more chance of getting 'em. I wonder what old Peters is doing about that Waterloo Bridge business! Jerusalem! This affair will take a small army to clear up. The next thing is to see that that Einsiedeln monk—what's his name?—Father something or other—gets here safe with the copies. Another note!"

These remarks were uttered in an undertone as a running commentary on his notes. He had just finished when the telephone buzzer sounded.

"Yes?" he inquired, "This is Chief Inspector Gilmartin speaking! Who's that?"

A female voice answered.

"Nurse Dawnay speaking, from Hampstead General Hospital. Mr. Hoskins has asked me to— —"

"Who?" Gilmartin interrupted, "Mr. Who? Oh! Yes! I know! Bill Hoskins! Yes? Go on, nurse. What does he want now?"

"He wants to see you urgently," the nurse replied, "A woman came to see him to-day. As she said she was his wife she was allowed in. I showed her into the ward, but Hoskins was asleep. She sat down beside the bed and he woke up. He asked who she was and when I said: 'Your wife, of course!' he said at once that he had no wife and seemed frightened. I'm afraid he used some bad language to the woman, and she went away after saying something to him that I didn't catch. Hoskins is now giving us a lot of trouble; he insists on seeing you and I suppose in order to make us send for you he refuses to let the patient in the next bed have his medicine. I thought, perhaps, you— —"

"Right-oh! Nurse!" Gilmartin interrupted, "I'll be there as fast as a taxi will take me."

He hung up and reached for his hat.

As he passed out under the arch he met Inspector Peters coming in accompanied by a very frightened young ragamuffin.

"Hello, Peters!" the Irishman called out, "How are you getting on?"

"Fine!" Peters beamed, "Fine, Chief! I've found the lad who put that body on the bridge."

"What!" Gilmartin exclaimed, pointing at the boy. "Not that?"

"Yes, Chief!" the big inspector replied, "That's the lad!"

"Gawd's trewth, mister!" the street arab whined, "I didn't— —"

"I'll see you later about it," the Irishman interrupted, holding up his hand for a taxi, "Tell me all about it when I come in."

"Right-ho! Chief!" Peters promised, "I'll have it all written out for you."

He took the boy by the arm.

"Come on, you young shaver!" he said, not unkindly, "Nobody's going to hang you—not yet, anyhow!"

XVIII. The Woman

GILMARTIN found the burglar trembling with excitement. A nurse who stood by his bed was making vain endeavours to calm him. As the detective accompanied by a young doctor entered the ward he heard Hoskins exclaim:

“’Snot a bit o’ good, nuss! I won’t keep quiet nor I won’t let the bloke over there take ’is med’cine till I see that there ‘busy.’ Nah!”

“He is coming, I tell you,” the nurse assured him, “I talked to him on the ’phone myself.”

“Aw! You’re only sayin’ that to keep me quiet,” the injured man retorted, “I’m—Blimey! ’Ere ’e is!”

“Yes, Hoskins!” the young doctor said, “Here he is! I think you owe the nurse an apology.”

But the burglar was too excited to think of apologies.

“See you later, nuss,” he said, “I want to— —”

“What’s it all about?” Gilmartin interrupted, “I’m a busy man, Hoskins, and I hope it’s not some tommyrot or other.”

The other patients in the ward—none of them very ill—were straining to hear. Hoskins drew from underneath the bedclothes a half-filled medicine bottle which he was clutching desperately.

“Guv’ner!” he said hoarsely, “Tyke that! If there’s not pizen in that, then I’ll—well, guv’ner, yer can lag me on any ole charge yer bloomin’ well like!”

Gilmartin took the bottle, uncorked it and put it to his nose.

“Seems harmless to me,” he said, handing it to the doctor, “I suppose you have facilities for analysing it.”

“Yes,” the medical man replied, “I can make a qualitative analysis. But perhaps Hoskins will tell us what happened and why he thinks there is poison here.”

“Nuss told yer abaht that there b— — that woman as said she was my wife?” Hoskins asked Gilmartin.

The detective nodded.

“She put sumpin in that bottle, guv’ner, s’welp me Bob!”

“But why should she put it in your neighbour’s medicine bottle?” Gilmartin asked.

“’Cos I ain’t got one, see? She thort it was mine ’cos it was on that there table. But she was on the wrong side o’ the bed.”

“M’yes!” the Irishman commented, looking along the ward, where bed alternated with table on both sides of the room, “M’yes! It’s possible if one doesn’t notice the bed at the end.”

“An’ I didn’t want another bloke to pizen himself ’count o’ me,” the burglar went on, “But I wanted to do everything reg’lar an’ c’rect like, see?”

'Sides, guv'ner, you was square to me. That's why I arsts for you, guv'ner."

"Quite right, Hoskins! Quite right!" Gilmartin stemmed the flow of words, "Now tell us how it happened. How did she put it in?"

"It was this way, guv'ner. I was sorter 'alf-asleep like, an' nuss brings this 'ere woman. I 'arf opens my eyes w'en the woman sits dahn in that there chair, an' I see 'er stretchin' aht 'er 'and an' liftin' the cork aht o' this bottle an' plunk!—in goes a pill or some think! I see nuss was lookin' at me 'an' I arsts 'er who the donah is. Yer see, guv'ner, I thort she was a visitor for 'im!"

Hoskins gestured towards the next bed.

"Then, guv'ner, yer cud 'a' stuck a knife in me wivout me knowin' when nuss says: 'Why, it's your wife, Hoskins!' Then, guv'ner, I was foolish. I shud 'a' acted different—I don't know how exactly, but I shouts out: 'I ain't got no bloomin' wife, I ain't!' I says an' the donah jumps up an says ter me in a sorter whisper: 'Keep yore mouth shut!' she says and scoots for the door. My wife! Gawd!"

"Can you or nurse describe this woman?" Gilmartin asked.

"I didn't see 'er much, guv'ner," Hoskins declared, "But I'll tell yer wot: She's a forriner."

"How do you know that?"

"The way she spoke. She says 'Kip yore mouse shat!' like that! French, I says, or sumthink like that!"

"Did you notice anything of her personal appearance, nurse?" Gilmartin asked the woman who was standing at the foot of the bed.

"Not particularly," the nurse replied, "Except that her clothes though rather shabby were of good cut. She seemed to me either a lady's maid or a—er—a fast woman. She certainly had rouge on her lips and her eyebrows were darkened."

"Oh! Lumme!" Hoskins spluttered, "My wife wiv 'er fyce p'inted! I'd just like ter see 'er—that is if I 'ad one!"

"Perhaps," the nurse went on, "Nurse Boyle who sent her up may have noticed more. All I can think of is that she was about my height."

"I see," Gilmartin commented, "By the way, is this visiting day?"

"No, but we sometimes allow a visitor to come in when it is an accident case on the day after admission."

The Irishman turned to the man in the bed.

"Well, Hoskins," he said, "You were quite right to ask for me. Another time, however, ask for the doctor here. He will know what to do. Now we'd

better go and have this thing analysed and — —”

He turned to the doctor and continued in a lower tone.

“Did you say he was a crook?” the latter said as they were going out, “He looks a good sort to me. He ought to be going straight.”

His voice had been pitched low, but not low enough to escape Bill’s keen hearing.

“Aw! guv’ner!” the burglar said, “I know I ort, but oo’d give me a charnst? What ‘busy’ would believe I was goin’ str’ight? Tell me that?”

“Why not?” the doctor asked coming back to the bedside.

“It’s this w’y, guv’ner,” Bill told him, “Fust time I was lagged I was ‘ungry. I’d bin lookin’ for a job for weeks. When I came aht o’ stir, nobody’d gimme a job. What was a bloke ter do? A man’s got ter live, ‘asn’t ‘e?”

“When you get out of here, Bill,” Gilmartin put in, “You come and see me. We’ll see what can be done.”

“Look here!” the young doctor joined in, “My guv’ner might find a job for him if I asked him, but it would be in the country—not in London.”

“Well, Bill!” Gilmartin said, “Think it over!”

“There ain’t no thinkin’ over, guv’ner!” Hoskins replied in a voice which was gruffer than usual, “On’y give a feller a charnst an’——thank yer, guv’ner, you’re a straight ‘busy,’ you are—not like some of ‘em!”

The man in the next bed who had been listening avidly to what they were saying, raised his head.

“If I kin ‘elp, mate,” he said, “You come an’ see me an’ the missus when we get aht o’ ‘ere. Looks like you saved my life, mate.”

“Aw! Garn!” Hoskins croaked and buried his face in his pillow.

Nobody misinterpreted the exclamation—the only way the ex-burglar knew how to express his feelings.

As Gilmartin and the doctor were about to leave the ward, the former stopped suddenly and turned back to Hoskins.

“Look here, Bill,” he said, “Do you know what I’m going to do as soon as I leave here?”

The man looked up apprehensively.

“I’m going to put a policeman in here,” the Irishman went on.

“Wha’ for?”

“To prevent any more attacks on your valuable existence.”

Hoskins grinned widely.

"Aw right, guv'ner," he said, "'S long as you send a slop wot plays a good gyne o' draughts, you can send a 'ole p'lice stytion. I ain't afeard of 'em now."

"That's the stuff," Gilmartin approved and followed the doctor out of the ward.

It was not long before the medical man gave confirmation of the burglar's statement.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I don't know how much there is but judging by the test paper there must be enough arsenic in that bottle to kill the whole ward. This is Gutzeit's test."

Between them they sealed and packed the bottle and when Gilmartin left the hospital he bore with him the poisoned medicine and the doctor's written statement of his findings. As he walked away he began to think over what had happened. Suddenly he stopped short.

"How the dickens did they know Bill's name?" he asked himself. "Ah! Yes, Otto must have heard that woman shout it out in Whitechapel. This good lady is undoubtedly one of his crowd and in close touch with him. Lord! A woman in it now!"

He walked on.

"H'm!" he murmured, "They've certainly got a good Intelligence Department, whoever they are. They must have been watching us last night at that fire. Then again, how did they get on to me when I left Wylie's? Were they watching him or me? Better warn that youth to be careful!"

Plunged in thought he hardly noticed the direction in which his steps were leading him. It was only when a passer-by stopped him to ask his way that he realised that he was not far from the police station to which Inspector Hughes was attached. He decided to go there to arrange for the dispatch of a constable to the hospital, and to receive Hughes' report by word of mouth.

He found that that officer had just come in.

"Well?" he asked when he had completed the first part of his errand.

"Nothing," the inspector replied, "That is to say, nothing of any use. The house was taken furnished from a Mrs. Warrender who is at present in the South of France, by a Mrs. Hoffmeyer who gave no references, but paid the agents—Webb and Ashe, a local firm—the entire rent in advance."

"Did you get a description of Mrs. Hoffmeyer?"

"Yes," Hughes replied dryly, "And a nice one it is. Or rather nice ones they are, for there are two. One of them was the usual sort of thing, a

description which would fit nine out of ten well-dressed women of between twenty-five and thirty and — —”

“Then she’s not an elderly woman?”

“Wait a minute, Chief! The second description is that of a woman over fifty.”

“Not the housekeeper that Hoskins talked about?” Gilmartin asked.

“Looks like it, but the curious thing about it is that the person referred to in the second description has not been seen since the 5th of November.”

“Curious how that 5th of November always crops up!” Gilmartin reflected.

“Well, it’s Guy Fawkes Day.” Inspector Hughes laughed. “And people remember it just as they remember Christmas Day or any public holiday.”

Gilmartin ignored this.

“I’m interested in these descriptions. Who gives them?” he asked.

“There is a funny thing about that,” Hughes told him, “The butcher, the greengrocer and other tradespeople described her as an elderly woman, while the florist, a garage proprietor and the house agents say she is not over thirty.”

“H’m! That is indeed curious,” the Chief Inspector agreed, “Those who might be called the purveyors of luxuries know her as a young woman. What about her nationality?”

“There again,” the local inspector said, “There is a divergence of opinion. Some say she was a foreigner and some say she wasn’t. The greengrocer, for instance, says that she was Scotch—and as he is a Scotsman he ought to know. On the other hand, the butcher, who served out in Russia during the war, is as firmly convinced that she was Russian.”

“And the house agents?”

“Say that she is probably French. Webb claims that she had a French accent. The florist—another Scotsman—says she was Scotch.”

“Very illuminating!” was Gilmartin’s comment.

“Very,” Hughes agreed dryly, “The point is though, are there two women or is it one woman made up to look different according to whether she deals with one set of people or another?”

“Quite!” said the Irishman, “There is another point. You say that the elderly woman has not been seen since the 5th of November. Has the younger one been seen since then—or for that matter, before it?”

“Both. She was seen as late as yesterday morning. And of course, Webb and Ashe, the house agents, did their business with her.”

"Well, Hughes," Gilmartin said, "Take it from me that it's one and the same woman. She discarded the housekeeper disguise for some reason or another—I have an idea that it became inconvenient at one moment."

"I dare say you're right, Chief," Hughes concurred.

"Did you learn anything about the man who lived there?" the Scotland Yard man asked.

"I came up against the same difficulty there," Hughes explained, "The tradespeople speak of an elderly rather shabby man, undoubtedly a German, whom they knew as Mr. Hoffmeyer, but he was often absent. They know nothing of the young man mentioned by a neighbour and by the same florist, who used to go out every day about nine o'clock and come back about midnight or later. The neighbour mentioned a lot of coming and going of late on the part of a Ford van at most irregular hours day and night."

The Irishman made no comment on this and rose to his feet.

"Well," he said, "I presume you'll carry on with your inquiries. Let me know if you get anything of interest."

"Certainly, Chief."

As the Irishman was leaving the police station he cannoned into a little fat man who, hatless and out of breath, had evidently been running hard.

"Sorry!" the man panted, "Sorry—but I—I want Inspector Hughes—phew!—Ah! There you are, Inspector."

Hughes, who had followed Gilmartin to the door, advanced.

"Yes, Mr. Webb?" he asked, and then turning to Gilmartin said in a low tone, "Come back, Chief. This looks as if it might interest you."

"I've—I've got something important to tell you," Mr. Webb announced excitedly.

"Come in! Come in!" Hughes invited, "This is Mr. Webb, Chief, of Webb and Ashe, Estate Agents."

When they reached the Inspector's room Mr. Webb, still panting, sat down, and with hands planted firmly on his podgy knees declared dramatically:

"I'm going to give you a shock, gentlemen."

"I daresay we'll stand it, Mr. Webb," Hughes smiled, "What is it?"

"Just look at this!"

He placed a large envelope on the table and looked at each of the inspectors in turn. Hughes picked up the packet, which had already been torn open.

“Where did you get this?” he asked.

“A District Messenger brought it.”

The inspector pulled out the papers and uttered an exclamation, for what he saw was a bundle of bank-notes.

“Five— —thousand— —pounds, gentlemen!” Mr. Webb announced emphasizing every word, “But there’s a letter. Read it, inspector!”

A sheet of quarto paper accompanied the notes. Hughes read the typewritten contents aloud.

“Mrs. Hoffmeyer presents her compliments to Messrs. Webb and Asche and has the honour to enclose bank-notes to the value of £5,000 being compensation for the house and effects contained therein, the property of Mrs. A. Warrender, of which a regrettable necessity compelled the destruction by fire.”

“And that’s that!” he concluded.

XIX. Inconvenient Witnesses

“WELL, gentlemen!” Mr. Webb asked, “What do you think of that?”

“I think it’s very extraordinary,” said Inspector Hughes feebly.

Gilmartin said nothing. He had taken the typewritten sheet from the inspector and was examining it closely.

“Extraordinary?” Webb exclaimed, “It’s mad! To burn a house down and they pay more than it’s worth for it! Mad, I tell you.”

“Well, Mr. Webb,” the Irishman said to him, “Leave this paper and the money with us. We’ll give you a receipt of course.”

“The money won’t be impounded or anything like that?” the estate agent inquired doubtfully, “My clients, you know— well, I’ve got to consider their interests.”

“I can’t guarantee anything,” Gilmartin replied uncompromisingly, “If this money has been dishonestly come by and is traced to its source, I’m afraid your clients will have to sing for it, but no doubt they are insured.”

“I don’t know anything about that,” Mr. Webb said, “I have wired to the owner but haven’t had any reply yet. However, I suppose there’s nothing for it but to do as you say.”

The estate agent got up and began looking about as if seeking something. Suddenly he laughed.

“By Jove!” he said in the tone of a man imparting a highly interesting piece of news, “Do you know what I did? I was in such a flutter about this that I came out without a hat.”

Hughes, who had been counting the money and writing the receipt now handed the letter to the little man, who read it through and then took leave of them, still fussing at having forgotten his hat.

“I think, Hughes,” Gilmartin said, “It’s up to you to try and trace these notes. Technically it enters into your arson case.”

“I suppose it does,” the inspector replied, “And what about trying to trace the lady—through the District Messenger Service?”

“You can try!” the Irishman said dryly, “But unless I am much mistaken you will find that she has left no tracks. No! The money is the best bet!”

“What I can’t make out,” Hughes reflected, “Is why they thought it necessary to burn the house at all.”

“It certainly does seem superfluous,” Gilmartin agreed, “But I have an idea that there was more in the house than could be removed in the short time those people thought they had at their disposal.”

“More what?”

“Well, papers. Compromising papers for example.”

“M’m! It might be that!” Hughes concurred, “But it beats me. What sort of a gang do you think they are, Chief? Bolsheviks?”

Gilmartin pointed to the bank-notes.

“Does that look like Bolsheviks?” he asked.

“N—no!” the inspector replied, “Not if all that one hears about them is true.”

“Well!” the Irishman said, more sententiously than was his wont, “Whoever they are—Bolsheviks or not—they have broken the Laws of this country and we’ve got to get them.”

He rose.

“And we’ll get them!” he added, “I think I am beginning to see my way about.”

On leaving the police station, he decided after a moment’s hesitation to go back to Scotland Yard. There the man on duty inside the front door stopped him.

“There’s been a young man asking for you several times, sir,” he said, “He ought to be back again in a few minutes.”

“Did he give his name?” Gilmartin asked.

“Yes, sir. Wylie was the name he gave.”

“Right! Send him up to me as soon as he comes. I wanted to see him in any case.”

The Irishman wasted no time in idle speculation as to the reason of the young man’s visit during working hours, but began at once to dispose of the accumulation of papers on his desk, for whatever his other work a Scotland Yard Chief Inspector finds that a great deal of correspondence has to be dealt with. Not the least part of this is in the form of anonymous letters and it was one of these which gave him pause now in the middle of his hasty perusal of a varied collection. It was short, and typed on a quarto sheet of paper.

“If Chief Inspector Gilmartin wishes to see the Benedictine monks alive, he is advised to abandon his present activities!”

That was all! Gilmartin stared at it for some minutes.

“H’m!” he said to himself finally, “I wonder what is the object of that! Is it to egg me on or is it the other thing?”

He held up the paper to the light, then put it back again into the envelope.

“It’s the other thing!” he decided, “That’s a bad break. Only a woman would think of doing that!”

He briefly examined the postmark on the envelope.

“London, N.W.” he read, “Naturally.”

He passed on to the remainder of his correspondence and was still busy when a messenger announced the arrival of Wylie. Before the latter could say a word, Gilmartin waved him to a seat and held out his hand.

“Let me see that letter!” he said with a smile.

“Good Lord!” Wylie exclaimed breathlessly, “How did you know? I haven’t told a soul—not even Je—I mean Miss Cannan!”

“Oh!” Gilmartin laughed, “That was merely a bit of Sherlock Holmesiness—to impress you. And now let’s hear!”

“A District Messenger came to the shop to-day,” Wylie explained briefly, drawing a thick manila envelope from his pocket, “And delivered this. My partner gave it to me when I came in.”

Gilmartin took the package and took out the contents.

“Humph!” he grunted, “Looks as if they’d robbed a bank to-day! Money is certainly plentiful!”

“Well,” the young man replied, “There’s five hundred pounds of it there. But read the letter, Chief Inspector, read the letter.”

The Irishman unfolded the quarto sheet and held it up to the light.

“Precisely,” he said, “Same paper, same typewriter!”

He read aloud the message.

“Mr. Wylie is informed that his drawings have been examined by competent persons and have been pronounced to be highly practical and of commercial value after slight modification in minor details. Enclosed are bank-notes to the value of £500, being payment for an exclusive option on the drawings for three months. Should a longer option be required a similar payment will be paid at the termination of that period. Any delay in the receipt of the payment may be considered as an intimation that all rights in the drawings have reverted to Mr. Wylie.

“Mr. Wylie is warned of the danger he will incur by treating this rather irregular transaction as non-binding or by inquiring as to the whereabouts of these drawings or the use to which they are being put, until such time as these facts are divulged to him. He will be well advised to accept the conditions above-mentioned, for though to his correspondents private property is considered sacred, human life in certain eventualities is not.”

“What do you think of that?” Wylie asked when Gilmartin had laid the paper on his desk.

“It is certainly an extraordinary production,” the Irishman said, “And I also think, young man, that having come to me with it, your life is worth an extremely small sum of money at the present moment.”

“What do you mean? Do you really think that these people will try to kill me?”

“Got it in one! I’m sure of it,” Gilmartin affirmed, “They are absolutely serious when they say that in certain eventualities human life is not in the least sacred to them. If you have any curiosity on the matter you will find first-hand evidence of it in a ward of the Hampstead General Hospital.”

“What do you advise me to do, then?” Wylie asked, “I’m not a coward, but I don’t want to die just yet.”

“I don’t blame you,” the detective told him, “But what you are to do, h’m—that’s a bit of a problem. M’yes! Now, I think that the first thing to do is to arrange for your disappearance.”

“But what about my work?” Wylie objected, “There’s the shop and— —”

“You’ll have to leave the shop to take care of itself,” Gilmartin interrupted.

“Y-yes! I suppose I can get my partner to attend to that, but how am I to disappear? What do you mean? And there’s Jean too!”

“You leave the disappearing part to me,” Gilmartin smiled, “Just you sit down over here and write a letter to Miss Cannan explaining that you must be invisible for a time, another to your partner announcing your absence on urgent personal business for a week— —”

“A week?” Wylie interrupted, “Is that all?”

“Yes, for the present,” the detective continued, “Then a word to your landlady which one of my men can take to your rooms for your clothes, and that will be all.”

“But where am I going?” the young electrical engineer asked, “Jean will want to know.”

“I daresay she will,” Gilmartin replied dryly, “But what’s the use of disappearing if you’re going to broadcast your destination all over the place?”

“She would never tell anybody,” Wylie protested indignantly.

“I should be very loath to give her the chance,” Gilmartin said calmly, “Of course I know that some people who are more ladies’ men than myself would have no scruples in putting their womenfolk in a position where they might possibly have to choose between their own safety and— —”

“Sorry!” Wylie interrupted, “I hadn’t thought of it like that.”

“I thought not,” the Irishman replied, “Meanwhile just you stay here and write those letters. I have a bit of telephoning to do. I’ll do it from the house exchange.”

The Irishman often smiled afterwards to think that as a result of that more or less surreptitious conversation on the ’phone a staunch young Methodist became—somewhat unwillingly perhaps—a temporary member of a Benedictine community in the Isle of Wight.

On his way back from the exchange Gilmartin found a perturbed Inspector Peters pacing the corridor outside his room.

“Who’s the lad you’ve got in your room?” the burly inspector asked him, “He seemed frightened out of his wits when I barged in.”

“He has good reason,” Gilmartin replied, “Come in, though. He’s all right!”

When they entered the room Wylie smiled wryly.

“By Jove!” he said, “You’ve put the wind up me, Mr. Gilmartin. I jumped like a rabbit when your friend came in a minute ago.”

“I don’t wonder,” Gilmartin smiled, “But you needn’t worry any more. To all intents and purposes you’ve disappeared already. And now, Peters! What’s your news? Don’t mind Wylie. He doesn’t exist now.”

“Well,” Peters growled, “My news isn’t much after all. I found out how that body got on to Waterloo Bridge, but I’m no wiser for that.”

“How is that?” the Irishman asked, “I thought you told me that the youngster you brought in had — —”

“Oh! He put the body there all right,” Peters interrupted, “Or almost—I’ll give you his statement later—but that doesn’t help. He didn’t kill the man nor does he know who did. As a matter of fact I thought I’d lost him too, and began to congratulate myself that I’d got his statement when I did, but he’s all right—the shaver.”

“Why? What happened?”

“Oh! He nearly got killed on the Embankment just after he left me.”

Gilmartin’s eyes lighted up.

“Give us the story, old man,” he ordered.

“What about?”

“About his nearly being killed.”

“Oh! That? It was nothing after all. He cut across the road and a Ford van on the wrong side of the road knocked him down, but he was only bruised a bit—that’s all.”

“And then, I suppose,” Gilmartin added sarcastically, “A constable rendered prompt aid, telephoned for an ambulance, etcetera, while the Ford van cleared off before anybody could even get its number.”

“By Gosh, Chief, you’ve got it to a ‘T.’”

“Naturally. It would happen like that under the very windows of New Scotland Yard! Where is that lad now?”

“In Charing Cross hospital, but they won’t detain him more than a few hours I should think.”

Gilmartin turned to Wylie who was not concealing his interest in this— to him—almost unintelligible conversation.

“There you are!” the Chief Inspector said to him, “Your friends the plan-stealers again or I’m a Dutchman!”

“O—I don’t quite understand,” Wylie stammered taken unawares.

“Inspector Peters here,” Gilmartin explained, “Gets hold of an important witness whose statements our friends the criminals consider damaging. That witness has barely time to get out of this building when he is run over by a Ford van which is on the wrong side of the road. A Ford van on the wrong side of the Embankment! Bah!”

“But, Chief!” Peters objected, “That’s only guess-work, surely! How do you know all this?”

“It may be guess-work, Peters,” Gilmartin retorted. “Or it may not. But I’m telling you now that you’ll be held responsible for anything that happens if you don’t immediately make arrangements for that youngster’s safety. He’s got to be produced whole at the proper time!”

Peters rose hurriedly.

“By Gosh, Chief,” he muttered, “If you say so, it is so! I’ll see about it at once.”

XX. Guy Fawkes Day

THAT evening a telegram arrived announcing the arrival on the morrow of Father Kleinmichel from Einsiedeln *via* Dieppe. Gilmartin admired the discretion of the Swiss Abbot in avoiding in the message all mention of plans. Within a few minutes of the receipt of the wire the Chief Inspector was instructing a certain sub-inspector Williams, a thin, fair spectacled man of thirty odd years who resembled more a studious compiler of dry and uninteresting statistics than the very competent and wide-awake officer of the Criminal Investigation Department that he was.

“You speak French, don’t you, Williams?” the Chief Inspector asked.

“Yes, sir. Passably,” Williams replied.

“Good! Then pack a toothbrush and get off to Dieppe as soon as you can. Get in touch with the French passport people on the quay and get them to tip you the wink when a Father Kleinmichel of, I think, Swiss nationality, presents his passport. He is a Benedictine monk but I conclude from the fact that he is travelling on the quiet that he will not be dressed in monkish clothes. You will then introduce yourself to him when you are absolutely sure that nobody is observing you or him, and show him this telegram.”

Gilmartin handed over the Einsiedeln Abbot’s telegram to his subordinate.

“You must persuade him,” the Irishman continued, “To let you have the plans he is carrying and as soon as you get them you must get rid of them at

once. I would suggest that you address them to yourself here by registered post as soon as you get to Newhaven. However, I leave that detail to you. The point is that the plans must be safely landed in this room by hook or by crook."

"I understand, sir."

"Good! And keep your eyes open. Note anybody who appears to be following this monk or trying to make his acquaintance on board the boat or the train, Don't ever go far away from him yourself, though it wouldn't be wise to stay with him too closely as that might draw attention to him if by any chance he happens to be disguised. However, we mustn't run the chance of an attack on him either. Get me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good then. Good-bye. It's time you were off."

This matter disposed of, Gilmartin rang a bell and asked that Inspector Peters be requested to come to his room as soon as he came in. When the big man arrived the Irishman passed him his tobacco pouch.

"Now Peters," he said, "Stoke up and tell us the story of how that body was got on to Waterloo Bridge during a busy time of the evening without being noticed."

"It was so simple, sir," Peters replied, "That we'd never 'ave thought of it in a 'undred years."

"How did *you* think of it, then?"

"I didn't. This is how it was. As you know, the circumstances were reported in the Press quite fully. And then, if you remember, some bright lad of a reporter got hold of the fact that you'd handed the case over to me."

"I remember," Gilmartin smiled, "It was probably some young fellow that I'd snubbed. At any rate the sub-editor gave his news a fine headline: 'Big chief Baffled! Hands Bridge case over! Meets his Waterloo—Bridge!' or words to that effect."

"That's it, Chief," Peters rumbled, "Well, anyhow, sir, a day or two later I got a letter from a gentleman headed 'The Athenæum,' asking me when he might come and see me about the case. Well, as you may imagine, I made tracks for that posh club of his, for I thought to myself that a member of The Athenæum wouldn't write a letter like that just for fun. They are almost all big bugs in their own line. I hung about till he came in, expecting to find an old gentleman with grey hair, but it wasn't. It was a young gentleman, a lawyer too, and he took me in to a smoking-room and gave me a drink. Then he told me his story. It seems he takes an interest in a boy's club down in the East End and one night when he was down there some of the youngsters

were talking about this murder, and the question was discussed as to how the body got on the bridge. So, more in fun than anything else this gentleman says to them: ‘Now, boys, just put on your considerin’ caps and try to work out from the clues given by the papers a likely solution of the mystery. I’ll give a prize for the most ingenious solution and if any boy gives a plausible one I’ll forward it to the proper quarter, and if there’s a reward that boy’ll get it if it proves to be the correct one’—or words to that effect. So the lads got going and next evening one of them handed in this.”

Peters drew from his pocket a rather soiled sheet of notepaper and gave it to Gilmartin. The Irishman read it through and then laughed.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed, “You’re right, Peters! It’s so simple that our great brains would never think of it. We should have done so, though, if we’d been any good. The little beggar expresses himself well too!”

“Yes, he does, Chief,” Peters agreed, “A good deal better than I can manage myself.”

Gilmartin read half-aloud the following:

“In order to reach a solution as to how the body was brought to the bridge I must go back to the day before, November 5th. As everybody knows this day is commonly known as Guy Fawkes Day, a day on which dummies are made up to represent Guy Fawkes and paraded around the streets by children who collect money from passers-by in order to buy fireworks and materials for bonfires in which the “Guy” is burned. No doubt the man was the victim of a gang who, after murdering him, thought of how to dispose of the body. With this result: They trussed the body and made up its face in such a way that it looked like a dummy, and under cover of darkness they went along the bridge, and no doubt to avoid suspicion called out: ‘Please remember the guy.’ Like other people the policeman thought that it was a real ‘Guy’ and only gave it a passing look. Having seen that the policeman had no suspicion the gang placed the body in an alcove and made off. When the relieving policeman came on duty, he, not having seen the thing before went up and said: ‘Move on!’ as he would say to any other person, only to find on inspection that he was talking to a corpse. So that is how I think the body got there.”^[2]

[2] The above is practically word for word the solution handed in to the author by a boy member of The Old Northeyites' Club in Limehouse, in circumstances similar to those described by Inspector Peters,—C.B.

“Well,” Peters went on, “I told the gentleman that I’d follow up the idea, but it was a tough job. You know yourself how many of those ‘Guys’ are trundled about on the 5th of November.”

Gilmartin nodded.

“Yes,” he said, “How did you set about it?”

“Oh!” the inspector replied, “Naturally I got hold of the constable who had been on duty up to midnight and asked him if he had seen any ‘Guys.’ Of course he had, scores of ’em, but one thing he was sure of: all those he had seen had been wheeled round by boys—not grown-ups. I concluded from that that they had got some boy to do it. In fact the idea was in my mind that the man had been killed in a house not far from the bridge and that the boy could tell me what house it was. It was a case of scouring the whole of the districts on either side of the bridge and asking every boy we came across what he was doing on Guy Fawkes night. At last I got hold of this nipper you saw, through another youngster’s story. He lives in one of those streets off the New Cut. I got hold of him at last and he told me his story quite freely.”

“H’m! Yes! I see how it was done,” Gilmartin interrupted, “Somebody paid him to wheel it to the bridge, but you don’t know who this somebody was.”

“Ah! There’s just the snag, Chief!” Peters said regretfully, “But you’re not quite right. It seems that this nipper was playing about the back entrance to Waterloo station and he saw a man dressed, as he says, in good clothes a bit dirty, but without a collar, standing by a margarine box on wheels, in which was a ‘Guy.’ This man called the youngster and told him that he was out of work. Would the boy wheel the ‘guy’ for him and he would let him have half the money he collected from passers-by? Naturally the lad jumped at the chance for he had wanted a ‘guy’ himself, and the man handed him the shafts of the home-made push-cart. They wandered about for some time—the youngster doesn’t know exactly how long—through the most crowded streets, the man walking behind the boy. It seems that the man was not pleased with the amount of money they were collecting—that was a clever move—and told the boy to leave the South side of the river and cross over

Waterloo Bridge. The lad says that the man never interfered with him all the time except once when the Army blanket nearly fell off. Then the man jumped forward and replaced it.”

“Do you mean to say the boy didn’t notice anything peculiar about the ‘guy’?” Gilmartin asked.

“He says he didn’t,” Peters replied, “In fact he doesn’t seem to know now why he has been called to account for his actions on that night. The only thing he says about it was that it was the ugliest ‘guy’ he ever saw, with streaks of red paint up and down its face.”

“H’m! And what happened then?”

“The lad says that when they got to the last alcove on the right the man told him to wheel the push-cart into it. He obeyed and there they divided the money between them. Then the boy was told that he was no good as a money-maker and ordered off. The man would find a more wide-awake youngster. The lad went of course, considering that he had made a few coppers quite easily. Then, he says a curious thing. He looked back when he had gone off about twenty yards and he alleges that the man pushed the ‘guy’ into the river over the parapet. He admits that it might have been only the push-cart, now that he considers it.”

“Undoubtedly,” Gilmartin agreed, “Has the boy any idea whatsoever of the time when he left the man?”

“A very poor one. He thinks it was about eleven o’clock.”

“Humph! If so there has been slackness somewhere.”

“Oh! I don’t know,” Peters demurred, “A constable might think that two people were seated talking in there especially if the fellow pretended to address the body, and he wouldn’t disturb them, or again, if that body were covered by the grey Army blanket, he mightn’t even notice it.”

“M-m! Perhaps so,” the Irishman admitted, “Have you tried to find that push-cart?”

“Yes. I’ve had the river police at it, but they couldn’t find it. They say that all the chances are that either it floated away or has been broken up long ago by the tides.”

“Quite probable.”

“What I think is,” the inspector continued, “That the fellow wiped off the paint from the corpse’s face, propped it up on the seat and covered the underclothes with the Army blanket, while pretending to be talking to it. Then he seized a moment when the bridge was nearly empty of passers-by, covered the corpse’s head and just walked away.”

"I daresay," Gilmartin agreed, "But what I'd like to have is a description of the man."

"I couldn't get a serviceable one out of the boy," Peters replied, "All I could get was that he wasn't old, that he was dressed in ordinary clothes—I suppose that means a lounge suit—without collar or tie, and that his hair was plastered down."

"H'm! That's not much good."

"Not much."

"I hope you will see that nobody gets at that boy," Gilmartin resumed.

"Yes. Nobody but his mother has been near him."

"Sure it was his mother?"

"Certain. I took the lad straight from the hospital to my missus, then I sent a constable to bring his mother from her home. It would take a clever man or woman to get past my old woman."

Gilmartin laughed, for he knew Mrs. Peters who undoubtedly ruled her big husband with a rod of iron.

"That's all right then," he said, "How's the lad getting on?"

"Oh! He's all right! These London lads are as tough as wire."

"That's good. And Peters, as you hope to draw your pension some day, impress it on Mrs. Peters that no visitor gets to the boy except his mother. This gang we're up against are clever enough to invent all sorts of tricks to get at him."

"That will be all right, Chief," Peters assured him, "but suppose I send for the lad and *I'm* not able to get there myself?"

"In that case, Mrs. Peters will have to bring him straight here first, no matter where she is asked to bring him."

"I have a feeling," Gilmartin continued, "That we will need that youngster soon."

"But what about me?" Peters asked helplessly, "What am I to do now? I've found out how the body got on the bridge, but I'm as far as ever from finding the man who had it put there."

"Oh! No!" Gilmartin disagreed, "You're quite a few steps further on than you were. As a matter of fact, Peters, you and I are after the same man, so I'm going to report to the Assistant Commissioner and ask him to put you on to doing some of my donkey work."

"That'll suit me down to the ground," the big inspector affirmed emphatically and with obvious relief.

"I've nothing for you to-day," Gilmartin concluded, "So I think you'd be wise to go home and get plenty of rest for I'm afraid you're not going to get much sleep for the next few days."

"You can't frighten me, Chief," Peters laughed, and took his leave.

Within a few minutes, the Irishman, unable to find the Assistant Commissioner, was also on his way to his Ealing home, where his wife, taking his overnight absence as a matter of course, had so arranged things that within less than an hour he was seated before his fire, well-fed, deeply immersed in the pages of Frere's translation of 'The Acharnians'—a new departure for Gilmartin, who as an old classical scholar in his seminary days, loved the original Greek. Mrs. Gilmartin smiled to herself as she heard him declaim with exaggerated emphasis:

"How many things there are to cross and vex me!
My comforts I compute at four precisely,
My griefs and miseries at a hundred thousand."

for she knew the signs which indicated that the comforts, few as they were, now held sway, while the "hundred thousand griefs and miseries" of a detective's life were forgotten.

XXI. Father Kleinmichel

HE felt inclined, however, to remember only the griefs and miseries on the following day when in the midst of the "staff work" necessitated by the thorough combing of suspected districts for the new headquarters of the mysterious gang of "honest" criminals, he received a telegram from the Abbot of Alderborough which had been delayed in transmission, together with another from the local police inspector which though dispatched more than an hour later arrived at the same time. It happened that he opened the latter first and was puzzled. It ran:

"Surrey police report van abandoned Tongham corner Guildford—Farnham road. Possible men arrive Waterloo. All stations notified—Inspector Farnshot."

Gilmartin tore open the other envelope and read that which made the Hampshire police officer's more intelligible.

“Two strangers discovered 10 A. M. attempting reach Baumgartner’s room Stop Massey pursued to road Stop Men entered brown Ford van number unknown drove direction Farnshot Stop Police notified—Chavasse.”

Having in view his plans for the remainder of the day Gilmartin considered the advisability of journeying to the Abbey and concluded that it would be possible and worth while only if he could have one of Scotland Yard’s fastest cars placed at his disposal. A word on the office telephone sufficed to ascertain that one was free and in a few minutes, having left an explanatory note on his desk, he was seated beside a constable who was threading his way expertly and swiftly through London’s South-Western suburbs towards the Portsmouth road. At Guildford a brief inquiry at the police station brought no information other than that the abandoned Ford van bore the number plate corresponding to that of a car long since departed to its final rest on the scrap-heap.

At the Abbey he found Dom Chavasse—warned by telephone from the porter’s lodge—awaiting him on the doorstep. The old Abbot had lost some of his military erectness and seemed worried to distraction. A faint trace of the old hasty temper of his youth flashed forth in the tone of his first few opening sentences.

“I feel, Mr. Gilmartin,” he said, “Like wiring to the Abbot of Einsiedeln to recall his monk and keep him there—securely locked away.”

“He is certainly a responsibility, Father Abbot,” the detective agreed, “A serious responsibility, but I think I can promise you relief from it very soon.”

“I sincerely hope so,” the Abbot sighed, “Have those miserable plans arrived yet?”

“Father Kleinmichel arrives to-day,” Gilmartin replied, “I think that you can consider them safe now.”

“God grant it, Mr. Gilmartin,” Dom Chavasse prayed, “For in that case we may hope for the end of our troubles. No news of my poor laybrothers yet, I suppose?”

“No! Nothing definite yet, I am sorry to say.”

“Well, let me tell you what happened this morning. I presume that is why you have come.”

“Yes. Please tell me, Father Abbot,” the Irishman said, “I have to get back to London at once and— —”

“First of all,” the Abbot stopped him, “Have you had anything to eat?”

"Well, I must confess I came away without thinking of lunch," Gilmartin admitted.

"In that case you can eat while you listen. I will give orders for a tray to be brought."

"Thanks very much," the detective accepted, "And if I may beg for something for the constable outside—the chauffeur. He probably needs it more than I do."

"Certainly. And I think perhaps I should let Father Massey tell you his own story. First hand evidence is best, isn't it?"

Dom Chavasse was absent from the small library where they were sitting, for only a few minutes and when he returned it was with the now obviously entirely recovered Guestmaster who bore a well-filled tray.

"Now, Father Massey," the Abbot ordered when Gilmartin had made a start on the viands thereon, "Please tell Mr. Gilmartin what you told me this morning."

"This morning," the Guestmaster began, "After Prime and Terce I had necessity to leave the choir and got Father Abbot's permission to do so. I came along through the cloister and up the stairs to the bathroom. On leaving again I thought I heard low voices in one of the corridors and I went to see what it was, because I knew that there should be nobody there, everybody except Father Baumgartner and Brother Cubert being in Chapel. I turned the corner at the head of the stairs and saw two men—laymen in ordinary lounge suits—standing at Father Baumgartner's door which one of them was either opening or shutting, at any rate it was slightly open. When they saw me they both ran away towards the stairs in the other wing, slamming Father Baumgartner's door. I ran to Father Baumgartner to see if he were all right. I found him sitting up in bed looking rather frightened and asked him if he was hurt. He said: 'No' and I immediately set out after the two men. They went down and out through the front door, across the drive into the wood and out to the main road behind the porter's lodge. There was a hole in the fence and they squeezed through it. I got to the spot in time to see them get into a brown Ford van which was waiting there quite openly. Then they drove off in the direction of Farnshot and I returned to the lodge where I telephoned immediately to the police station."

"A nice lot of local police you've got!" Gilmartin grumbled.

"Oh! I don't know," the Abbot interposed, "They took measures at once and in a very few minutes the inspector was up here getting particulars."

"Yes, when he should have been scouring the roads," the Irishman retorted, "But that's not what's worrying me. How were these fellows

allowed to get near the place? However, just now that's neither here nor there. Were you able to give the inspector a description of the men, Father Massey?"

"A very bad one," the monk replied, "Because I only got a back view of them. The inspector took it down but he said it was practically useless."

"M'm! I see! I take it, then, that they got in while everybody was in chapel?"

"Undoubtedly," the Abbot answered, "They have probably made a study of our routine and evidently thinking that the plans are in Father Baumgartner's cell tried to get them. They probably would have succeeded but for Father Massey's unexpected arrival on the scene."

Gilmartin made no comment on this.

"By the way," he asked, "How is Father Baumgartner now?"

"He is nearly all right again," Dom Chavasse replied, "The blow on the head was less severe than we at first thought, but Father Sub-prior insists that he still keep his room. He is no longer a young man and has been badly shaken."

"And my friend, Brother Cubert?"

"He is progressing normally too, but of course he won't be able to move for weeks yet."

"So that's all you have to tell me, Father Massey?" the detective asked, looking straight into the monk's eyes.

The guestmaster returned the look squarely as he answered with a slight smile:

"Yes. That's all I can tell you."

"Was Father Baumgartner questioned by the police inspector or by you, Father Abbot?" Gilmartin asked.

"By both," the Abbot replied, "I questioned him myself first of all. He says that he was half-asleep and was only awakened by the slamming of the door of his cell. He sat up alarmed and saw Father Massey who asked him if he was all right. More than that he cannot say. He was not disturbed by anything before that."

"M'm! I see!" was the detective's only comment on this as he pushed back his tray.

"Is he uneasy about his plans? Does he know that they will arrive soon?" he asked.

"Yes," Dom Chavasse replied, "In order to relieve his mind I had to tell him yesterday morning of their approaching arrival by hand."

The guestmaster at a nod from his superior took the now empty tray and left the room. When ten minutes later the Abbot and the detective came out from the library, it was evident that the former seemed more worried than before. As they drew level with Father Massey who was walking in the cloister, Dom Chavassee gave an order.

“Ask Fathers Prior and Sub-prior to come up to our cell in five minutes, and come with them yourself.”

On his way back to London the Irishman wore a preoccupied frown which did not leave him even when he sat down to deal with his correspondence.

It was nine o'clock that evening when Sub-Inspector Williams ushered triumphantly into his superior's room a man in horn-rimmed glasses and a black moustache which vied with Gilmartin's own in luxuriance, dressed in a grey suit of obvious “reach-me-downs,” carrying a small valise in one hand and a black velvet hat in the other.

“Let me introduce Father Kleinmichel, Chief,” Williams announced with a broad grin.

Gilmartin himself had to laugh as the new arrival tore off with an involuntary wince of pain the black moustache which had been firmly attached to his upper lip with spirit gum.

“Very pleased to meet you, sir,” the disguised visitor declared in good English with a slight foreign-American accent, “That moustache was most uncomfortable and paint is disagreeable.”

He then wiped his face, leaving it in worse state than before and removed the tinted glasses, revealing alert blue eyes set below a high forehead above which the close-cropped black hair seemed somehow incongruous.

“I only hope I shall be able to remove the dye from my hair,” he continued, “It is really fair.”

“Well,” Gilmartin said with a smile, “All these disguises seem to have got you through all right—and the drawings too, I presume.”

“Yes,” Williams answered, “But Father Kleinmichel couldn't hand them over to me.”

“Oh? Why?”

“They are sewn in here,” Father Kleinmichel replied and caught hold of his ready-made jacket.

A crackling sound was heard as he crumpled the material.

“Better take them out and have them put in our safe,” the Irishman advised, “As you cannot go down to Alderborough to-night. I won’t risk railway travel for you after dark, at least from Waterloo down there.”

The visitor considered this a moment and then reached out for the scissors on Gilmartin’s table. In a few minutes the desk top was littered with sheets of architect’s paper covered with beautifully executed drawings. A number of typed sheets of foolscap from the waistcoat lining completed the operation, and the drawings having been checked by one of these, Gilmartin provided an envelope large enough to contain them and immediately took the sealed package away to the safe in another room. On his return he found the monk gravely engaged under the admiring eye of Sub-Inspector Williams in re-sewing the ripped lining of his coat with a professional air.

“You’re a useful sort of man, Father Kleinmichel,” Gilmartin commented.

“You bet he is,” the habitually calm Williams declared enthusiastically. “Do you know, Chief, he actually had himself photographed in his make-up for his passport.”

“A wise precaution,” the Irishman approved, “Otherwise you might have had difficulties with the immigration officials, but there would have been no harm in adopting a false name as well.”

“Yes, I had thought of that,” Father Kleinmichel replied, “But the Lord Abbot thought that by disguising myself and slipping out of the monastery through the guest-house as if I were a lay guest I would be reasonably safe. By the way, how is Father Baumgartner? I have heard that he was injured.”

“Oh! Not so bad,” Gilmartin informed him, “In spite of his various accidents. But where did you learn to speak English so well, Father Kleinmichel? In America?”

“Yes,” the other replied, “In one of our Abbeys there—in Belmont, South Carolina.”

“Do you want me any more, sir?” Williams put in.

“Yes. You must go with Father Kleinmichel to this address,” Gilmartin said, handing over to his subordinate the address of a religious community in Highgate, “I have made arrangements for a room there. Be careful not to say it too loudly to the taxi-driver.”

“I should like to go soon if it is convenient,” the monk announced, “For as you may imagine I have not slept since leaving Einsiedeln.”

“Quite so,” Gilmartin agreed, “I am sorry to have kept you so long. However, I will see you to-morrow. I want to ask you a lot of questions about things at Einsiedeln, and also to arrange for your journey to

Alderborough. You may, I think, safely dare to sleep soundly to-night at any rate."

When Williams and his companion had left Gilmartin sat down again at his desk. From his expression it seemed as if he were disappointed.

"No!" he said to himself, "They won't give in like that. I'll bet they'll be on to Father Kleinmichel in no time."

He was only aroused from his reverie by the arrival of a messenger.

"Is Inspector Williams here, sir?" the man asked.

"No, he's gone. What's the matter?"

"A telegram for him, sir."

"Give it to me," Gilmartin ordered, "I'll see that he gets it."

"Very good, sir."

When the messenger had gone the Irishman considered a moment.

"Perhaps I'd better open it," he murmured to himself, "And 'phone it to Highgate so that the Fathers there can give it to him when he gets there."

He tore open the envelope but what he read put all idea of telephoning out of his head for the moment.

The telegram had been handed in at Dieppe and was as follows:

"Importants suites votre affaire Gardez Kleinmichel rigoureusement Présence immédiat représentant Scotland Yard ici nécessaire—Commissaire Police, Dieppe."

XXII. Consultation

LATE though the hour was Gilmartin was able to bring together the Assistant Commissioner and two of the four superintendents of the Criminal Investigation Department known to the newspaper-reading public as "The Big Four," to hear his account of how the case which had begun as a semi-official inquiry had developed into a distinctly grave affair involving the most serious crimes punishable by English Law. Scotland Yard does not insist on frequent reports from its officers on the progress of a case, but leaves the responsible chiefs a great deal of latitude in this as in other directions. It also places a corresponding amount of responsibility on their shoulders. The Irishman, though not afraid of responsibility, knew the danger of secretiveness, that pitfall of many a promising detective, and was fully alive to the advantages of getting the opinion of others whose minds came fresh to the problem in hand. The police chiefs who assembled in the

Assistant Commissioner's room to hear Gilmartin at such an untimely hour had come willingly for they knew that their colleague was not the man to disturb them for trifling reasons.

They sat silent while Gilmartin gave a rapid but almost detailed account of his discoveries from the moment of undertaking the inquiry up to the receipt of the telegram addressed to Sub-Inspector Williams by the Police Commissaire of Dieppe. The silence was prolonged for some minutes after he had finished. The Assistant Commissioner sat staring at his ivory paper knife. Superintendent Meldrum was puffing forth smoke rings at the ceiling, while Pennell rolled with meticulous care and absorption a perfectly-filled and rounded cigarette.

"Let's see that card you spoke about!" Roche said suddenly.

Gilmartin produced the piece of cardboard which had fallen from the dead Yakob's tobacco box.

"H'm!" the Assistant Commissioner grunted, "It's a curious looking thing. I suppose there is no doubt about it being Russian?"

"None whatever," Gilmartin replied, "To my mind at any rate."

"That's good enough for me," his chief rejoined, and turned to the superintendent on his right.

"What do you think of it all, Meldrum?" he asked.

"Huh!" the superintendent replied, "It's a nasty business. To my mind we ought to consult the Foreign Office."

"Why?"

"Because there can be no doubt about it being a case of espionage—not perhaps military espionage in the strict sense of the word, but espionage all the same—on the part of agents of some foreign Power."

"I don't agree," Gilmartin said, "To me it is only a case of theft of plans, of attempted murder, and a few other things like that. And in any case what is there to show which foreign Power is in question?"

"I know that. There aren't enough data to say definitely," Meldrum replied, "But don't you think that everything points to our old friends the Soviet?"

"No! I do not!" was the Irishman's direct and uncompromising answer.

"Why?" the Assistant Commissioner exclaimed, "I must confess I was thinking of the Soviet myself!"

"I could hardly tell you why, sir," Gilmartin said, "I think they're not in it. It's more a feeling than anything else. But in the first place, that identity

card—if that’s what it is—does not bear a single sign of it. Then again, if it is a case of the Soviet why should there be Germans involved in it?”

“As a matter of fact,” Meldrum countered, “You have no real evidence that there are, but even if you had, why not? According to your translation of that thing it’s an International business and — —”

“No!” Gilmartin contradicted, “I didn’t translate that first word as ‘International.’ I said, ‘Universal.’ As a matter of fact literal translation would be more like: ‘World-wide Union (or “League” if you like) of Liberty.’ Not that it makes an essential difference, I admit!”

“Not a bit!” the superintendent insisted doggedly, “It’s the same thing. ‘International’ or ‘Universal’—It’s all one, just as the Soviet Government and the Third International are the same whatever they may say to the contrary. The only difference is that non-Russians are members of the latter—the damned fools! What’s to prevent some of their tools being German or—or—or Patagonians for that matter? Oh! if you like I’ll substitute for the Soviet the Third International. They’re the lads at the bottom of this, you may bet your boots.”

“How do you explain the fact that they have paid for the property they have taken or damaged?” the Assistant Commissioner asked, “That doesn’t sound like Bolshevism I must admit.”

“Policy, sir! Policy!” Meldrum repeated, “To put themselves right with the bourgeois whose property they needed. Possibly a bid for silence, knowing that most people have their price.”

“I’m afraid that’s rather weak for you, Meldrum,” the Assistant Commissioner commented with a smile, “I must say that on second thoughts I am inclined to agree with Gilmartin. It doesn’t sound like Bolshevism, but on the other hand what the devil is it? By the way, Gilmartin, have those bank-notes been traced yet?”

“There hasn’t been much time, sir,” Gilmartin replied, “The last I heard was that some of them were paid out to Lord Letchworth personally about ten days ago. The others, the bank thinks, probably came over from one of the French or Belgian Banks. They are making inquiries.”

“Lord Letchworth!” the Assistant Commissioner laughed, “Well, he is certainly not a Bolshevik. If anything he is a dyed-in-the-wool die-hard!”

“Yes,” Meldrum muttered, “The sort that makes more Bolsheviks than ever Trotsky converted. I suppose you will inquire, Gilmartin, where they went from him—the notes, I mean?”

“Yes. Inspector Hughes will do that.”

Assistant Commissioner Roche turned to the other superintendent who had not said a word.

“What do you think, Pennell?” he asked, “What sort of a gang are they?”

Superintendent Pennell, a tall, grave man, looked up from the scrutiny of his boots with a wintry smile.

“Does it matter what they are?” he asked, “I agree with Meldrum when he says that it smells of a species of espionage, but I also agree with Gilmartin when he says that what concerns us as ordinary policemen is the kidnapping business, larceny, arson, attempted murder and possibly murder. If I may say so I think that we are merely wasting time talking like this.”

Gilmartin nodded emphatic agreement.

“I take it,” Pennell went on in his precise judicial manner, “That Gilmartin’s reason for consulting us is that the case is getting complicated enough and has sufficient importance, or perhaps I should say sufficient sidelines of importance, to warrant more than one responsible officer taking charge of a portion.”

“Precisely,” the Irishman confirmed, “And I feel that with the arrival of the drawings things are coming to a head—or possibly to several heads—and I can’t be everywhere at once.”

“Then what do you advise, Pennell?” Roche asked.

“Let us get things clear first!” the superintendent replied, “Matters at present stand thus! Pull me up anybody if you don’t agree. This is how I see it: A series of attempts have been made here and abroad to lay hold of valuable plans. Connected with these attempts it would appear that several laybrothers of a monastery have disappeared—not of their own free will; several other monks have been injured more or less seriously; a murderous attack has been made on the life of a potential informer; a presumed member of the gang committed suicide when captured; a house which sheltered members of the gang—and possibly their prisoners—has been burned to the ground. Simultaneously—or almost—other valuable drawings have been stolen elsewhere—the subsequent sending of money does not from our point of view alter the fact of their theft—and there is a proven link between the two cases. These, I think, are the material facts.”

Pennell had addressed himself to the blotter on the Assistant Commissioner’s writing-table. He looked up now at each of his hearers in turn, and finding no contradictory sign went on in the same monotonous, unimpassioned manner:

“Now, what do we know of the persons suspected in connection with these matters? Take them in turn. There is the man whom we know as

Gottschalk. We know definitely that he was connected with the theft of documents from the young electrical engineer. We also know that he was connected with the house at Golders Green and with the struggle in the grounds of Alderborough Abbey. That is all. There is the man known only as Otto. We know that he was connected with the house at Golders Green, that he was concerned in the disappearance of at least some of the laybrothers, and in the attack in the Abbey wood. Then there is a woman known as Mrs. Hoffmeyer and at least two unknown men. That is really all we know.”

“It sounds very little,” Gilmartin commented ruefully, “When you take a hand at boiling things down.”

“Doesn’t matter,” the superintendent replied with a wave of his hand, “What we don’t know is equally important at this stage, for it tells us how to direct our efforts. Let us go into that! The mere putting of our difficulties into words will help us to get a clear idea of what we want to find out. Firstly, we don’t really know the whereabouts of any of the people I have mentioned. That is really our principal problem. Somebody has said that if Scotland Yard knows a name under which anybody has lived they will find him. However that may be, the knowledge of a name certainly helps. To tackle our problem properly we must divide it up and analyse what we’ve got. There are other things than names. Take Gottschalk! Isn’t it rather a noteworthy fact that after the morning of the 5th November nothing more has been seen or heard of him? Queries:—Has he left the country? Is he still alive? As for Otto, we are up against the fact that we know him by no other name, but on the other hand— —”

“By the way,” Meldrum interrupted the rather didactic monologue, “Have you ever considered the possibility, Gilmartin, that Gottschalk is simply Otto or one of the others disguised. Remember what Inspector Hughes reported!”

“He is certainly not Otto,” Pennell answered before Gilmartin could say anything, “Hoskins saw them together.”

“Still,” Meldrum insisted, “I don’t see why if Mrs. Hoffmeyer was a young women and an elderly one at the same time, the same thing couldn’t be true of Gottschalk. It’s my opinion he was Mr. Hoffmeyer in his two capacities of elderly and young man.

“Oh,” he hurried on as Pennell was about to say something, “I don’t insist that he was Otto. We have no proof that the man the neighbours saw at Golders Green was Otto.”

“No,” Pennell replied, “but we do know that Otto actually was an inmate of the house in Golders Green. He is, as I say, elusive, and so is Mrs.

Hoffmeyer, though we have the doubtful advantage of a typewritten note from her. She is certainly a very shadowy sort of person altogether who eludes us fairly successfully. Queries: Was she the housekeeper of the house at Golders Green? Was she the woman who visited that burglar in hospital? What is her nationality? In fact was she one woman or two? The other observed or suspected members of the gang are like supers on the stage. Their names are not on the programme.”

Pennell stopped and rolled carefully another cigarette. The others watched him, fascinated.

“All these queries,” he went on then, “Seem to me to be essential points if we want to find the people in question. There is of course the general question of *what* they all are. It would certainly help if we knew the origin and aims of the organization to which they appear to belong. Is it a formal organisation or is it merely a temporary banding together of a number of criminals?”

“This identity card,” Gilmartin remarked, “Would seem to indicate quite a high stage of organisation. Then there is the money, and the veiled reference in the notes sent to the recipients of the money to at least an association of people banded together with a common object.”

“The card may be misleading,” Pennell reminded him, “You must consider the possibility that this Russian who killed himself may have belonged to a Russian organisation—political or otherwise—in addition to being in this business. The identity card may refer to that.”

Gilmartin shook his head doubtfully.

“Oh!” Pennell went on, “I don’t mind admitting that I think that it is a highly organised gang. I am only pointing out weaknesses in our chain of inferences. As a matter of fact it is my own private opinion—useless of course as evidence, this—that it is not merely a criminal organisation. It is criminal, of course, since they commit crimes, but there also seems to be something—well—something, if you like, a cut above mere crime in this. Perhaps it would not be a bad idea to let the Special Branch have what information we can give. They might be able to dig up something linking up with it in some way.”

“Yes,” the Assistant Commissioner agreed, “I’ll see about that.”

“I notice,” came Meldrum’s bass voice, “That from start to finish you never mention the body found on Waterloo Bridge.”

“Deliberately so,” Pennell replied, “For I have heard nothing reliable which connects it with the case before us.”

“You forget the underlinen,” Gilmartin put in quietly.

“No, I had not forgotten that,” the superintendent told him, “But if I remember aright the linen marks were not identified by the monks of Alderborough, so it was certainly not that of any of the missing brothers.”

“As a matter of fact,” Gilmartin said, “I should have corrected or rather amplified that. The body was certainly not that of one of the missing laybrothers. The Abbot said so at once. As for the linen they were not so sure. You see, in a monastery, all property is in common. There is no individual property even in clothes. The procurator admitted the possibility of, say, the linen of a visiting monk being washed at the Abbey and put into general store and reissued without any identifying mark. What I was thinking of was: if these people used the habits—the outside clothes—of the laybrothers to disguise themselves why should they not use their underlinen to cover that body in order to lead us astray. I don’t put that forward with any degree of confidence. In fact I intended keeping it to myself; I don’t forget that the stockings on that body had to my mind never been worn inside boots, which is a decided set-back to the theory.”

“Does not the fact that the body was placed there on the 5th of November suggest anything to you?” the Assistant Commissioner asked.

“No. I can’t say that it does,” Pennell replied, “Except the fact that the man was killed on a mighty convenient day for the disposal of his body.”

“Well,” Roche declared, “I can’t help thinking that the body on the bridge was that of Gottschalk.”

“Why?” Superintendent Fennel asked.

“Well,” the Assistant Commissioner answered, “In the first place Gottschalk disappeared on the 5th of November, and the body was placed there on the 5th of November.”

“You forget, sir,” the superintendent countered, “That the landlady heard him in his rooms at an hour when that body was already in the hands of the police.”

“She heard *somebody*,” the Assistant Commissioner retorted, “Who she *thought* was Gottschalk because of his cough.”

“A cough is a very individual thing,” Meldrum murmured.

The Assistant Commissioner ignored this and went on:

“Secondly we have the undoubted resemblance between the photograph of the body and the sketch of Gottschalk. The differences would be explained by the absence of beard on the body.”

“But why should Gottschalk be killed?” Pennell asked.

“That,” Roche replied, “Is another matter. There are two possible theories. Don’t forget that the Russian, Yakob, poisoned himself when he failed. Gottschalk did not poison himself but perhaps he allowed himself willingly or unwillingly to be punished for failure. That is perhaps a rule of the organization.”

“And what do you suggest was his failure?” Pennell asked with a smile.

“Your prodigious memory overlooks some things, Pennell,” the Assistant Commissioner laughed, “You forget that on that day Father Baumgartner’s luggage was stolen and that the plans were not in it.”

“H’m!” Pennell admitted, “Plausible! Very plausible, but somehow it seems to be far-fetched and inconclusive.”

“I admit,” Roche declared, “That it is not my favourite theory. What I think happened is that Gottschalk, having got young what’s-his-name’s—Wylie’s—plans, engineered a double-cross on the gang. He made his preparations for getting away, even to the point of shaving off his facial adornments, but was found out. Don’t forget that the organisation had a good intelligence service, as Gilmartin knows. You know also from their own admission that human life had very little value in their eyes. So they calmly outed Gottschalk, dressed him up and the rest. Then they got into his lodgings with his own key and replaced his own clothes there. Incidentally they recovered Wylie’s plans from there as well.”

“Your imagination is certainly working overtime to-night, sir.” Gilmartin laughed.

“Damned ingenious,” Meldrum growled, “But I still hold that this Gottschalk business is merely a temporary identity under which Otto or another of the gang—possibly even its big boss—was hiding. He’s calling himself something else now.”

The Assistant Commissioner looked at his watch.

“It is getting late, gentlemen,” he reminded them. “We certainly are working overtime.”

“What about this telegram from Dieppe?” Gilmartin asked, “It needs looking into.”

“What do you suggest, Pennell?” Roche asked.

The superintendent looked at Gilmartin.

“It’s Gilmartin’s case,” he began doubtfully, “I don’t like to — —”

“Go ahead,” the Irishman said at once, “I shall be glad of suggestions.”

“Thanks. Then, this is what I suggest: that I go over to Dieppe tomorrow and go into the developments over there, whatever they are. As I am

not such a good linguist as Gilmartin I propose that I should take Williams with me, who also has the advantage, obviously, of having met the people there. Then, Gilmartin, as he is at home in the monastery, should escort this Father Kleinmichel to Alderborough and remain there to watch things from that end. I should advise that he take a couple of our people on whom he can depend—Peters, for example, and a couple of detective constables. He will have more faith in them than in the local police.”

Gilmartin nodded approval.

“Then,” the superintendent continued, “Meldrum could get in touch with the Special Branch and have a shot at finding the gang’s London headquarters.”

“Humph!” Meldrum grunted, “The easiest job of the lot—I don’t think!”

“You know that you have the best nose in the place for that sort of work,” the Assistant Commissioner laughed, “or the most uncanny luck.”

“Humph!”

“Anybody suggest anything else?” Roche asked. “Nobody? Good! Then that’s settled! Make your own arrangements, gentlemen.”

The Assistant Commissioner rose and reached for his hat, but his hand stopped over the telephone receiver as the buzzer whirled.

“Hello!” he called out, “Yes. Yes, he’s here!”

He landed the receiver to Gilmartin.

“For you, Gilmartin,” he said, “St. Joseph’s Retreat, Highgate, speaking, whatever that is.”

Gilmartin listened to what was said at the other end. “Good!” he replied then, “’Phone the local station. Get two men from there and send them here with him—handcuffed, you understand, handcuffed! I shall be waiting. And don’t leave your posts—any of you—whatever happens!”

“Can you beat it?” the Irishman then addressed his colleagues as he replaced the receiver, “As a precaution I had the place watched and my lads have arrested a man—a foreigner, they say—trying to enter the house where I sent Father Kleinmichel. Yet nobody except the Father Superior and I knew that he was going there. I didn’t even say it aloud to Williams!”

XXIII. Another Attempt

BOTH MELDRUM—AS the one now interested in the gang’s headquarters—and Gilmartin were still at New Scotland Yard when two constables brought in the would-be burglar from Highgate. He was a sturdy blue-eyed man of

about twenty-five of erect bearing and imperturbable mien. His square head covered with fair hair cut *en brosse* did not move from its stiff pose over the well-knit shoulders as he stood at attention with his escort when Meldrum and Gilmartin in turn interrogated him. A stony silence greeted every question, whether in English, German or Russian.

“By George!” Meldrum muttered, “I wish we could give him a good old American third degree—and get away with it!”

Finally they gave it up, but before sending the man to the cells Gilmartin took the precaution of searching personally every inch of his clothes and person with the closest attention. No identity card rewarded the effort, but tucked away under the waist lining of the trousers the Irishman found three little pellets wrapped in tissue paper which he put aside for analysis. This was the occasion for the only display of emotion on the part of the prisoner, and the two constables had difficulty in holding him when he tried to recover the pellets from Gilmartin.

On arrival at Highgate the following morning the Irishman found that the watchers had not been again disturbed, and that the Einsiedeln monk, though complaining that he was unable to get the dye from his hair and face, was ready for the journey to Alderborough. On the way to Waterloo, Gilmartin told him of the attempted entrance and the subsequent arrest. The half-triumphant air engendered by the successful issue of the journey up to then was succeeded by an obvious uneasiness on receipt of the news.

“How on earth did they find me?” Father Kleinmichel asked, after a silence, “It seems almost miraculous how they get their information.”

“No, Father,” Gilmartin replied, “There is nothing miraculous about it. I should think that you were simply followed all the way from Einsiedeln. They were not sure of you until Williams met you, and perhaps at Victoria neither of you was careful enough. However, the arrest may have scotched their plans.”

“But,” his companion objected, “If so why didn’t they try to get my baggage?”

Gilmartin smiled.

“Well,” he said, “Considering that your only baggage seems to be that little valise which you kept by you, I presume, during the whole journey, they must have thought the attempt too difficult. It is fairly obvious that you are a more wide-awake man than Father Baumgartner.”

“Poor Father Baumgartner!” the other smiled, “His thoughts are always elsewhere. He must be terribly upset by all this.”

"Very naturally," Gilmartin replied, "I am sorry in a way that I sent Inspector Williams to meet you."

"Why?"

"Well," the Irishman answered, "It certainly does look as if you were not really recognised before Dieppe, and that his meeting you there drew the attention of some member of the gang who knew you by sight."

"Possibly," Father Kleinmichel agreed, "And they could easily have followed your inspector and me last night, especially as we once stopped on the way. They could then see me without that false moustache. What a pity I took it off!"

"What's that?" Gilmartin shot out, "You stopped on the way? Where? What for?"

"I remembered on the way from you," the other replied, "That I had promised to inform the Lord Abbot of Einsiedeln of my safe arrival in London, so your inspector brought me to a telegraph office at a railway station—I do not know its name."

"H-m! Probably St. Pancras or King's Cross. They would be open at that time," the detective said, partly to himself.

"So I sent him a telegram," Father Kleinmichel continued, "Also one to Father Baumgartner telling him I was coming to-day."

"I am sorry you did that," Gilmartin commented mildly.

"But why?" the other asked in surprise, "Naturally he would like to know."

"I daresay," the Irishman replied dryly, "But there are others equally anxious to know. We don't know what sources of information these people have. In any case, an observer down at Alderborough would draw his own conclusions if he found that Father Baumgartner got a telegram. However—what's done is done! Here we are at Waterloo!"

On the platform Gilmartin noted with approval that Inspector Peters ignored him completely and that three other young men of different types known personally to him who were stationed at various points along the train were equally unconscious of his existence. It did not escape his attention that two of these happened to enter the compartment to the right of his own, while Peters and the other found seats in the compartment on the left. Evidently the emissary to Alderborough was to be well guarded even though the end of the journey seemed near.

At the Abbey the visitors were met by the guestmaster, now completely recovered from his bruises. On being introduced to the detective's nondescript companion in ready-made clothes he seemed taken aback for a

moment, but recovering quickly greeted him as a brother in religion in spite of the novel attire. The new arrival after a hasty "Glad to know you" which was with the rest of his English a reminder of his transatlantic days asked at once if he could see Father Baumgartner.

"Father Abbot has given instructions that you are to be brought to Father Baumgartner's cell at once," Father Massey replied, "Perhaps you would like to see him also, Mr. Gilmartin. He is no longer confined to bed now."

"Yes. I should like to see him just for a moment," the detective agreed, and they followed the guestmaster through the cloister.

It was obvious from the meeting of the two confrères that they were glad to see each other. The guestmaster and the Chief Inspector could only look on while a stream of questions and answers in guttural German passed to and fro between the two. Gilmartin noted that Father Baumgartner already looked brighter than when he had last seen him. Evidently his nerves had been badly shaken by the whole affair and this flow of words betokened a relief from the tension which had never been overtly admitted. He could now even joke about his assistant's dyed hair and sunburn-stained face.

The first outburst of greeting over, Father Baumgartner turned to Gilmartin with outstretched hand.

"Mizder Kilmardin," he said in his thick, throaty English, his short-sighted eyes illumined with pleasure, "I musd tank you for the golossal drouble you have taken. Midout your vonderful bregautions my blans would have into de wrong hands vallen and I of this life would not be."

Gilmartin seemed embarrassed and at a loss to know how to answer this speech in the terms it would appear to merit.

"I have done a policeman's duty," he said finally after a pause, "As well as I knew how, but I have yet to do more. I shall not be easy in my mind, for my own sake and for yours, until I have put those who are after the plans under lock and key and found what has become of the laybrothers of this monastery."

"Ah! Dose poor laybrudders!" the wireless enthusiast sighed, "In my choy at Vater Kleinmichel's safe arrifal I was selfish and forgotten had."

Shortly afterwards the detective left the two radio experts to themselves and followed Father Massey downstairs.

"You're looking very glum," the guestmaster remarked when they reached the cloister.

"Do you think so?" Gilmartin asked.

"Yes. You've a frown on you that contrasts strongly with Father Baumgartner's smile."

"I haven't the same reasons that Father Baumgartner has for smiling," the detective retorted with emphasis, "I came down here in the first instance to investigate the disappearance of your laybrothers, not to deliver plans safely. Well, whatever else I may have done, I haven't yet got to the bottom of this gang, nor have I discovered the whereabouts of your laybrothers. Meanwhile, my job here is not finished."

"Here? Why not?"

"Do you think for one moment," Gilmartin asked, "That the gang will abandon all their activities in this part of the world now? Believe me, this is where these same activities are likely to be redoubled."

"M'yes, I suppose you're right!" the guestmaster agreed.

"Of course, I'm right!" the detective rejoined, "It's obvious! But as a matter of fact, talking of glumness, you're none too bright yourself."

"I'm not *feeling* particularly bright, to tell you the truth," Gilmartin's fellow-countryman admitted, "I'm worried."

"About this business?"

"Y-yes. That is naturally worrying me like everybody else in the community."

"May I say," Gilmartin said, turning to look at his companion, "That I thought you didn't seem too pleased at Father Kleinmichel's arrival."

"I wonder why you think that!" the guestmaster replied.

"Well, you seemed rather—er—surprised when I introduced him."

"Did I? Well, who would think of meeting a brother Benedictine in a suit of reach-me-downs and a made-up tie?"

"Oh! That was it, was it?" Gilmartin said dryly, and then laughed, "I wish then that you'd seen him last night before he pulled off his false moustache. It was the funniest sight imaginable."

"Did he do that?" the monk laughed in his turn, "Now that was clever! I'd never have thought of that if I'd been in his shoes."

"It didn't prevent a mysterious individual trying to enter the Passionist monastery in Highgate where I got him a bed last night!" the detective said seriously.

"Did you get the fellow?" Father Massey asked, with considerable interest in his tones.

"Yes."

"Did he talk?"

"No. I am sure, however, that he is a member of the gang."

"Humph!" the guestmaster murmured, "That's interesting."

"I should like to see Father Abbot if he isn't busy." Gilmartin changed the subject.

"On the contrary," Father Massey told him, "He bade me bring you to him as soon as you felt inclined to see him."

As the detective entered the Abbot's cell, and before the initial greetings were finished, the old porter laybrother entered with a telegram. Dom Chavasse took it from him and nodded.

"That will be all right, brother," he said and waited till the door had closed behind the laybrother.

"I have followed your advice," he continued addressing the detective, "About a strict censorship of correspondence, though I do not particularly like it. As I expected, moreover, there has been nothing."

He looked again at the orange envelope he held in his hand.

"This is for Father Baumgartner," he went on, "As a matter of fact I always open telegrams in any case, so I shall open this one before delivering it."

Dom Chavasse slit the envelope open and read the pink enclosure which he then handed to Gilmartin.

"Curious that that should come just while you are here!" he commented.

Gilmartin read the message: "Can you come interview directors Tuesday morning ten thirty if so car will meet ten fifteen train Waterloo—Marconi."

The Irishman read the telegram a second time and then looked at the Abbot for a moment in silence.

"What is it, Mr. Gilmartin?" Dom Chavasse asked.

"This was handed in at the East Strand Post Office," Gilmartin answered, "And may be all right, but would you mind, Father Abbot, sending a reply-paid telegram to Marconi's asking if they sent this telegram?"

"Do you think—after all—Why not?" the Abbot began disjointedly, "Everything must be suspect now. Yes, this may be a trick."

"I don't like that bit about the car." Gilmartin declared, "A strange car could take a man anywhere. It's an old trick of kidnappers too."

The Abbot said no more but sat down at his desk and wrote.

"I'll have it sent," the detective said rising, "Please don't mention this until we have received a reply. It may be all right after all."

Gilmartin left the Abbey by the front door. Outside the entrance gates he beckoned to a man on the other side of the road. It was one of the men who had travelled in the same train as he from Waterloo.

“Send off this telegram—reply paid,” the Chief Inspector ordered, “The post-office is a hundred yards away to the right of this road.”

“Very good, sir.”

“Then come back here. I’ll wait till you come.”

The Irishman waited until he saw that his messenger had returned from his observation post and went in search of Inspector Peters at the spot already agreed upon between them as being that from which that worthy could best superintend his watchers. When he returned to the Abbey more than an hour later the porter asked him to go up to the Abbot’s cell. There Dom Chavasse handed him a pink form in silence. Gilmartin read:

“Nothing known here of telegram mentioned but pleased see Father Baumgartner his convenience.—Simpson, Marconi.”

XXIV. Meldrum’s Luck

WHILE CHIEF INSPECTOR GILMARTIN was holding a long consultation with the Abbot of Alderborough and his two coadjutors in the government of the Abbey, Superintendent Meldrum, that organising specialist of the Criminal Investigation Department, who had spent his morning planning what promised to be the most difficult search of his career, was groaning at the meagre prospect of success to be foreseen. He rapped out a forcible oath when a knock at the door interrupted his train of thought.

“What is it?” he barked at the messenger who obeyed his profane invitation to enter.

“Very sorry, sir,” the man announced, “I knew you didn’t want to be disturbed but it’s a young lady who wouldn’t be put off.”

“A young lady?” Meldrum growled, “What young lady can want to see *me*? What’s her name?”

“Miss Jean Cannan,” the messenger began, “She— —”

“Never heard of her? What does she want?”

“I don’t know, sir, she— —”

“Then why don’t you ask her? What are you there for?”

The messenger could have reminded his superior officer of the regulation contained in the Police Code which expressly forbids inquiry by a

subordinate into the nature of a visitor's business with his chiefs, but knowing the superintendent in all his moods and tenses he saw that he was now "in one of his paddies" and refrained.

"The young lady wanted to see Chief Inspector Gilmartin," the man said when he could succeed in getting in a word, "So I thought, sir—I mean I said the Chief Inspector was absent and — —"

"Why the devil didn't you say so at first?" Meldrum interrupted, "Send her up, and next time don't talk so much!"

Far from showing resentment the man was actually grinning as he went off down the stairs to the entrance door.

"Come this way, please," he said to Jean, and then slowed down to allow her to come up with him. When she had done so he added confidentially: "The super's in a terrible wax about something, miss. He's worritin' about a case, I think, an' 'e don't mean nothin' by it, miss. 'E'll be all right when his worry's over and he'll apologise 'andsome, he will. We knows 'im, but you're different. Don't you get frightened at his little ways."

"It would take a great deal more than one of your London police chiefs to frighten me, young man," Jean Cannan told her conductor, "I'm worried too, and I guess he is going to know it."

"Don't say afterwards I didn't tell you, miss," the man whispered as he opened the superintendent's door for her.

He waited outside to hear the expected growl, but had to flee at the first words of the visitor.

"I could 'a' bust wi' laughin'," he told a colleague later, "She walked in as cool an' neat as a tuppenny ice-cream brick. 'My!' sez she in 'er little American way, 'It's like gettin' in to Buckingham Palace, just to says a few words to a grumpy old man behind a desk.' Then, mate, I 'ad to run, for fear the ole man'd hear me laughin'."

As a matter of fact the superintendent was so taken aback by the unexpected greeting that he forgot to rise—a courtesy which even his worst moods never allowed him to omit.

"Well, I'm — —"

"I dare say," Jean interrupted coolly, "But I've come here to ask a question and get an answer—not to hear about your personal reactions."

Meldrum had now recovered his poise, and was his own man again. He rose and gestured to a chair.

"Sit down, please," he said with a grim smile under his grey moustache, "As you are so direct I will allow you two minutes for your question and one

for my answer.”

“Well, I guess that will be four times too much for me,” was Jean’s self-possessed retort, “My question is: Where is Gilbert Wylie?”

“Eh? What? I don’t understand!” the superintendent blundered out.

“Oh! My goodness!” the girl exclaimed, “I do wish that nice man Mr. Gilmartin were here. He would show infinitely more intelligence, I’m sure.”

Meldrum’s patience broke and he thumped his desk.

“Miss Whatever-your-name-is!” he thundered, “I—I— —”

“My name is Cannan—Jean Cannan,” came the interruption in dulcet tones.

“I—I— — Why I’ve got a daughter your age,” the superintendent resumed feebly, “You mustn’t waste my time like this.”

“I don’t see the connection,” Jean replied with quiet impertinence, “But I sincerely hope that your daughter is like her mother. And, pardon me, I must remind you that it is you who are wasting my time. I have asked my question in less time than you allowed me. You are very much— —”

The superintendent had another of his brusque changes of mood. Jean stopped in astonishment as the grey-haired detective burst out into a series of loud guffaws. Had she known it, it was her remark about his daughter—the apple of his eye—which had operated the miracle.

“She is—thank Goodness!” Meldrum spluttered between gusts of laughter, “Haw! Haw! Haw! Like her mother! That’s a good one! I apologise, Miss Cannan. You’ve perfectly right! I’m a foolish old man.”

He became serious.

“Would you mind,” he said, “Repeating your question and explaining a little. You see, I haven’t the faintest idea of what you’re talking about.”

Jean smiled.

“Then I guess the time limit— —”

“Goes by the board? Yes! I take it all back!” the superintendent retracted handsomely.

Jean smiled her acknowledgement and conquered completely.

“Gilbert Wylie is my fiancé,” she explained, “I received a letter from him saying that on Mr. Gilmartin’s advice he is disappearing for a time and — —”

“O-o-o-h! Now I remember!” Meldrum interrupted, “That’s the young chap whose drawings were stolen! What an ass I am!”

“That is who I mean.”

"Now, I'm very sorry, Miss Cannan, but I cannot tell you where he is."

"Does that mean," Jean asked, "That you really cannot or that you just won't?"

"It means exactly what I say, Miss Cannan," the superintendent replied, "I cannot. I haven't the faintest idea where he is. Chief Inspector Gilmartin—probably deliberately—kept that to himself, but you can rest assured that he did so for a good reason."

"There can be no reason good enough," the girl said emphatically, "For hiding him from me."

"All I know is," Meldrum replied, "What Gilmartin told me, and that is that the young man's life was in danger if he didn't get under cover. And you can take my word for it that when Chief Inspector Gilmartin says that a thing like that is so it *is* so."

"But," Jean objected, "Why should his whereabouts be kept from *me*?"

"How would you like him to be traced," Meldrum retorted, "And possibly killed—through, say, a letter from you?"

The girl was silent for a moment.

"Then," she decided, "I must see Mr. Gilmartin. Where is he?"

"He is out of Town," Meldrum told her.

"Of course he is out of Town, but where?" Jean insisted, "He can't be far away. This country is not so very big."

"No, I daresay you could steal it out of the United States without it being missed—much," the superintendent agreed.

"Come now, Mr. Meldrum!" the girl said firmly, "You are not going to put me off with a lesson in geography. I want to know where Mr. Gilmartin is and I am going to stay here till you tell me."

"Now, look here, Miss Cannan," Meldrum replied with equal firmness, "You must appreciate my point of view. In the first place it would be most irregular to tell anybody the whereabouts of an officer on duty, and secondly, you may be Mr. Wylie's fiancée as you say or—on the other hand you may not."

"Oh!" Jean exclaimed indignantly, "What do you mean?"

Meldrum was studying her closely. He was not entirely sincere in his expression of doubt, but as an experienced detective he had considered the possibility of this being a ruse on the part of the gang to discover Wylies's hiding-place. This girl certainly did not look the part he had hypothetically created for her, but owing to Gilmartin's economy of words he had never heard of her, and even if he had nothing less than very exceptional

circumstances would be necessary to persuade him to inform an outsider of the whereabouts of a colleague engaged on a case.

“Think it over, Miss Cannan,” he said gently.

Jean nodded helplessly and was silent for a moment.

“Oh!” she exclaimed suddenly, “They know me at Gilbert’s boarding-house and could identify me there as his fiancée. Besides—oh!—I have thought of something else! I made a sketch of the man who stole Gilbert’s plans. You must have seen it. I can describe it, I can describe the paper, indeed, I could make another sketch for you.”

Meldrum smiled.

“So you are the artist,” he said.

“Yes, Mr. Meldrum, and I don’t think you really believe me to be a—a—well, that I am just trying to vamp you for information.”

“W-well!” Meldrum hesitated, “I don’t know! It’s most irregular! I may be an old fool—a grumpy old fool too, but— —”

“Oh! Don’t make fun of me, please!” Jean pleaded.

“Sorry! I didn’t mean to do that,” the superintendent apologised, “What I was going to say was—well, it doesn’t matter. I’ll tell you where Gilmartin is, and you can deal with him.”

“Oh! You dear man!”

“Don’t talk too soon,” Meldrum warned, “I know Gilmartin well enough to tell you that he is not always as nice as you think to ladies. If by any chance you get in his way, you’ll be sorry for yourself, and wish you were talking to a grumpy old man behind a desk.”

“*I’m* not frightened,” Jean declared bravely.

After she had left him the gruff old superintendent sat still for some moments.

“Gosh!” he muttered to himself, “They’re a fair caution, these American girls! You never know what they’re going to do. Now, some of them in her shoes would have howled the house down. You’d never think from her manner that she was nearly off her head with anxiety!”

The messenger at the outer door certainly did not receive any such impression, for seeing her tripping down the stairs towards him he grinned as if at an old friend.

“Well, miss,” he said, “The super ’asn’t bit yore ’ead off?”

“Don’t you say a word against him!” Jean admonished him with mock severity, “He’s a very nice man!”

"Well! I'm blowed!" the man declared, but recovered in time to accost an ill-assorted couple who were entering.

"Is Chief Inspector Gilmartin in?" the foremost asked, "I've been trying to get his room on the 'phone but there's no reply."

"Sorry, sir. I didn't reckonise you at first," the man apologised, "No, sir, he's not in, nor likely to be for a couple of days, I hear. But Superintendent Meldrum is seeing his visitors. Shall I announce you, sir?"

"Yes."

The man did not make a personal visit this time to Meldrum's room but lifted the receiver of the house telephone in his little box-office.

"Superintendent Meldrum?" he called, "Detective-Inspector Gibbs to see you, sir."

He nodded to Gibbs.

"Come on, John!" the East End detective said to his companion who bowed silently and followed him up the stairs.

"Lumme!" the messenger said to himself, "A Chinaman! Them lads is mostly in custody when they comes 'ere."

"G'morning, Gibbs!" Meldrum greeted, "Hello? Who's this?"

"This is Foo Wong Hui," Gibbs introduced his companion, "He has a statement to make and— —"

"Sit down, Mr. Foo," the superintendent invited courteously, "What's the statement about?"

"It's about Chief Inspector Gilmartin's case, I think, sir," the inspector replied, "I didn't wish to take hasty action and brought John—I mean Foo—here. I think you will find, sir, that his information will clear up the question of the missing laybrothers."

XXV. Foo Wong Hui "Tells"

"WHAT do you know about missing laybrothers?" Meldrum asked, "I thought nobody outside this building knew about that."

"I only know what Chief Inspector Gilmartin told me, sir," Gibbs replied, "If you wouldn't mind listening to John—I mean Foo—perhaps — —"

"Wait a minute!"

The superintendent pushed a bell button.

"Send Sergeant Wilson here," he ordered the messenger who answered.

The Chinaman, who was a stout, glabrous man dressed in a padded alpaca jacket and trousers and patent leather shoes, sat perfectly motionless with his hands hidden in his wide sleeves awaiting patiently the signal to speak. Sergeant Wilson came in, a reporter's notebook in his hand, a pencil behind each ear and another held ready.

"Sit down, Wilson, here," Meldrum directed, vacating his own chair and taking an arm-chair, "Take down every word."

The superintendent turned to the Chinaman.

"Now, Mr. Foo, begin," he ordered.

"I tell stoly my way, ol you ask questions?" Foo Wong Hui inquired, his head to one side.

"Tell your story in your own way," Meldrum directed, "If anything isn't clear I'll ask."

"Evlyting velly cleal," the Chinaman said unemotionally, "You leddy, Salgen Wilson?"

Sergeant Wilson smiled his readiness.

"He's a bit of a character," Gibbs whispered to his superior officer, "But he's a good scout—and reliable."

"Inspectol Gibbs know me," Foo Wong Hui began, "I Foo Wong Hui, tea and spice melchant of Glenade Stleet."

"Grenade Street," the inspector interpreted.

"Yes, I say Glenade Stleet," the Chinaman continued, "Last night I go flom my shop along Thlee Colt Street."

"Three Colt Street?" the sergeant stenographer inquired.

"Yes, not fal flom my shop. I walk down and then I stop. I heal flom the glound at one place sing-song—so!"

Foo Wong Hui in a not unmusical tenor gave a perfect rendering of the seventh tone of the Psalmody as sung by the monks of Solesmes.

"Yes, yes!" Meldrum said eagerly, "A psalm tune!"

"I say to myself," Foo went on, "Hele no Chlistian chulch, only empty house, and listen mole. The sing-song stop soon and I heal talk, but I can't undelstand."

"Wait a minute!" the superintendent interrupted, "You say this singing came from the ground. What do you mean exactly?"

"I tell!" the Chinaman went on imperturbably, "I stop and listen. Some time the voice come cleal and some time velly not cleal—like man walk up and down away flom me and back. I look at the wall—nothing! I look low

down and I see a glating—velly dilty glating, at the foot of the wall. I listen again and I hear voice from it. I call: 'Who is that?' but nobody answer; man talk like he say plays in Christian Church. I wait for he finish and I call again, but he not hear. I say not my business and I go to go away but a motol car stop at the corner and a man and a lady come out. Man see me and say something to the lady. Lady, she come to me and she ask: 'Who are you?' I say: Foo Wong Hui, merchant of tea and spice of Glenade Street.' 'What you do here?' she say. I say: 'I go from my shop. Why not? This Thelme Colt Street, the way from my shop.' The man then come and say: 'I saw you look on the ground. What for?' I answer: 'I don't think it your business, sir, if poor Chinaman lose sixpence on street and look for it.' The lady then talk to the man and she say something in a not-English language—Russian I think. I understand one word only."

"What was that?" Meldrum asked.

"It sound like 'Kitai'," Foo replied, "That mean China in Russian. I know because I hear Russian soldiers in Khabarovsk say one time long ago."

"Excuse me, sir," the sergeant stenographer put in, "But the word 'Kitai' means 'China' in more languages than in Russian. It is the word in several Oriental languages."

"Sounds to me," Gibbs added, "As if that was the word the old word 'Cathay' comes from."

"Shouldn't be surprised," Meldrum grunted, indifferent to the philological side of the matter, "What happened next?"

"The lady say 'good night,' and I walk away. At the next corner, the corner of Park Street—"

"Park Street," Gibbs supplied.

"At that corner," Foo Wong Hui went on, "I hide and look back. Lady and man go into empty house and leave motol car in the street. Inspector Gibbs know me. I not do merchant. I straight tradesman, and I sell only tea and spice. I go home and tell my wife. She good wife—English wife. She say 'Wong, I think that a good business. You get your brother Feng quick-quick and watch what happen. If it good you tell Inspector Gibbs.' I run get brother Foo Feng Hui. He watch at corner of Limehouse Causeway. I put on China boots—you know, soft boots—and I go unscrew nail-hole in tire of car."

"He means the tire-valve," Gibbs informed the sergeant, who was looking puzzled.

"That's light—tire-valve. Then when nail go out, I screw again, and I run to corner of Challie Brown's, where I know taxi wait, and I get taxi. I pay

taximan wait fol me, and I get inside and wait. Long time pass, and I see nothing, but then I look and see man and lady come out. They get in cal, and then dlive off, but stop soon. The man get out and pump ail in, and then dlive off again. I follow in taxi—not velly close, and it goes velly fal—to Highgate, but lady she get out and go into Moolgate Undelglound Station. I follow motol. Now I wish I follow lady. At Highgate Hill he stop and leave motol in side stleet. Then I leave taxi. I watch. Man look lound two-thlee time, and go over wall into chulch glounds. I say: Chulch sing-song in Thlee Colt Stleet! Bulglal flom Thlee Colt Stleet go in chulch in Highgate! Funny! I wait see. Not long. P'laps half-houl. Then I see two p'lice come and pliest open flont gate of Chulch galden. P'lice go in, and then come out with bulglal. A man pass, and I ask what call that chulch. He say 'Holy Joe,' but p'laps he joke."

"That's the name some of the people round there give to St. Joseph's Retreat, Highgate, the Passionist monastery," the sergeant stenographer interpreted.

"I know, I know," Meldrum said excitedly, "This gets interesting. What then?"

"I take bulglal's motol cal," Foo Wong Hui announced impassively, "I know how to dlive, and I dlive home. Then I tell wife. She say: 'You go to-morrow molning, tell Inspector Gibbs one time, p'laps swag in house in Thlee Colt Stleet.' I say yes. I sleep. In molning I go see Inspector Gibbs—not his distlict, but he know me. He listen. We come hele. That's all."

"And very good, too, Mr. Foo Wong Hui!" Meldrum exulted, "Very good indeed! Now Gibbs, you and I have work to do."

Foo Wong Hui looked from one to the other.

"You pay for taxi?" he asked.

"Sure thing!" Meldrum informed him, "And probably a bit over for—er—expenses."

"Velly good! I not lich!" Foo Wong Hui bowed.

"Oh! By the way," the superintendent asked, "Where's that car?"

"I've got it," Gibbs answered, "There was nothing in it except a woman's fur stole."

"Now I go back," the Chinaman announced, "My wife no like stay in shop velly long time."

"Right!" Meldrum smiled, "But not a word to anybody! I presume you've told nobody except your wife and your brother about this?"

"Nobody."

“They won’t talk, I hope.”

“Wife, she not talk. Blother—he do what I say do, he not do what I say not do. Inspectol Gibbs know.”

“That’s quite right, sir,” Gibbs corroborated, “See you later, John!”

When the Chinaman had left them Meldrum ordered Wilson to have his notes typed out at once, and turned to the East End Inspector.

“Gibbs,” he said, “If this job comes off, it’s not going to do you any harm.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Oh! No thanks to me. Now let us see what’s to be done! I suppose you’ve no doubt of the truth of the story? The Highgate end I myself know to be true, but it seems funny that a Chinaman should go out of his way to do this sort of thing.”

“Oh! Foo Wong Hui is as good as ten policemen down in Limehouse,” Gibbs replied, “He makes war on all law-breaking of a serious kind. They call him ‘Busy’ John down there. And then—well—I was once in a position to do him a good turn, sir, and in his funny way he is always trying to give me a leg-up.”

“I see. What about that English wife of his he talked about? Who is she?”

“China Sally? As a matter of fact, she is only half English. The other half is Chinese. She is as ugly as the seven deadly sins, but my wife, sir, who doesn’t love many of her sex, says she’s the best woman she ever met. She is a regular god-send to all the kiddies down there.”

“Well! Now what have you done in this matter yourself?” Meldrum asked.

“Before coming on here I posted half a dozen plain-clothes men within sight of the house with orders not to disturb anybody going in, but to arrest quietly everybody that goes away from it.”

“Very good!” the superintendent approved, “We must of course get those monks out—if that’s who they are—but it is equally important, more so, in fact, to get the gang. I think we ought to put off the raid we shall have to make for as long as we can to-day, so as to get as many of them as we can. Let’s go and see the Assistant Commissioner!”

THROUGHOUT the remainder of the day such was the discretion of Gibbs's sentinels that none of the denizens knew that anything untoward was in preparation. Some, indeed, of the less reputable Chinese were inclined to wonder at the absence of some of the local detectives from their usual haunts. They may also have suspected that some of the strange figures which kept appearing in the district were not the casual loiterers they seemed, but if they did it served to make them remove themselves to other parts of the dockside Orient, all of which was to the good from the point of view of the police.

There was a steady, cold drizzle during the calm period of the evening when the legitimate houses of refreshment were busy catering to their clients' wants when two stalwart individuals of the docker type accosted an equally powerfully built navvy, who stopped at the corner of Three Colt Street and Ropemaker Fields to light a stumpy clay pipe.

"Well?" asked one of the docker-like figures—a tall, grey-haired man, "What's doing?"

"Nobody's come out, sir," the navvy replied, handing over his box of matches for the benefit of any passers-by, "There's four people come in, though—three men and a woman."

"Right!" the other replied, "You know your post. Circle to be closed in at eight-thirty sharp!"

"Yus, mate!" the disguised sergeant replied fairly loudly as two Chinamen passed near, "It is a narsty night! Meet yer at the pub, time you said."

"Seems a good man, that, Gibbs!" the big man said to his companion as they walked away.

"He is, sir. One of mine, Sergeant Haines."

Meldrum and Gibbs made a complete tour of the district exchanging a word here and there with various loiterers. They had completed the circle when the former looked at his watch in the light of a bleary street lamp.

"Time we were moving," he said.

As they drew near to the apparently empty house in Three Colt Street which was under observation, mysterious shadows, large and silent, seemed to emerge from every side street and doorway to converge at the same point as themselves. Meldrum said no word, but advanced to the door of the house. Not a sign was there of light in its windows, nor any other indication that it was occupied. A man came up alongside the superintendent.

"Sure you can do it?" Meldrum asked.

“If the door’s not bolted or chained inside, guv’ner, yus!” the man replied, “I put that lock on meself!”

“Right! Carry on! Be as silent as you can.”

A touch on his arm out of the darkness made him wheel round suddenly.

“Sh!” a shadow beside him whispered, “You come hele! You listen! You heal!”

It was Foo Wong Hui! Meldrum wasted no time in cursing him for his presence, though he wondered for a second how he had passed through the cordon which was now tightly drawn round the entire block. He followed the Chinaman a few paces to one side and stooped in obedience to the pressure of his guide’s hand. A voice reached his ear—a decidedly Cockney voice.

“. . . a bit o’ use moanin’, Bruvver Denis,” the superintendent heard distinctly, “The devil tykes care of his own, we all know, but Lord love yer, so does Gawd tyke care of us all! We’re goin’ to get aht, I tells yer. I feel it, I knows it! See? ’Ere! Hadrian! Strike up that one abaht the Israelites comin’ aht er Egypt from a barbarous people. Barbarous it is, too, ’Eaven knows, and precious cold. Come on, Denis, an’ you too, Renny, we’re goin’ to start. Same as usual! Wot one forgets anuvver’ll remember. Go on, Hadrian!”

In a clear baritone rang forth immediately the opening words of the psalm to the plaintive air of the Peregrinus tone:

“In exitu Israel de Ægypto. . . .”^[3]

[3] Ps. 114 (113 Latin vers.).

whereupon the nasal drawl of the Cockney joined in:

“domus Jacob de populo barbaro-o-o.”

The blending of two weaker, more tremulous voices replied:

“Facta est Indæa sanctificatio eius, Israel potestas eius.”

Meldrum listened, fascinated, and—hardened old policeman though he was, with very little of what is called religion in his composition—touched by the simple faith of the poor fellows below. The psalm went on, the two more powerful voices acting as one side of the choir replying to the others

with each alternate verse. Suddenly a distant voice broke in on the psalmody:

“*Halt den mund!* Shud ub dat noise!”

“Carry on!” came the voice of the Cockney laybrother, “*Non nobis Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam.*”^[4]

[4] Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory.

The superintendent turned towards the front door. A click just then reached his ear.

“It’s open, guv’ner,” the locksmith whispered.

In a second Meldrum’s electric torch sent out one beam towards the wet street. The shuffling of feet followed.

“Now remember!” the Scotland Yard man whispered to the leaders, “Each party its own floor no matter what happens!”

Silently, so silently that only a listening ear could have detected it, the party filed into the hall. Someone coughed!

“Damn!” the superintendent said under his breath.

Presently a voice which Meldrum recognised as that of the man he had heard endeavouring to silence the prisoners shouted out something in a foreign tongue. Concealment was now useless.

“Now! Quick!” the superintendent yelled and pushed forward.

At once the hall was filled with light as the rays from a score of torches darted up the well of the rickety stairs! There was now no attempt at silence. Rattle! Creak! Bang! The raiders tumbled up, two, three steps at a time! Crash! A door on the ground floor fell from its hinges! A woman’s scream! An oath in pure Anglo-Saxon! Another in some guttural tongue! Then, Rattle! Creak! Bang! again.

The superintendent was at the head of a party which stopped at the second floor. Three closed doors confronted him. Which? No matter! All three! All together! Meldrum fell forward as the one he had chosen gave way. He fell flat on his face and his torch flew from his hand. In the light of those of his followers a woman crouched in the middle of a comfortably furnished room, her hands busy fumbling with the hem of her well-cut tailor-made coat.

“Get her!” the superintendent roared as the men seemed taken aback at the sight, “Hold her arms! Don’t let her get her hands in her mouth! Quick!”

In a moment it was over. When Meldrum rose to his feet the woman was standing haughtily erect, her eyes flashing, her arms securely held by two detectives, making no attempt to struggle. Meldrum recovered his torch and went forward.

“Madam!” he began, “I—but Good Lord! You are P— —”

The haughtiness disappeared.

“Please!” the woman appealed, “My name is Olga Skosyreff!”

“I see.” The superintendent obeyed the unspoken request.

“Thank you,” the prisoner murmured.

“What sort of a blasted mess is this?” Meldrum muttered as he moved away, but all he said aloud was: “See that the prisoner’s hands don’t get free, but don’t handcuff unless it’s necessary.”

Throughout the rest of the house the tumult had died down. Only the unhurried step of a policeman here and there broke the silence. The superintendent went out into the landing. Somebody had lighted the gas-jets and a dim light was everywhere. Inspector Gibbs from the floor above met him on the stairs.

“We’ve got two men,” the inspector reported, “The third— —”

“What! Got away? Hell!” Meldrum began.

“He’ll never bother us, sir!” Gibbs went on, “Threw himself out of a top window. The men at the back of the house picked up what remained.”

“Good God!”

Quickly recovering himself, however, the big man became matter-of-fact again.

“Get the prisoners off!” he ordered, “No information to the Press! Watch the woman, and if you recognise the face, say nothing for the present. Pass the word.”

“Very good, sir.”

“Leave two men in the house,” Meldrum went on, “And give me two. I’m going down to the cellar.”

He found a door leading down from the kitchen. As he turned the key which had been left in the lock he heard the strains of the psalmody again. One of the men behind him, a Catholic, made the sign of the Cross.

“Would you believe it?” he whispered.

Meldrum went on down the mouldering steps and came to another door. As he turned the rusty key which hung there, more powerfully than ever, for all the prisoners were singing together, came the chanting of the verse:

“Sed nos qui vivimus benedicimus Domino, ex hoc nunc et usque in sæculum.”^[5]

[5] “But we that live bless the Lord, from this time now and for evermore.”

Meldrum did not understand the words but it seemed almost as if their meaning had reached him somehow. A lump came to his throat as he refrained from pushing open the heavy door. The Doxology, which he recognised, followed, and he waited for the final “Amen” before he entered the underground prison and flashed his torch.

“Good God Almighty!” he exclaimed in horror, and turned to the man behind him who was craning his neck. “Go up at once,” he barked hoarsely, “And get four greatcoats or something—at the double!”

The sight which had met his eyes merited the horror he had expressed. Huddled up closely in a corner of the coal-strewn cellar whose stench was almost overpowering were four filthy unkempt and wild-eyed beings whose dirty unshaven faces seemed hardly human. A solitary brown cassock, ripped down on one side to make it larger, was stretched over all four as far as it could reach. A pitcher was on the floor; beside it lay a crust of white bread, evidently the uneaten part of their last meal.

As the superintendent’s voice rang out, one of the figures—a ridiculous, spindly little figure in undergarments of indescribable filthiness—threw back the covering and staggered to his feet.

“It’s not one of ’em!” the little creature cried out, “It’s rescue bruvvers! It’s a— —”

With a crash he fell at Meldrum’s feet. Another of the figures got to its feet—a long, lanky one this!—and stooped beside the superintendent.

“Oi ’ope ’e’s all roight,” he said, “If it ’adn’t ’a’ bin for *he* we’d ’a’ despaired.”

The other two men on the ground seemed too weak to move.

“Go and get an ambulance,” Meldrum directed the policeman with him.

The first man now came back with an armful of heavy coats. As the two detectives helped the shivering laybrothers into them, the tall one—Brother Adrian as he named himself—asked:

“They didn’t get Father Baumgartner? did they?”

“No,” Meldrum replied, “He’s all right, but he had a close shave, I believe.”

“Thank God for that!” Brother Adrian muttered, “I thought they’d killed ’im!”

XXVII. The Chapter

MEANWHILE, GILMARTIN was reviewing in detail with Dom Bruno Chavasse the arrangements he had made at the Abbey itself. He was chewing the ends of his moustache in obvious agitation.

“I’m getting old for this game, Father Abbot,” he said at one moment, “There was a time when I went boldly forward at all costs. Now I am afraid to do so.”

“Isn’t that as it should be, Mr. Gilmartin?” the Abbot—no less troubled than his visitor—asked, “As we grow older we grow more prudent.”

“Oh! It’s not only prudence,” the Irishman demurred, “It’s something else. I hardly know how to call it, but I think that it is that I am less sure of myself. Now, a few years ago I was more easily satisfied with the evidence I collected, and I acted on it promptly. True, I was lucky and I happened to hit the nail on the head most times, but I realise now that I often went on something very like intuition instead of real evidence. That was not seldom picked up afterwards.”

“But why distrust your powers of intuition now?” the Abbot exclaimed. “For I gather that that is what is wrong.”

“M’yes,”—the answer was hesitating.

“Or is it not,” Dom Chavasse continued, “That you are unduly anxious lest you accuse falsely a monk, and then prove mistaken? You are kind enough, I know, to wish to avoid a scandal in the monastery.”

“Yes, there’s a little of that,” Gilmartin admitted.

“Let not that trouble you!” the old monk exhorted, “If he is not guilty I assure you that it will be a matter of a few minutes to prove it to me. The answers to a few questions wholly unconnected with this miserable affair will be sufficient—without even leaving the Chapter Room. If he is the man you think he is, then— —”

The Abbot’s gesture expressed the meaning of the unspoken words.

“Then,” Gilmartin said after a moment, “It is all settled as we have agreed.”

"Yes," Dom Chavasse replied, "After collation—about fifteen minutes before Compline, I will have the bell rung for Chapter. At the Chapter the monks will be seated in the order I have given you, which is simply that of seniority.

"By the way," Gilmartin told the Abbot, "I have never been in the Chapter House. I only know that it has a door at one end, off the little library and another giving on the lobby at the end of the cloister."

The Abbot smiled.

"Oh! You can go into it at any time," he said, "As you can see, the Abbey has never been completed—simply through lack of funds, and consequently we have no Chapter House properly speaking. The room you mention is nothing more than the large library converted into a Chapter House by the simple means of placing chairs round the walls instead of stalls."

"I shall have a look at it."

"Your people, I gather, will be in the small library?" the Abbot asked.

"Yes, except that two constables will post themselves at the door leading to the cloister as soon as the entire community has gone in."

"You will be rather crowded, I fear."

"Oh! Not so very crowded," the Irishman laughed, "And in any case not for very long. There will be Inspector Peters, a constable and myself, the man Hoskins will be in the arm-chair as he is not yet very strong. The boy will not take up much room."

"I must say," Dom Chavasse declared, "That I am not enamoured of the idea of dressing up that young man, Mr. Wylie, whom you brought here from the Isle of Wight, as a laybrother. It seems—er—not quite—"

"I understand, Father Abbot," Gilmartin interrupted, "But I'm afraid it is necessary. I may be wrong but I believe that we have to deal with a desperate man. Just imagine if he were to attack you or a member of your community when he sees that the game is up. Better have somebody who is prep—"

"Oh! It is settled," Dom Chavasse dismissed the point, "Of the necessity you have convinced me already."

"I had more difficulty in convincing that young American lady who came to-day," the Irishman laughed, "She wanted me to dress up one of my men instead. Just think of how conspicuous a six-foot London policeman would have been."

"Very natural," the Abbot smiled, "That she should be afraid that her fiancé will be hurt. By the way, where is she now?"

"She is now down at the Cambridge Arms with Wylie," Gilmartin replied, "She insists that she will be outside the Chapter Room window to-night."

"I am afraid she will see very little," the Abbot smiled, "Unless she climbs up. The ground slopes down just outside the windows. However so long as she doesn't force her way into the monastery I don't mind. We only allow crowned heads of her sex into the cloister."

"I don't think she will do that," the detective laughed, "Though she certainly is persistent enough for anything. I simply was obliged to tell her what was happening, otherwise she wanted to take Wylie away, and I need him."

"Well!" the Abbot drew a long breath, "I must confess I am feeling very nervous as the hour approaches."

"So am I," Gilmartin admitted. "I wish I knew what is happening in London and in Dieppe. They promised to wire if there was any news."

Dom Chavasse rose.

"I will leave you now, Mr. Gilmartin," he said, "Doubtless you have arrangements to make."

In the refectory at supper half an hour later Gilmartin was the only guest at the centre table. Everything appeared normal. The whole community, with the exception of the missing laybrothers and the injured Brother Cubert, and including the visitors from other Abbeys and Priories, was present. A monk read monotonously from a pulpit behind Gilmartin; two others, long white aprons covering their black habits, served the scanty meal. Father Massey attended to his compatriot's wants. The Abbot seemed to be the only one who found difficulty in emptying the plate before him. To the guest the meal seemed long and he breathed a sigh of relief when the monks began to clean their wooden spoons and forks and place them in the receptacles under the table leaf. Grace was sung and then, headed by Dom Chavasse, they filed out into the cloister, the professed monks to go to one end, the novices to another, and the laybrothers to their own common room. With a bow to the Abbot, Gilmartin went up to the room allotted to him where with apparent calm he read one of his bedside books till the boom of the great Abbey bell brought him to his feet.

He opened the door and came face to face with a laybrother whose hand was raised to knock. He recognised Brother Gregoire, the lodgekeeper, who held an orange envelope in his hand.

"A telegram for you, sir," he said, "A boy has come with it who says that he has instructions to wait in case there is an answer."

Gilmartin tore it open. As he read it his face brightened. The message was long but he read it quickly. He pulled out a pencil and scribbled a couple of words on the flimsy paper.

"No reply!" he said to the laybrother, "But give this at once to Father Abbot, if possible before he goes into the Chapter Room."

"Yes, sir,"—and Brother Gregoire waddled away.

When Gilmartin reached the foot of the stairs the last monk to enter the large library was closing the door behind him. Quickly the detective, with a nod to the two men who seemed to appear from nowhere disappeared into the darkness of the room alongside. By the faint light from the chink made by the imperfectly closed double doors he distinguished Inspector Peters peering carefully into the Chapter Room. Beside him in a chair, straining forward and endeavouring to restrain his wheeziness was Bill Hoskins also trying to see. A typical London urchin was craning his neck under the Inspector's arm. Another man stood stolidly behind. As Gilmartin reached them the Abbot's voice rang out as he sang the opening notes of the old Gregorian air:

"Veni Creator Spiritus."

The monks took up the strain:

"Mentes Tuorum visita."

"It's 'im, guv'ner, it's 'im!" Bill Hoskins' excited whisper came, "That's 'im sure as—"

"Shut up!" Gilmartin whispered back, "I know it is."

A noise at the window made him turn round. Perched on the narrow sill was Jean Cannan, making frantic signs towards the large library. Gilmartin muttered an expletive coupled to a few words uncomplimentary to her sex, nodded understanding and waved her away.

In his turn he peered into the adjoining room. The Abbot's back, as he stood at the head of a long library table, was towards them. Round the room stood the professed monks singing their hymn to the Holy Ghost. Three deep at the further end of the room were the novices and laybrothers in the front

row among whom Gilmartin recognised the embarrassed young electrical engineer.

When the hymn was finished the monks sat down. The Abbot occupied the arm-chair at the head of the table. When the rustle and the scraping of chairs had died down Gilmartin could hear the crackle of the paper he held in his hands. Then there was complete silence as the head of every monk was turned expectantly towards the Father of the monastery. Dom Chavasse bent his head a moment and then began to speak.

“My dear brethren,” he began in French, the language of the majority of his hearers, “As you know, our community has been passing through troublous times. Four of our laybrothers have disappeared from our midst under mysterious circumstances and more than one of us here has suffered more or less serious injuries. All this is known to you. You have, as becomes followers of the Holy Rule refrained from idle comment on these matters. What you do not all know is that these happenings can be traced back to the covetous desires of evilly disposed persons in regard to certain inventions which have been perfected by our brother, Father Baumgartner of the Abbey of Einsiedeln, whose researches in the radio world are well-known to the outside world.”

Gilmartin saw the bony, spectacled monk seated beside the Father Cellarer raise his bald head for a moment, then drop it again.

“He had,” the Abbot went on, “Perfected a certain invention whose great importance became known to these evilly disposed persons, who followed him to England, but failed to attain their object, which was to steal the drawings of the new appliance. How the laybrothers of this monastery became involved I am ignorant, and I shall therefore not speak of it. Suffice it to say that through the good offices of a friend of this house the help of the civil power was called in, and discreet investigators have been endeavouring to discover their whereabouts. I had a definite object in calling you together in Chapter at this unusual hour. That object need no longer be pursued, for I hold here a telegram which announces among other things that our brethren have been found, not indeed in — —”

There was a rustle of excited interest which told more than anything else how moved the monks had been by the happenings in their midst. A chair scraped, and Gilmartin craning forward, saw the back of a scapular as its wearer went towards the other door. The Abbot stopped, turning involuntarily towards the door behind which the detective and his companions were standing. Another monk rose from the other side of the room.

“Sit down, please, Father Massey!” the Abbot ordered.

After a wondering look in his superior's direction the guestmaster obeyed. A scuffling sound at the door through which the other man had passed was too obvious to be ignored. Tapping Peters on the shoulder, Gilmartin—a strange figure in such surroundings—strode into the Chapter Room, and passing behind the Abbot went down between the table and the brethren seated on the right. Peters and the other policeman followed behind. Suddenly as the Irishman passed the Sub-prior a bony figure in his black habit rose from his seat and faced him, at the same time drawing his hand from underneath his scapular.

“Look out!” came a yell from the end of the room as Wylie, his brown habit tucked up, threw himself under the upraised arm.

Crack!

The bullet intended for Gilmartin buried itself in a calf-bound volume high up on the shelves, and a small revolver clattered to the floor. The monks rose to their feet. Father Massey dived forward. The Abbot, still seated, called out in calm tones:

“Asseyez-vous, mes frères!”

Obedience was immediate, and then a scene such as in all probability was never seen in the most troublous times of monastic history was then enacted. Two score of silent monks, their hands demurely folded under their scapulars, seated round the room, followed with frankly curious eyes the struggle on the floor between their rows. Between the table and the occupied chairs five equally silent figures rocked and threshed from side to side, now falling against the table, and now almost on the knees of the nearest fathers. One of these—it was Father Massey—suddenly put out his foot, and with a crash the hampered man in Benedictine habit fell to the floor, dragging with him the constable and Inspector Peters. Gilmartin staggered back and looked on for a second. Wylie also looked on, breathing hard. On the floor, half under the massive library table, the struggle continued. The Irishman drew a small truncheon from his pocket. There was a slight lull in the fight.

“Julius Baumgartner!” Gilmartin called out, “Give in, or I will brain you.”

The scuffle on the floor ceased at once.

“I komm!” came a smothered Teutonic voice.

Peters rose to his feet, holding firmly a twisted arm of his prisoner, whom with no pretence at gentleness he hauled erect. The click of handcuffs followed, and without a word the two detectives marched the manacled man out of the room, followed by Wylie, already divesting himself of the—to him—distasteful garments he was wearing.

Gilmartin, after a bow to the Abbot, also followed in silence.

In the cloister a curious group was gathered. Another handcuffed man in monkish garb stood glumly erect between two plain-clothes men. Bill Hoskins, wheezing and coughing, pointed a stubby finger at him.

“D’ye know ’oo that is, guv’ner?” he called excitedly, “That is Otter—the same bloomin’ old Otter wot— —”

“’E was the one wot got me to w’eel that ‘Guy’ for him!” the boy’s shrill voice broke in.

“Let’s get out of this,” Gilmartin ordered.

The prisoners were handcuffed together and led out by the three detective constables.

“Gosh!” Peters whispered, on their way out, to Gilmartin, “Who’d think he was so strong? He’s got muscles like whipcord.”

As they trooped out to the drive where an excited girl—visible in the headlights of two purring automobiles—awaited Wylie, Gilmartin, bringing up the rear, heard in the distance the clear voice of the old Abbot as he intoned:

“TE DEUM LAUDAMUS!”

XXVIII. Peace

SUPERINTENDENT MELDRUM was frankly curious to meet a Benedictine Abbot in the flesh, and to see what the inside of a monastic establishment looked like. That curiosity, and that alone, explained his journey in company with Gilmartin two days later to Alderborough. The Irishman, who was going down to get the signature of Dom Chavasse to certain documents in connection with the case, was glad to have him with him, for he anticipated a certain amount of amusement from the big man’s subsequent comments. He was smiling now at Meldrum’s expression as the guestmaster arrived in the little library with a tray, upon which stood a barrel of biscuits, two glasses and a dust-covered bottle of age-old sherry.

“The last of the Mohicans!” Dom Massey announced whimsically, “Father Cellarer found it by chance—all that remains of a few dozen presented by a certain Grandee of Spain many years ago.”

“Oh! But— —” Gilmartin protested, “It’s a pity to open it.”

"A greater pity to let it lie," the guestmaster retorted, "And who more worthy than you two to give it its quietus? I'm sorry the other officer who went to Dieppe isn't here."

Meldrum laughed.

"I'm afraid he'd be a disappointment, sir," he chuckled, "Pennell's a teetotaller."

"Poor man!" Dom Massey exclaimed.

The big superintendent's eyes at this now became like saucers.

Gilmartin laughed aloud.

"You've shocked Meldrum, Father Massey," he said, "Look at his face! He thinks you ought to preach prohibition."

"Not I!" the guestmaster replied, dexterously removing the cork, "I imitate our Founder, St. Benedict, who preached abstention, and failing that, temperance—a very different thing!"

"By Jove, you're right!" Meldrum ejaculated as he sipped appreciatively the amber wine, adding contentedly, "A very different thing!"

The Abbot entered in the midst of the laughter that followed.

Dom Chavasse was smiling as he advanced and shook Gilmartin's hand.

"And this is the rescuer of my laybrothers?" he said, when he heard the superintendent's name, "I have heard so much from them of your kindness to them afterwards."

Meldrum was embarrassed and tongue-tied in the face of praise.

"Oh!" he said, "That's nothing. I—I—"

He wrung the Abbot's hand with a force which might have injured that of a weaker man.

"God bless you for it, anyhow," Dom Chavasse replied, "You certainly have their gratitude and prayers—and mine."

"By Jove!" the superintendent lowered his tone, "I shall never forget that scene—huddled up in a corner singing the psalms and—"

He could say no more.

The Abbot came to the rescue.

"Well!" he said in a matter-of-fact tone, "You have some documents you want me to sign, Mr. Gilmartin, I believe."

"Yes, Father Abbot," the Irishman replied, "I suppose we mustn't waste your time."

"Father Guestmaster," Dom Chavasse suggested, "Perhaps Superintendent Meldrum would like to see over the Abbey while we are

occupied.”

“I’d be delighted,” the big man assured them and jumped up.

“You must come back here when you’ve been round,” the Abbot added with a twinkle, “and aid Mr. Gilmartin to be temperate.”

He then turned to the papers the Chief Inspector was arranging on the table.

When Father Massey and the superintendent returned to the little library, the business with the papers had been dispatched and they found the others discussing the events of the preceding weeks.

“I think, Father Abbot,” Gilmartin was saying, “That in the course of my whole career I have never muddled a case so badly.”

The Abbot waved the superintendent to a chair and made a sign to the guestmaster to fill Meldrum’s glass and to seat himself also.

“Well,” he replied to the Irishman, “I don’t know anything of your earlier cases, but I think you could hardly have done better than you did in this one. I fail, personally, to see where the muddle was.”

“It started in the very beginning,” Gilmartin affirmed, “And continued practically until the end.”

“Oh! At first things looked a bit muddled!” Dom Chavasse rejoined, “But then you had nothing to go on in the beginning.”

“On the contrary,” the Irishman contradicted, “I had the body on Waterloo Bridge. I should have jumped there and then to the correct conclusion, for I identified the underlinen as monastic at once.”

“When did you first suspect the truth?” Father Massey asked.

“After you did, I think,” Gilmartin smiled, “It was on the night of the fight Brother Cubert and I had with those people in the wood.”

“And I thought you suspected me then!” the Guestmaster exclaimed.

“No! I gave up my suspicion of you then,” his fellow-countryman declared, “But I suspected that you knew—or rather guessed—a great deal more than you told.”

“Which was not far wrong,” Father Massey added, “I guessed a good deal but I wasn’t sure.”

“I was really groping in the dark until then,” the detective went on, “But that evening after anathematising Baumgartner for being such a fool as to go out again after the attack in the morning, I thought on turning things over in my mind that it really was a bit ‘thick’ that an intelligent man should do such

a thing. He might be ever so absent-minded, but—well, on thinking things over I realised that everything that had happened here that day bore two interpretations. The attack in the morning might really have been a bona fide attack, or it might have been a talk with accomplices, interrupted by the arrival of the novice. If the latter, it was cleverly covered. Then I saw the significance of the fact that no serious injuries had been inflicted other than those which might be caused by an ordinary fall well calculated. The business in the evening made me doubtful for a moment, I must say—I mean when Baumgartner was brought back indubitably suffering from hurts. Afterwards I am afraid I was rather glad that though they were not so bad as he pretended and really only a very good excuse for not taking part in the daily routine of the community, I was the author of the injuries. He was, of course, taken away in the first panic and afterwards dropped at his own order in order not to lose the footing he had gained here. The calculation was good for he gained in addition a considerable amount of sympathy—which is a great antidote to suspicion. In one quarter perhaps he didn't quite— —”

“I must admit I was somewhat cynical,” the guestmaster interjected.

“Quite so!” Gilmartin resumed, “I observed that. I might add that Baumgartner's exaggerated German accent repelled me so much that I could not help thinking that it was overdone. An educated German is like an educated man elsewhere; when he learns a foreign language he generally carries into his manner of speaking it something of his intonation in his own language, but a Londoner, say, wouldn't speak French with the accent of Manchester. That, in his way, was what Baumgartner did. Of course I know now that he speaks English perfectly with practically no accent beyond a slight foreign intonation. All that, therefore, was merely surmise. What really gave the show away to me was the attempt to pick my pocket in Whitechapel. Why should they think that I had brought anything away from Wylie's? What he had had was already stolen! Then, it must have been that they thought that I had brought something away from here—that I had intercepted the mails. Why should they think so? Somebody down here had told them. Who? I thought of you, Father Massey, for I had been told by Father Abbot that nobody here was aware of my mission. You had recognised me! Then, on second thoughts, I recalled that I had satisfied myself that you had really been run down by the van, and that I had let the cat out of the bag to Baumgartner himself on the occasion of the first supposed attack.”

“But,” Dom Chavasse asked, “What about Brother Cubert's statement about seeing a white collar under a monastic habit?”

“That,” the Irishman explained, “I thought rightly was simply an ordinary layman’s collar. I said so at the time if you remember.”

“When were you really dead certain of your case?” Dom Massey asked.

“Not until the last moment, practically speaking,” Gilmartin replied, “At least in all its aspects. That is why that unusual Chapter was held. I was delaying until there should be news from London. You see, I had counted very considerably on the arrival of the monk from Einsiedeln with the plans to bring matters to a head. I was resolved to be present when he arrived here, but the scene wasn’t played exactly as I had planned it. The arrest of the man at Highgate did not arouse my suspicions; it was only when I heard of the telegrams dispatched that evening that I smelt a rat. The telegram from Dieppe had merely intrigued me. If anything, I thought that the French police had caught the would-be thief, but when I heard of the stop at King’s Cross to send telegrams I realized that I had underrated these people. One telegram was certainly to the man we arrested, so that he could come and get the plans, but that was a wash-out — —”

“Yes,” Meldrum interrupted, “You were clever enough there to omit telling him that you were having the place watched.”

“I didn’t even tell Inspector Williams,” Gilmartin smiled, “But it wasn’t cleverness; it was just that I was beginning by that time to distrust my own shadow.”

“However,” he resumed, “I then revised my plans—or rather my arguments—especially when I thought of the visit of the two unknowns to Baumgartner’s cell on the preceding day, which Father Massey interrupted. On the way here I examined my fellow-traveller closely and then I observed that his haircut—for he sacrificed a sleek head of hair—was so recent that small hairs were on the collar of the ready-made coat, and under the artificial tan I noticed the discoloration of the eye which, I knew from the man who had tried to pick my pocket, was the peculiarity of a certain Otto at the moment, due to contact with either Brother Cubert’s or my fist. Consequently when I arrived here I looked out for a comedy scene instead of the melodrama I had sketched out. I can assure you, Father Massey, that when we came here my eyes and ears were open. I noticed, for instance, that you greeted my companion with the usual monastic greeting in Latin; I also noticed that it was not returned—as a monk would return it.”

Father Massey slapped his knee.

“Good man!” he exclaimed, “I wondered if you’d spotted that.”

“Then,” the detective continued, “Thanks to your very astute diplomacy, I was present at the meeting with Baumgartner. Well! You remember that! It

was, even to me a layman, a most unmonastic procedure.”

“Very,” the guestmaster agreed, “It was a bad slip on their part. No monastic greeting; too much exuberance— —”

Father Massey stopped and reddened as he caught the Abbot’s smile.

“I know,” he said, “I am a bit of a trial to everybody myself because of that same exuberance. In my case it is the nature of the ‘baste,’ but these were supposed to be German—or at any rate German-Swiss monks.”

“I understand, Father Massey,” the Abbot said with his indulgent smile, “I understand.”

“Why did you wait after that?” the guestmaster asked, “Personally I’d have collared them then and there.”

“First of all,” Gilmartin replied, “I wanted to consult Father Abbot, for after all, might I not have been wrong, and you, too, Father Massey, from start to finish? As I have said, everything bore two interpretations, and even then they might both have been perfectly all right! And then, as I told you a moment ago, I wanted, if possible, to see if any news would come from my colleagues Meldrum and Pennell. I had great faith in Meldrum’s luck.”

“Humph!” the superintendent grunted, “It *was* luck!”

“I am very sorry to interrupt this very interesting catechism,” the Abbot said gently, “I must confess that I am still very much in the dark. Perhaps if Mr. Gilmartin would tell us the truth of the whole matter it would make clear a great many of the things that puzzle us.”

“Yes,” Gilmartin agreed, “But as I see Meldrum is drinking all the sherry, may I suggest that as he has gone through the whole case in detail with me, he be requested to tell the tale?”

The Irishman reached for the bottle and poured himself out a glass.

“Fair’s fair!” Meldrum said good-humouredly, “And this is certainly a wonderful wine.”

He was silent for a moment.

“This is how I read it,” he began. “My information, by the way, comes from one source and another, documentary and other, for we got quite a number of papers in Three Colt Street. It seems, however, that many more were burnt in the Golders Green house. The worst job the gang ever did was to recruit that little Anglo-German we got down in Limehouse. It was from him that we got the greater part of our information. Well, this is what appears to have happened. At Einsiedeln Father Baumgartner’s invention was talked of—by whom we don’t yet know, but I hope the Abbot there will grill the man that did it. His journey to England became known and word

was given over here. He was met at Victoria by his own cousin, Julius, who was no less than the leader of the crowd over here under various aliases, such as Hoffmeyer, and Gottschalk. The poor man was ignorant of his cousin's character and went willingly with him to Golders Green. It seems likely that conversation turned on the object of the father's visit to England and Julius asked to see the drawings."

"Excuse the interruption," Father Massey broke in, "But I thought from something Mr. Gilmartin said that this Julius—or Gottschalk—lived in the boarding-house near Victoria. I wonder why he didn't take him there."

"I should think that very obvious," the old Abbot said, "A boarding-house is—well, it is a boarding-house with all that that implies, but the other house was the headquarters of the band where they could do as they liked, without much fear of disturbance."

"That's right!" Meldrum approved, "Gottschalk as a matter of fact always had a lodging apart from the gang, though he sometimes slept at headquarters as well. Well, to continue, Father Baumgartner told the truth, that he hadn't got the drawings. Julius disbelieved. Otto came in and they tried to search him and his luggage. In the scuffle Father Baumgartner was struck—whether accidentally or not is not clear, but I suspect that Otto could explain that dislocated neck if he wished—and they found themselves with a dead body on their hands. Their idea then was to transport the corpse to a place in the neighbourhood of Waterloo Station and place him where it might be thought that he had fallen down steps and broken his neck, but Otto, who went out to look for such a place saw a better way when he met so many boys trundling 'Guys' round the streets. You know what a 'Guy' is, Father Abbot?"

"Oh! Yes!" Dom Chavasse smiled, "We catholics know all about that. There is a grim irony about their disposal of the body which horrifies rather."

"By Jove, Father Abbot, it does," Meldrum agreed, "Cold-blooded devils! They considered then what to do. From the conversation with his cousin, Julius had gathered that the invention was too good a thing to lose, and he was ready to do anything to get the drawings. It was finally decided that Julius Baumgartner *alias* Gottschalk, etcetera, should impersonate his cousin in order to get the plans when they came. He would then disappear quietly abroad when supposed to be interviewing Marconi's people. Time was limited as there are not many late trains to Alderborough. Gottschalk—as I prefer to call him, it is less confusing—got into Father Baumgartner's clothes—the habit, etcetera in which he had travelled—and explained the absence of spare underclothes by the story of the theft of his luggage, for,

you see, they had cut open Father Baumgartner's valise. It was planned that Gottschalk should go back first of all to his Victoria lodgings when he had got the plans, so Otto went there that night and left his clothes there, as well as a note to the landlady in Gottschalk's handwriting informing her of his temporary absence. That note was never seen by the landlady and was probably swept up by the maid with other papers. Owing to greater delay in receiving the drawings than they had anticipated, the project didn't come off, and the theft of Wylie's plans was connected with Gottschalk's disappearance, thus giving us our first real clue to his identity. That theft, by the way, was purely incidental—and accidental! The vague resemblance between Father Baumgartner and his cousin was a misleading item for a time."

"Well, I'll jump things a bit. When he came here Gottschalk had to play the monk—if you'll excuse the expression—but though very adaptable and a good actor he wasn't well enough up in his part and made some bloomers; he fluffed badly and—well, Father Abbot, you know what I mean better than I can tell it."

"Yes," Dom Chavasse nodded, "I know. He actually had the effrontery to go through the ceremony of saying mass, and of course made glaring mistakes. Brother Paul who is very sharp noticed them when serving this parody of a mass and was imprudent enough to make a remark about it to him afterwards, though he had merely attributed them to fatigue after the supposed journey from Switzerland the day before. Such a thing as an impersonation would never occur to him—or to any of us, especially as his documents were quite in order."

"Quite so!" Meldrum resumed, "And next day when Gottschalk's pals came down here to consult with him, he ordered the abduction of Brother Paul. The same thing happened to the tall laybrother—Brother Adrian, isn't it?—though from what he told me, he had not attached any importance to the few mistakes he had noticed. In fact he did not understand why he had been kidnapped until Brother Paul told him. The other two laybrothers—the Frenchmen—were attacked because they were thought to be carrying letters from the lodge."

"Meanwhile an attempt was made to get the drawings at Einsiedeln, resulting only in a further delay which got on Gottschalk's and the others' nerves. Hence the frequent consultations in the wood. The use of the imprisoned laybrothers' habits was to avert suspicion at this end. I will pass over the affair when your laybrother sustained a broken leg. Gilmartin has explained that. Gottschalk seems to have had a feeling that Father Massey suspected him, and in the van—not being nearly so badly hurt as he

afterwards made out—seeing him on the road tried to have him knocked out.”

“What I am not clear about,” Father Massey said at this point, “Is where the plans were—or are now, for that matter. I gather that the drawings Otto gave Mr. Gilmartin were elaborate fakes.”

“They were certainly fakes,” Meldrum replied, “but not elaborate fakes. They wouldn’t deceive a maiden lady with experience of a ten-shilling crystal set, but then, you see, they knew very well that we would never examine them. This is what happened: Father Kleinmichel left Einsiedeln disguised, but he was recognised and followed while a wire was sent to London. Otto departed post haste for Dieppe, where he joined the man who was following Father Kleinmichel as the train came in. The fact that the monk was travelling alone in his compartment was in their favour so they jumped him from behind as he was reaching for his valise on the rack. They rifled his pockets, took his papers and his luggage. Then Otto hastily made himself up with the materials Father Kleinmichel had with him for renewal purposes and got on the boat. He deceived Inspector Williams completely and I assure you that that officer is feeling vindictive towards him. Father Kleinmichel lay in that compartment until the railway cleaners came and found him still unconscious. When he explained to the police commissaire that officer believed him at once in spite of the absence of documents, for Williams had given him an inkling of things earlier in the day. He is a sharp man, that commissaire, for when told of the absence of the cosmetics he immediately found out from the passport office that somebody had impersonated the monk and then wired to Williams to hold the pseudo-Kleinmichel. Even our linguist Gilmartin fell down there for he translated ‘gardez’ as ‘guard’ not ‘hold.’ What Otto did not know was that Father Kleinmichel was as clever a man as he, and having an uneasy feeling that he was followed had sent the real plans by registered post to Gilmartin on his way across Paris from the Gare de l’Est to the Gare St. Lazare, keeping in his valise another set which were really *elaborate* fakes. When I reached Scotland Yard after my raid, I found the Assistant Commissioner there with Pennell’s telegram, so we decided to send Gilmartin a wire here giving him a summary of all that had happened.”

“It came in the nick of time,” Dom Chavasse remarked, “To avert a scene even more painful than the one we witnessed. The Chapter was merely an identification parade for Mr. Gilmartin’s friends, but I was about to hold a sort of trial before allowing arrest. As it was, on the news of the rescue of the laybrothers they gave themselves away.”

"Funny," Father Massey murmured after a short silence, "How small things often have big consequences! Why didn't that gang notice the ventilator shaft in that Whitechapel cellar?"

"Simply because the place was so filthy," Meldrum explained, "And because they had never had an efficient light down there. Even if they'd had one I doubt if they'd have noticed it. The cellar end was merely a couple of perforated bricks and the shaft widened as it rose to the street. That is why outside sounds were barely audible in the cellar whilst in the street the brothers' singing was heard by the Chinaman."

"And the drawings?" the Abbot asked.

"I have them," Gilmartin replied, "I found the package lying openly on my table when I got back from here. They are at your disposal when you wish."

There was a few minutes' silence which Dom Chavasse finally broke.

"I don't know," he said, "Whether I am being unduly inquisitive but I should really like to know a little more. What is this gang? What were their objects?"

The Scotland Yard men exchanged glances. At a slight nod from Meldrum, Gilmartin spoke.

"These people," he replied, "Are probably going to be put on trial for felonies and misdemeanours violating English Law. The objects of the gang, I believe, will not be mentioned in Court unless it becomes necessary in the interests of justice. You, however, Father Abbot, are entitled to know something more than the general public. The gang in question is a section of a certain organisation called 'The Universal League of Freedom.' The name is perhaps misleading in these days of Bolshevism and Fascism. There are various ideas and opinions as to what constitutes freedom. Far from being an organisation to overthrow crowned heads and dictators it is a decidedly anti-republican, anti-socialist and anti-bolshevik league. As you know a number of sovereigns lost their crowns after the war and other forms of government have been substituted for monarchies. This has naturally not pleased everybody and in every country were formed cliques and societies whose avowed object was the restoration of monarchies. These societies were scattered all over Europe—and America, and were purely national in scope; Germans had German organizations, Russians had their own, Austrians had theirs and so on. None of them had any real hope of succeeding in their aims.

"Through the organizing genius of one man—no other than Julius Baumgartner, a mild, apparently harmless creature, but an adventurer who

will adopt any cause provided there is likely to be money in it—the majority of these societies were banded into one big league, with a grandiose plan of organising a Putsch in one country after another by pooling all their resources for each in turn. They collected money from among themselves, and also from sympathizers—be it said discreetly, even among our own Peerage—for they realized, or Julius realized for them, that in order to have any chance of success they must control ways and means as yet unknown to existing governments. So they set out to buy—forcibly if no other means were possible—all sorts of inventions likely to be useful. They had spies everywhere on the look-out for such, even in the Patent offices of some countries as far as I can make out from their papers. I suspect that an offer was made to Father Baumgartner and refused by him. At any rate they were determined to get his invention, the usefulness of which can be easily imagined.

“Unfortunately for the organization, Baumgartner—I mean Julius—gathered round him here in England an extremist crowd which was in too great a hurry and they were ready to do anything—even, as you know, to take life—to attain their ends. They even swore an oath to take their own lives in case of arrest as a guarantee against treachery. I wonder if Julius would have taken his if allowed! This Otto whose name you haven’t heard is a son of the famous General Von Martensen; most of his henchmen were young junkers of good family; Mrs. Hoffmeyer *alias* Olga Skosyreff is no other than Princess Kurusoff—you know what that means! The poor *moozhik* Yakob who poisoned himself was an old retainer of her family in Tsarist days.”

“Poor—poor—mad creatures!” the old Abbot sighed, “May God in His mercy forgive them!”

There was silence in the little library.

“I must thank you, gentlemen,” Dom Chavasse resumed after some minutes, “For your great kindness to me and my brethren. You have made your duty more onerous by the necessity which you imposed upon yourselves of sparing us pain and scandal. I can, humanly speaking, never reciprocate the kindness, but otherwise—I shall not forget it when offering up my poor prayers.”

Neither Gilmartin nor Meldrum could reply to this. The superintendent looked out through the window to where laybrothers were working in the field beyond and cleared his throat.

A silent handclasp, then a hand upraised, and the old Abbot retired to his cell.

“Gosh!” said Meldrum an hour later apropos of nothing as the train rushed Londonwards, “Wouldn’t that old Abbot make a fine Commissioner of Police?”

He stared as Gilmartin burst into uncontrollable laughter.

His time for laughing came when they arrived at New Scotland Yard. Gilbert Wylie and Jean Cannan awaited there the Irishman’s arrival.

“I’ve come to ask you about my plans,” the young man announced.

“They are safe,” Gilmartin told them, “And will be returned to you in a day or so.”

“What I want to know is,” the practical Jean declared, “What is going to happen to the £5000 which was sent to Gilbert for the plans?”

The Irishman smiled.

“That money,” he said, “Is under no interdict that I know. The request—the very urgent request—of the lady who sent it is that Mr. Wylie should have it.”

“Oh! Gilbert!”

“Oh! Jean!” Wylie exclaimed, “Come on! We’ll go straight away and get a licence. I’ll just show you if an Englishman can’t hustle—when it comes to marrying, anyhow!”

When the young couple had gone, the superintendent’s guffaw was loud and long.

“What’s wrong with you?” Gilmartin asked, “Had a nervous breakdown?”

“Haw! Haw! Haw! Damn funny!” Meldrum roared.

“Oh! No!” he jeered, “There’s going to be no weddings in the monastery case! Poor old Gilmartin! When you go out on pension open a matrimonial bureau! You’ll make a fortune at it.”

THE END.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

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.

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[The end of *The Corpse on the Bridge*, by Charles Barry (ps. of Charles Bryson).]