

# THRILLING MYSTERY NOVEL

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MAGAZINE

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at  
Cambridge



BY Q. PATRICK

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# THRILLING MYSTERY NOVEL

MAGAZINE

Vol. XXVI, No. 1      A THRILLING PUBLICATION      January, 1947

*Featured Complete Book-Length Novel Selection*



## MURDER AT CAMBRIDGE

By Q. PATRICK

*When Hilary Fenton met the girl of his dreams he felt that life was just beginning for him, but he certainly never suspected his new existence would include grim murder, a mysterious maniac and the deadly cyanide in the tea!.....*

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# The LINE-UP

A DEPARTMENT WHERE READERS  
AND THE EDITOR MEET



**S**ERGEANT MYERS of the Chicago Homicide Bureau was a great deal more worried about the fact that he was not to be allowed to play Santa Claus for the Department this year than he was about the eighteen corpses he was supposed to guard in the morgue. And then brilliant young Doctor Danny Michaels, senior interne at County Hospital, came into the morgue to do a little extra-curricular study—and things began to happen.

First it was the dog, a tremendous shepherd, who sat outside in the cold winter night air and howled like a banshee. Then it was the eighteenth corpse. Danny pulled the sheet back and recognized the bum beneath it, who had been picked up dead from a stomach full of wood alcohol, as Alfred Sutton, one of Cook County's leading criminal lawyers.

This led to a whole new chain of surmises and events. Marian Sutton, the dead man's daughter, and Danny Michaels had been in love years before—until Alfred Sutton broke up their romance, believing his daughter worthy of better things in life than those a penniless interne, however brilliant, could give her. Danny had not seen or heard of the Suttons since the break-up with Marian.

## Date at the Morgue

Now he had to call her and tell her. She agreed to come to the morgue. And when she arrived there, the dog, which was still outside, overwhelmed her with affection. She called it by name—Hans—and explained to Danny that she hadn't laid eyes on the beast in years herself.

Then she let Danny sneak her into the morgue, and there recognized the eighteenth corpse as that of her father. By the time Danny got back outside to rejoin her, she, her car and the dog had vanished!

It looked unpleasantly cut and dried until Danny was called on the carpet by the head of the hospital the next morning. Sutton, it seemed, had died in an automobile wreck three years before. Therefore, the body couldn't be his. Danny gave up on the problem and decided to mind his own business thereafter.

But the problem had by no means given up on Danny. That afternoon a Mr. Ferguson, who introduced himself as Marian Sutton's step-father, visited the young man in his rooms and returned the dog, saying that it was not Hans. Hoping to get a reward, Danny returned it to a Lake Shore Drive address which he found on a silver identification chain buried under the thick fur on one of the dog's legs.

Seeking information there, he persuaded the manager to find out where a Mr. Sorenson, apparently Hans' owner, had vanished. And while there he found unmistakable evidence that Sorenson, whoever he was, might have leprosy. Re-examination of corpse eighteen showed this to be the truth—and the fat was in the fire with a vengeance. For the case had never been reported to the Board of Health!

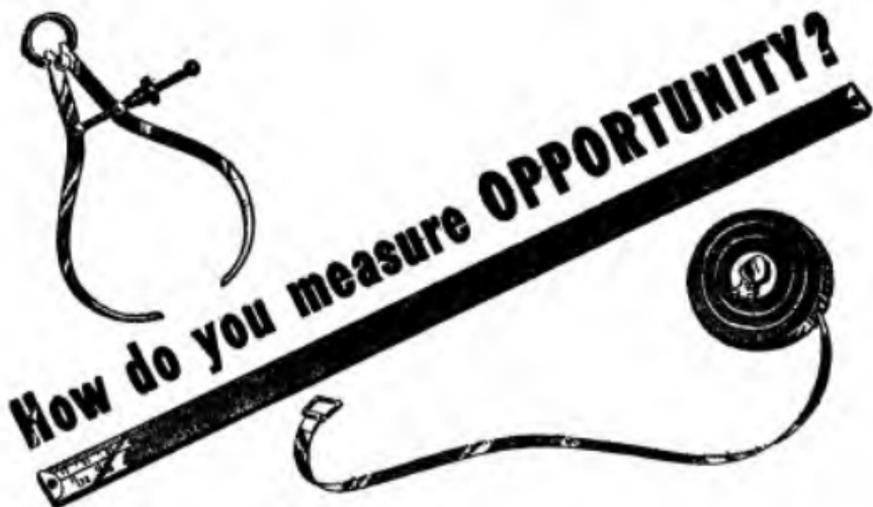
Such is the basic situation upon which is reared one of the most baffling and suspenseful novels ever to emerge from the Chicago literary mills:

## DEAD TO THE WORLD

By  
NORTH BAKER and WILLIAM BOLTON

Originally published as a Crime Club novel by Doubleday & Co. at \$2.00 per copy, **DEAD TO THE WORLD** is the sort of story that must inevitably remain in the reader's mind—and inevitably remain so as a story whose various angles and developments are as puzzling as...  
(Continued on page 8)





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### THE LINE-UP

(Continued from page 6)

zling in appearance as they are, ultimately, logical in evolution.

The discovery of leprosy is but an opening gambit in as deadly a bit of criminal conspiracy and crossfire as even the Windy City, with its gaudy underworld record, has ever known. For soon it becomes evident that, whether corpse eighteen is Alfred Sutton's remains or not, its discovery has shaken up very dangerous elements in the city.

Sorenson, at any rate, was living unofficially as man and wife with the actual wife of an extremely dangerous racketeer. And once this news reached the grapevine, still more hades began to pop. The climax will satisfy the fussiest mystery connoisseur.

Packed with peril, thrills, reality and humor, DEAD TO THE WORLD is a detective novel which fully lives up to the altitudinous standard this magazine has always maintained. In fact, it may even lift the average. Read it and see, along with the complement of new short stories that, with this department, will make our next issue a grand reading feast for mystery fans!

### FROM THE REVIEWS

**BY WAY** of backing up the previous statement, we draw on the opinions of a number of the nation's leading critics of mystery stories. They greeted DEAD TO THE WORLD with hearty huzzahs, as the quotations below reveal.

*The Saturday Review of Literature:* Slightly gruesome atmosphere considerably lightened by sprightly characters. Plot well developed and action continuous.

Will Cuppy in the *New York Herald Tribune Sunday Book Section:* You're not likely to guess all the answers. . . Messrs. Baker and Bolton offer their medical horrors . . . with an engaging innocence that takes off the curse. We found their collaboration robust, refreshing and . . . appealing for all the frightful doings.

Anthony Boucher in the *San Francisco Chronicle:* At once hard-boiled and human, lively and likable, this is the most interesting human debut so far this year. More Michaels, please!

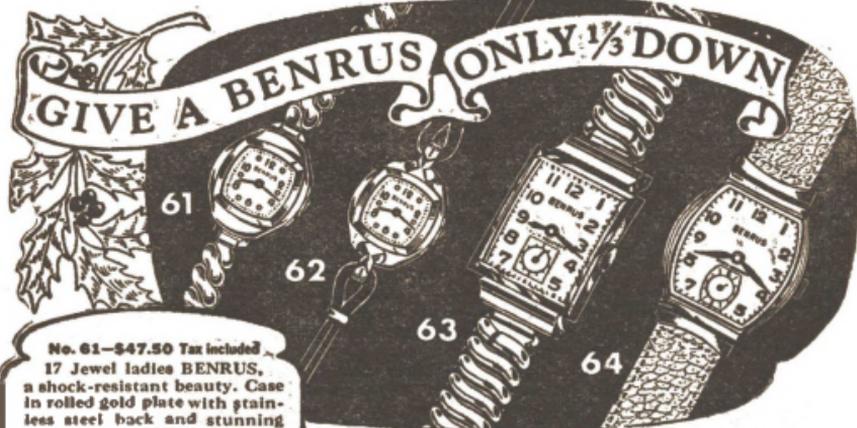
*Chicago Tribune:* Smart use of police work and hospital laboratory technique in neatly developed murder puzzle. Some novel elements introduced. Fast pace and plenty action.

*St. Louis Globe-Democrat:* Dr. Dan Michaels, young interne at County Hospital, brings killer to book and wins a bride with rapid action and a brashness as irresistible but not as profane as that which made "The Front Page" famous.

Dorothy B. Hughes in the *Albuquerque Tribune:* DEAD TO THE WORLD is always alive, vivid and entertaining.

(Concluded on page 10)

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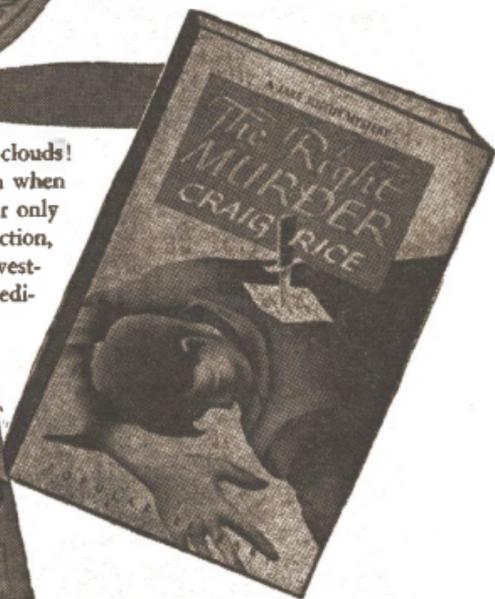




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A VARIETY OF WEAPONS...by Rufus King  
THE CASE IS CLOSED..by Patricia Wentworth

# JIM DIVED INTO TROUBLE BUT THEN...

HELP!  
QUICK!  
SHE'LL DROWN!

EQUIPPED WITH FACE-MASK AND SPRING-DRIVEN HARPOON, SUE DISCOLL HAD ENJOYED HER BEST TRY AT FLORIDA BOAT-FISHING. UNTIL HER PEACOCK QUARRY SNARLED THE HARPOON LINE, TRAPPING HER IN DEEP WATER...



HOPE WE DON'T COME UP UNDER MY BOAT



SHE'LL BE OKAY NOW. BUT WE'D BETTER GET HER HOME

THAT'S OUR PLACE ON THE POINT



WHAT HAPPENED, SON?

SIS ALMOST DROWNED, BUT THIS MAN SAVED HER



I APPRECIATE THE INVITATION, SIR, BUT I'VE BEEN ROUGHING IT AND...

AS A GRATEFUL FATHER, I INSIST, LET'S GET YOU FRESHENED UP...



SHAVING'S A CINCH WITH THIS BLADE, SIR. MY FACE FEELS GREAT!

YES, THIN GILLETTES ARE PLENTY KEEN



... AND AFTER FOUR YEARS IN THE ARMY, I'M UNDECIDED ABOUT RETURNING TO WAYBURN U.

WAYBURN! WHY THAT'S MY SCHOOL. I DO HOPE YOU COME BACK

THAT THIN GILLETTE SHAVE TURNED THE TRICK



FOR QUICK EASY SHAVES... GOOD-LOOKING AND REFRESHING... USE THIN GILLETTES. THEY'RE THE KEENEST, LONGEST-LASTING BLADES IN THE LOW-PRICE FIELD. ALSO THEY FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR TO A "T" AND PROTECT YOUR FACE FROM THE HARSH, IRRITATING EFFECT OF MISFIT BLADES. ASK FOR THIN GILLETTE BLADES

# MURDER AT CAMBRIDGE



By

**Q. PATRICK**

*When Hilary Fenton met the girl of his dreams he felt that life was just beginning for him, but he certainly never suspected his new existence would include grim murder, a mysterious maniac and the deadly cyanide in the tea!*

## *Chapter I*

**I**N THE flat but not altogether unpleasing Fen country, about sixty miles northeast of London, lies the small market town of Cambridge. If you have an Oxford tradition in the family, you may have heard that it achieved a certain amount of notoriety as a seat of learning during the middle ages.

Should you chance to possess an uncle or a cousin who was a Rhodes scholar, he may have casually mentioned the fact that Cambridge University is now devoted almost entirely to the winning of boat

faces and the mass production of marvelous, if somewhat moronic, athletes.

If, as a tourist, you are a disciple of the ubiquitous Baedeker, you will probably know even less than this. For, in his discussion of the University towns of England, after a glowing and lengthy tribute to the

on a certain Monday halfway through the May term. My birth, I might add, took place in the twenty-fourth year of my life.

That was the exact moment when all the trouble really started, and if any enterprising pathologist should happen, in the (I hope) fairly distant future, to perform an autopsy on my remains, he will find this particular date scrawled across my heart in letters of flame and magenta.



beauties of Oxford, he summarily dismisses her less ostentatious sister with the curt phrase—"If pressed for time, Cambridge may be omitted."

After which modest preamble on the subject of my Alma Step-Mater, I feel that I am now perfectly justified in diverting my reader's attention entirely towards myself.

My name is Fenton, but you had better call me Hilary. Somehow or other I don't seem to smell as sweet by the name which my godfathers and godmothers saw fit to bestow on me at my baptism, viz., Hilarion Aloysius. I am at present an undergraduate in residence at All Saints College, Cantab., where I am ostensibly studying English.

My real purpose, however, is to polish off any odd corners that may have survived four years at Harvard. I am, amongst other things, a native of Philadelphia and consequently an American citizen.

But when I imply that I was born in Philadelphia, I am using the word in its most crass, material and corporeal sense. Mentally, spiritually and emotionally, I was born in a Cambridge lecture room at about 10:15

The fateful day dawned clear and surprisingly warm for May. No comets, no fall of meteorites had occurred during the night to announce the portentous happenings with which it was to be so richly fraught. I rose reasonably early. On returning from the half mile or so which usually separates the inmate of a Cambridge college from his bath, I caught a glimpse of the Cam, still winding peacefully along between its daisied banks.

I could hear the majestic notes of a Bach chorale from the organ in King's Chapel. An occasional undergraduate sauntered across the old gray pavements of the court—

the bright colors of his bathrobe forming a striking contrast against the encrusted stones of the college building.

Black-coated servants carried heavily laden breakfast trays up oaken staircases and a cluster of white surplices announced that chapel was over. In short, everything was just as usual, and the University was turning over in bed and opening one sleepy eye exactly as it had in the days of Queen Elizabeth.

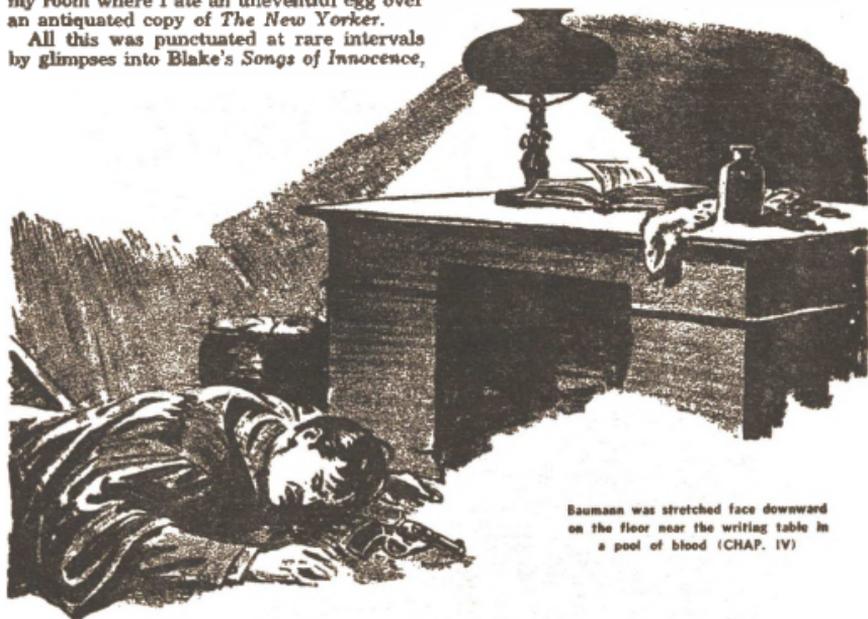
"A" staircase, however, had not yet done more than merely stretch itself and the only people stirring were Hank, our solemn gyp, and Mrs. Bigger, who performed the mystic offices of bedmaker. These I saluted with democratic cordiality and then proceeded to my room where I ate an uneventful egg over an antiquated copy of *The New Yorker*.

All this was punctuated at rare intervals by glimpses into Blake's *Songs of Innocence*,

collided with a tall, fair-haired youth in gorgeous sky-blue pyjamas. An arm, languid yet muscular, was thrown around my neck and I felt myself forcibly propelled into a room redolent of roasting coffee, Virginia cigarettes and Yardley's shaving soap. A *Daily Mail* was thrust into my hand as a harsh, nasal voice, supposedly in imitation of my transatlantic accent, said mockingly:

"Take a peek at that, kid. It sure will send your old man."

I glanced at the paragraph indicated and then up into the smiling blue eyes of my persecutor. Stuart Somerville was one of those blond young giants who are sent to Cambridge with the express purpose of giving inferiority complexes to us scrubby indi-



Baumann was stretched face downward on the floor near the writing table in a pool of blood (CHAP. IV)

in leisurely anticipation of a lecture I was to attend that morning. At about 9:30 I tucked under my arm the abbreviated gown required by the authorities for all those in *statu pupillari* and strolled downstairs.

**T**HAT all this sounds terribly trite and trivial, I am well aware. And yet, in the light of future events, every triviality which occurred that morning, in fact, almost everything which occurred that day, later became gravid with significance and rich with sinister possibility.

As I reached the ground floor, I almost

viduals of five feet nine or thereabouts.

Always perfectly dressed, perfectly poised and perfectly sure of themselves, they exhale the very essence of the remnants of the English feudal system. They are the fruit of cricket and cold tubs. In later life they talk about Empire, write letters to *The Times*, and invariably they think about—nothing. They are decorative but dumb; lovely but limited.

Stuart Somerville, however, had broadened his horizon somewhat by an athletic trip to America and enjoyed nothing better than practicing the vernacular on me. His mem-

ory with regard to Bowery slang was remarkable and, where memory failed, the movies and detective stories had stepped in to fill the breach.

"I really see nothing in the paper that would be of special interest to my father," I said, with what dignity I could muster under the circumstances. "And I wish—"

Stuart ran a hand through his disheveled, corn-colored hair and raised his eyebrows in mock-surprise.

"So Hilary doesn't read pappy's law books, eh? Well, get a load of this, buddy. William North has escaped. He's done one beautiful big bunko. And all after your inestimable pop had made him figure so large in the dullest of all his dull text-books, Fenton's *Famous Second Trials*."

I was used to this kind of nonsense from Stuart and it was, to some extent, justifiable. He was reading for a "special" in Law and thus was constantly victimized by Fenton on Torts, Fenton's *Legal Theory* and the aforementioned *Famous Second Trials*. That my father, though a perfectly good American, was a sometime fellow of All Saints and a well-known writer of law books was considered by most people to be my misfortune rather than my fault.

They kindly overlooked this blot on my family escutcheon. But Stuart Somerville never let me forget it. The sins of my father were repeatedly visited on me, even though they had been committed a full generation ago—before marriage with my mother had put mayonnaise on the paternal salad days

## Glossary of Terms Used

For the benefit of those who have not sojourned long at Cambridge, some of the local colloquialisms and other quasi-technical terms used in this novel are explained below.

**Absit** (Latin—"let him be absent"): Permission to stay away from Cambridge for one day. Absence must not be extended after midnight.

**Aegrotat** (Latin—"he is sick"): Permission to suspend university activities or postpone examinations because of illness.

**Bedmaker**: A college servant (female). Almost always abbreviated to "bedder."

**Blood**: A colloquialism for an expert at athletics—an athletic snob. The term usually implies a somewhat over-careful selection of clothes and intimates.

**Blue**: Light blue at Cambridge and dark blue at Oxford are the colors given to those undergraduates who have represented their university in one of the major sports (boat-racing, cricket, football, etc.) in an inter-Varsity contest. A blue has been described as "a hall-mark of intellectual inefficiency." It is nothing of the sort.

**Bulldog**: A college servant, usually youngish and fleet of foot who accompanies the proctor on his prowlings. They go in couples, wear top-hats and are scrupulously polite. But they get there just the same.

**Combination Room**: A mysterious chamber in which the fellows of the college assemble to drink port after Hall. No one has ever yet discovered what they talk about there, but the conversation is reputed to be very brilliant. It has been described alternately as "the unwritten history of England" and "the unprintable history of Cambridge."

**C. U. A. D. S.**: Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Society.

**Debag**: Forcibly to remove the trousers (someone else's). Usually accompanied by other playful badinage.

**Don**: A generic term for fellows, tutors and heads of colleges. The freshman is apt to confuse these gentlemen with the "gyps." A simple rule to remember is: "The gyp is the tidier individual." (*Freshman's Guide*.)

**Exeat** (Latin—"let him go away"): Permission to leave Cambridge over night.

**Girton**: See *Newnham*.

**Gyp**: A college servant (male) usually assigned to take care of a certain set of rooms or the rooms of one particular staircase. Strangely enough, the name bears absolutely no relationship to the

once and for all.

My father now sat lofty and unassailable on the bench of the United States Supreme Court. His lectureship at Cambridge had long ago ended, but his text-books lingered on to be thorns in the flesh of the budding barrister and the embryo K. C.

And so, whenever Stuart Somerville saw any reference to my father or to one of the cases which he had used as illustrations in his text-books, he took an unholy delight in drawing my attention to the matter. This reverberation from the once famous North trial was a typical case in point.

"I wish," I said at length, "you would let my poor father alone for awhile. It's not his fault that North has got out and it's certainly not my fault that the Cambridge Law School

is still antiquated enough to use his text-books. Supposing I were to make scathing remarks about your father every time I see a cow or a turnip." (Sir Anthony Somerville owns about one-half of Cambridgeshire.)

STUART gave a whoop of delight at this feeble sally and promptly threw me down on the couch and sat on me for several very uncomfortable minutes. As he did so, he improved the shining hour with some pregnant remarks about the moulting of the American eagle and the prowess of the British lion.

I finally escaped from his room and proceeded to my lecture in a thoroughly disheveled condition. Even in my most intellectual moments I am not capable of appreciating

## in "Murder At Cambridge"

American slang word which is spelt the same. (At Oxford it is pronounced *scout*.)

**Hall:** The college dining hall. A large building usually remarkable for its architecture and portraits of illustrious alumni. Dining in Hall is more or less compulsory, hence "after Hall," merely means after the evening meal.

**High Table:** A raised table in Hall reserved for dons, fellows and their guests. The food served is no better there—the drinks are!

**K. C.:** King's Counselor.

**K. P.:** King's Parade. A main street in Cambridge.

**Littlege:** The entrance examination which must be passed by all before being admitted to Cambridge University. There is no royal road for athletes. (Oh, yeah!)

**Marlborough:** A famous English public school.

**Mays:** End of year examinations usually held in May. There is nothing final about them but they are often fatal.

**M. C. C.:** Marylebone Cricket Club. A famous London cricket eleven, always referred to by its initials, possibly because the correct pronunciation of the word is too difficult for ordinary use.

**Newnham (and Girton):** The two women's colleges at Cambridge. Officially females have no rights in the government of the University except inasmuch as they often marry the fellows, graduates and under-

graduates, thus getting around it in another way. The percentages of such marriages is probably higher at Cambridge than at Oxford, since in the University, the girls are obliged to wear very unbecoming caps and gowns!

**Oak:** The usual set of college rooms at Cambridge has two doors. The outer one—or oak—is very thick and when "sported" (closed), this is the polite English way of saying, "Keep out—this means YOU."

**Proctor:** A don dressed up as a policeman. He prowls about, usually after dark, accompanied by two bulldogs (see above) and maintains discipline by fining luckless or gownless undergraduates six shillings and eightpence or multiples thereof. Verb. (tr.) *Frog*.

**R. A. M. C.:** Royal Army Medical Corps.

**Special:** (1) The shortest and easiest cut to a B. A. Degree. (2) The shortest and easiest cut to intoxication via Beer.

**Sport:** See Oak (above).

**Tripes:** (Derivation from Greek words meaning "three feet"): A university examination for the B. A. Degree. Usually—and very suitably—abbreviated to Trip.

**Union:** The famous debating hall at Cambridge. The "home of lost causes" and the cause of several (to my knowledge) lost homes!

**Varsity:** Simply an abbreviation of the word University. It has no athletic or other sinister significance.

the somewhat exotic mysticism of William Blake; and I was certainly in no mood for it that morning.

I managed, however, to listen attentively for the first few minutes while the lecturer explained that the famous poem about the Sunflower was in no sense of the word botanical, but that it really symbolized a sex repression or the early symptoms of pernicious anemia. After that my thoughts began to wander and I found myself looking along the row of faces.

There were thoughtful youths in old tweeds; boys with fresh complexions, boys with spotty faces—the usual assortment. Then there was the sprinkling of girls from Newnham and Girton, most of them wearing particularly unsightly hats. All, so it seemed, had pencils working overtime on any tid-bits of solid fact that might advantageously be reproduced in an examination paper. I saw nothing new or exciting. I was rather bored. My brain was lethargic. My hands were idle and Satan was undoubtedly cooking up some mischief.

And then, all of a sudden, out of a sea of ordinary, everyday faces, I caught a glimpse of the Profile. Up to now it had been concealed behind the rather prominent girl in spectacles. At first I thought it must be just a phantasy bred of some obscure wish-fulfillment complex.

I didn't, I couldn't believe that it really existed in a musty old Cambridge lecture room. And yet, there it was standing out from the rest like a scarlet tanager among a flock of sparrows. Nothing that I had seen before had ever seemed so perfect.

Probably she didn't measure up to the world's most rigid standards of perfection. But which of the famous heroines of history really did? There is documentary evidence to prove that Cleopatra was positively plain; that Méliande was an untidy creature with wispish hair and staring eyes, and that Juliet was a long-legged and precocious sub-deb of about fourteen.

And yet each of these ladies appeared as visions of light and beauty to Antony, Péléas and Romeo respectively. They set a fashion for love at first sight and now who shall dare to say that such cannot exist? Perhaps it is only at first sight (as the cynics have told us) that perfect beauty can exist.

To me the Profile seemed perfectly and utterly beautiful. The contours were classical without being severe. The nose, coming down in an almost straight line from the forehead, was Greek rather than Roman. The line of the cheek was clearly yet delicately marked. A curve of dark hair was just visible beneath a plain and perfectly negligible hat. The complexion was clear olive.

I could not see the color of her eyes. But,

as I twisted my head in a vain effort to find out, something absurd seemed to be happening inside of me. In that one hyperbolic moment I felt that I was really seeing things for the first time in my life.

I seemed to understand, in a flash, what the poets had been writing about all down the centuries. Even the obscurity of William Blake became amazingly clear. I knew what pictures were about. The whole of art, music and life stood suddenly revealed.

I was in love. But surely it was not really I who was experiencing these tempestuous feelings. Not the Hilary Fenton whose only emotional experiences to date were to hear Stokowski lead the Philadelphia Orchestra and to hand out a rapid line to hard-boiled Radcliffe girls.

It was—it must be—a new Hilary Fenton. Someone utterly different. Some strange, primitive creature who had suddenly become overpoweringly and sensuously alive on a warm, steel-blue day in spring—at Cambridge—in a lecture room with thirty or forty other undergraduates; alive and alone with the Profile.

A piece of paper was thrust towards me by my neighbor. It was the attendance list. Immediately my mind snapped back into action and I did some of the fastest mental arithmetic since my prep school days. I counted the names backwards. Jean Higginbotham—that was the girl who came first. Camilla Lathrop—that must be the prominent one with the spectacles. Dorothy Dupuis—that must be the name which a stupid world applied to the Profile. I pushed the paper away from me.

"Aren't you going to sign it?" whispered the solemn young man by my side.

I had forgotten to add my own name to the list. Just as I scribbled Hilary Fenton across the page with a brand new, triumphant kind of flourish, I caught the prophetic voice of the lecturer rising loud and clear above the tumult of my emotions.

"O Rose, thou art sick!  
The invisible worm  
That flies in the night,  
In the howling storm,

"Has found out thy bed  
Of crimson joy;  
And his dark secret love  
Does thy life destroy."

The lecture was over. I made a rush towards the door but a milling group of chattering undergraduates temporarily barred my passage. I pushed and shoved, and when I finally reached the court, I was only just in time to catch a glimpse of the Profile in the distance, as she slipped on a quite unnecessary raincoat and hurried across Claire

Bridge with the prominent girl in spectacles.

Pursuit would have been both useless and undignified. She had gone as suddenly as she came, but I didn't seem to care. I knew her name. I knew she must be reading English and I knew the way her chin joined on to her throat. That was quite enough to go on with.

There were no more lectures on my schedule for that morning, so I strolled back towards my own college, puffing at a meditative pipe. As the hazy smoke ascended in the clear May sunshine, vista upon vista seemed to be opening up in my imagination—and at the end of each one was inscribed the magic name, Dorothy Dupuis.

Skillfully avoiding the bicycles in Trinity Street, I kept repeating it over and over again. It didn't seem to suit the Profile in the very least. Somehow or other, I vaguely connected the name with an incident that didn't suit her either. For a few moments the half memory of that incident tortured me, hanging on the brink of my conscious mind. Then it began to come back to me.

■T WAS at the dinner party given by the American Ambassador last vacation. What was her name—the stout lady who sat next to me at the table and snorted over her soup? Lady—Lady Lusinger, that was it! I could hear her distinctly now:

"So you are up at Cambridge, young man. Well, I have a niece there too. The men in our family go to Oxford, of course. (Snort.) But Dorothy Dupuis is a very sensible sort of girl. I might say a thoughtful girl." (Two snorts.)

The adjective might perhaps have been more suitably applied to the girl and I remembered how they had made me wince at the time. In fact, I had made an inward resolve that Dorothy Dupuis' acquaintance would not add to the gaiety of nations. But now I blessed the American Ambassador and his dull dinner party. I blessed Lady Lusinger and I blessed every snort that she had snorted. I felt absurdly happy.

And being happy, I had the natural instinct to share my happiness with someone else. But there was only one person at Cambridge to whom I ever talked about myself and that was Michael Grayling, who occupied the room directly below mine on "A" staircase. He was my best and most intimate friend at college, but for the last few weeks he had been almost as difficult of approach as my next door neighbor, Julius Baumann, who lived on the fourth floor.



As I looked toward the passage window, I saw the shadow of a woman in front of it  
(CHAP. III)

The two of them were working in deadly rivalry for the Lenox Open Scholarship—Michael because he really needed the money to complete his third year at Cambridge—Baumann because he wanted to fling his success in the world's teeth and prove that he was not only a marvelous cricketer but a considerable classical scholar as well.

It was with some surprise, therefore, that I saw Michael's door standing invitingly open as I passed up the stairs. He looked up from Plato's Republic as I entered the room. His brown eyes, I noticed, seemed very tired and there were faint parallel lines on his broad, bulgy forehead. My friend's smile of welcome, however, was as warm and sunny as ever.

"Doing a spot of work for a change," he announced in the apologetic tone assumed by even the most serious-minded undergraduate when caught red-handed at his studies. "I'm past all help from lectures now and have to plug along by myself in the hopes that I'll hit on something that they will set in the papers. Not that I have an earthly chance, anyhow—unless Baumann dies or gets laid out in the Varsity Match against the M. C. C. this week."

The tone was light, but I knew the deep seriousness of his situation. The race, in this case, was to the swift. Baumann was brilliant; Michael was only a very creditable plodder. I made sympathetic noises with the roof of my mouth and was just about to divert my friend from his Plato with a description of the lecture and its quite unplatonic consequences, when a noise on the stairway above made me turn to look out of the door.

Now a noise on the stairway could mean only one thing—a visitor for me. Baumann, the misanthropic man of mystery, never had visitors. A constantly sported oak and a sullen scowl barred my South African neighbor from all friendly intercourse with his fellow men.

With a muttered excuse, I went out on to the third floor landing and left Michael to his Platonic ideals. Light footsteps were coming down from the fourth floor; a turn in the staircase revealed the fact that our visitor was a woman. Nor was it, as might have been expected, the inestimable Mrs. Bigger.

No, it was a young woman—a girl—a girl in a shabby raincoat, and, yes—heavens, how my heart was beating—it was the Profile. The Profile on our staircase, on my floor!

But now she was the Profile no longer, for this time I caught her head on, as it were. In the twinkling of a second I took in the interesting facts that her eyes were dark blue and that her full face did more than justice to the promise of the side view. I also no-

ticed that a worried, unhappy expression had supplanted the earlier serenity of the lecture room.

She was holding a handkerchief in her hand and somehow I had the impression that she had just been using it to remove the trace of tears. (I was in far too romantic a frame of mind even to imagine that she might have a cold in the nose!) Or perhaps she kept it there to conceal a perfectly natural embarrassment, for despite musical comedies and the co-educational movies, women students are not in the habit of running around in the men's colleges at Cambridge.

AS SHE came toward me, I thought of a thousand marvelous things to do. I thought of a thousand marvelous things to say. It was an heroic moment, but like most of life's great opportunities it was destined to be wasted. The mountains of my emotion had been in labor—a ridiculous mouse of conversation was born.

"Were you looking for someone?" was my final fatuity.

For a moment her eyes darkened with a look of annoyance and suspicion. The finely marked eyebrows seemed almost to meet in the center of her forehead and then her whole face suddenly smoothed itself out into a delightful smile.

"No—yes," she hesitated. "I wanted to—er—see Professor Long. He's on this staircase, isn't he?" Normally her voice must have been charming. It now sounded strained and a trifle husky.

"Professor Long is on the ground floor," I replied, "but he's only in his rooms on Saturday mornings." Everyone in Cambridge knew that Dr. Long, being almost ninety, kept very restricted office hours.

"Thanks." The handkerchief had now been put away and her smile was positively mischievous. "And—lectures on Blake are well worth listening to, by the way. They are not intended as opportunities to stare at one's neighbors."

"Oh, I say, I'm sorry. But—but—" Here I wanted to tell her about the line of her nose and forehead, the curve of her cheek and the full, devastating effect on her profile. They seemed sufficient reason for staring at anyone. Involuntarily, however, I chose a more conventional line and stammered out, "—but you see, I know you. That is, I know your name. I know Lady Lusinger, and she told me—"

"And can I flatter myself that you deliberately followed me up here?" The tone was light but I thought I detected a note of anxiety beneath its lightness.

"Oh, no—I mean, yes. Well, I don't know what I mean, but my name is Hilary Fenton and that's my room up there behind you and,

well, couldn't we have a date for lunch?"

"A date for lunch!" She laughed. "It sounds like a vegetarian food crank. I loathe dates. Why not a prune and have done with it? But—" here she paused and looked straight at me for the first time, "—you must be an American."

"I admit the allegation and admire the—er—perspicacity of the alligator," I said facetiously.

She gave me a rather wintry smile and then she proceeded to edge past me down the stairs.

My voice rose imploringly:

"Seriously though, I really am not a rounder—I mean boulder. I do know you—or, at least, your name. You're Dorothy Dupuis. I saw it on the attendance list. And Lady Lusinger did tell me to look you up."

She paused and her smile was so bright that I had the uncomfortable feeling that she was laughing at me rather than with me.

"Well, I must dash on now or I'll be late for a lecture in Kings—on the Pre-Raphaelites. I couldn't possibly have lunch with you today, but if you're really sure you know me, ask me some other time. Drop me a line at Clough Hall, Newnham."

Once again the handkerchief was produced and held up to her divine little Doric nose. She gave it a substantial blow and then passed on quickly down the stairs.

She was gone: but the fragrance of her stayed with me. It was a surprising and unforgettable fragrance, different from anything that I had ever smelled before. It was not English. It was not French. Nor was it Oriental. Exciting without being extravagantly exotic, it hung about the age-old staircase like a faint memory of half-forgotten flowers or a romance of long ago.

But I did not stay to appreciate it. I was seized with a mad desire to catch a last glimpse of her. I wanted just to see her cross the court and go out by the gate. Accordingly I put my head out of the landing window which gave a good view of the only exit to our staircase.

I waited five, I waited ten minutes. Still she did not appear.

At the end of half an hour she came out and walked quickly across the court. I noticed that she still held her handkerchief in one hand. She had missed her lecture on the Pre-Raphaelites. She was walking away from Kings. Dr. Long had not been in his room that morning and yet she had been half an hour on our staircase since leaving me. What had she been doing?

When I pulled in my head and started upstairs again, her perfume was still with me. I have always been very sensitive to perfumes. I was destined never to forget this one.

## Chapter 11



OF ALL the many dignitaries and functionaries that play a part in the life of a Cambridge undergraduate, perhaps the least appreciated is his bed-maker. Cruel things have been sung and written about "bedders." Their very name lends itself to ridicule and unkind jokes.

They are mocked for the better days which they invariably claim to have seen.

They are castigated for their taking ways—no heel tap, no remnant of tea, butter or sugar is supposed to be safe from their pilfering fingers. I have even heard them accused of being superannuated Girtonians who once took the wrong turning in youth and are now expiating their peccadillos by lives of service and sacrifice. They are, indeed, a much maligned race.

But the sublime Mrs. Bigger of "A" staircase cared for none of these things. She was, in every sense of the word, a bigger and better bedder, and I freely admit that she contributed not a little to my amusement and comfort while I was at Cambridge. In fact, until my encounter with the Profile, she was the nearest approach to a soft, feminine influence in this rugged phase of my life.

Perhaps some womanly intuition had warned Mrs. Bigger that there was a rival near her throne on that Monday morning. Perhaps she took exception to the unconventional hours which the Profile chose to wander about the staircase—at any rate, when I returned to my room, I found the good lady showing unmistakable symptoms of the tantrums which she usually reserved for Hank, her boss, or the unneighborly Baumann, who was notoriously the thorn in her ample flesh.

"Hembarressed," she sniffed, as she emerged from my bedroom with much indignant rustling of gray alpaca, "hembarressed, that's wot I was, Mr. Fenton! To be caught a-empting the slops by a young lady in the middle of the morning. I could of blushed for the shame of it."

(Mrs. Bigger's sentiments mirror to some extent the views of a great University that does not officially recognize the existence of women students.)

"Do you mean that she came into my room, Mrs. Bigger?" I asked, trying hard to conceal the eagerness of my curiosity.

The purple ostrich plume on her hat quivered with indignation and outraged decorum.

"No, hindeed, sir," replied the good lady in the tone which was first used on Eve by

the Angel with the Flaming Sword. "Nobody comes into your room when you ain't here, Mr. Fenton—honly hover my dead body, sir. Leastways unless it's one of yer pertickler friends like Mr. Grayling or Mr. Comstock—folks as has a right on this staircase, sir."

"The young lady wasn't looking for me, then," I asked innocently.

Mrs. Bigger sniffed volubly.

"I don't know wot she was 'ere for, Mr. Fenton, and that's a fact. A few minutes 'fore you come in, I went out and saw 'er on the stairs. But seein' as how I 'ad the pail in me 'and, I popped back into yer bedroom and waited as was only modest."

I casually remarked that our visitor had at least been remarkably easy on the eyes.

"Andsome is as 'andsome does," replied my bedmaker cryptically, "and certainly she's 'andsome enough for that there Mr. Baumann. Not that she's as pretty as Mary Smith—'er as works as 'ousemaid over to the Master's Lodge—the girl as Mr. 'Ankin 'as honored with 'is attentions—"

She sniffed again, then added generously, "Haristocratic is the word I would of used for the young lady on the stairs, Mr. Fenton. Haristocratic, she was, almost to the point of bein' 'orty! As soon as I kleps me eyes on 'er, I says to meself, 'Well, mebbe she ain't dressed like a lady, but you'd right off know 'er for one.'"

She paused on her way to the door.

"But—I don't 'old with them mecks on a young woman! I onst 'ad a niece as wore a meck, Mr. Fenton, and she come to no good, she didn't. Two buckles," she added darkly. (Mrs. Bigger had a decided weakness for pathological conditions and their nomenclature and was never so happy as when she was describing the complicated diseases which carried off her friends and relatives.)

Having fired her Parthian shot at the objectionable mackintosh, my bedmaker stalked from the room with one hand on her hip and the other clasping the handle of the aforementioned pail. Her departing gait, therefore, combined the lilt of Patience with the dignity of a prominent royal personage who is also to be seen wearing ostrich plumes in her hat.

After she had left me I felt that I could not settle down to work until I had written to the Profile. And while I am on the subject of work, I want to set at rest, once and for all, the anxiety which my over-conscientious readers will doubtless feel with regard to my studies during the course of this narrative.

I am naturally of a fairly studious turn of mind. But I had not come to Cambridge to shun delights and live laborious days exclusively. In fact my tutor had said to me some time previously, "You won't get a first.

Fenton, not if you stand on your head until the date of the Tripos. You can't fail to get a second even if you stand on your head throughout the whole examination. Read the things you enjoy and develop your own taste.

"But don't overdo it or get a one-track mind. Just browse in the pastures that suit you best, but vary your diet and always get your full quota of vitamins such as Shakespeare, Milton, Donne and Wordsworth. . . ." In short, I was predestined to mediocrity. My leisurely attitude had the divine sanction of authority. I had no reason to be worried or hag-ridden.

I WAS worried now, however, as to my best method of approach in writing to the Profile. I had had so little experience with English girls and all my preconceived notions with regard to the British had been proved hopelessly wrong to date. It is not surprising, therefore, that I tore up several highly colored flights of fancy and wasted nearly half a ream of crested note paper before I finally evolved the following piece of plain, straightforward prose:

Dear Miss Dupuis,

At a dinner party given by the American Ambassador last vacation I had the pleasure of meeting your aunt, Lady Lusinger. She told me that you were at Newnham and suggested that we might meet. I shall be at the "Whim" tomorrow (Tuesday) at one o'clock and shall be delighted if you can join me for lunch.

Sincerely,

Hilary Fenton.

There was nothing in this sober missive at which even Lady Lusinger herself could do more than give one of her milder variety of snorts. It was a harmless elixir of milk and water. I addressed it to Clough Hall, Newnham, and ran down to catch the twelve o'clock post.

It was when I returned to my room, some minutes later, that there occurred the second amazing incident of that already amazing day.

As I pushed open my door I found to my intense surprise that Julius Baumann, my misanthropic neighbor, was standing by my fireplace obviously waiting for my return.

Now, to those whose jaded appetites require the constant stimulus of thrills and horror, I am afraid that this chronicle to date must have appeared hopelessly dull and singularly devoid of dramatic incident. A very ordinary (if American) undergraduate has attended a lecture where he has "fallen for" a girl to whom he has subsequently spoken.

He has written her a politely conventional letter, posted it and returned to find another undergraduate waiting in his room. Nothing in that to make a song about—let alone a

mystery story. No? Well, the unexpected happens so seldom at Cambridge.

Today it had happened twice, and yet these extraordinary happenings afterwards seemed like the quiet lull before the storm of strange incidents that were to follow—mere *hors d'oeuvres* preceding a regular orgy of unexpectedness.

It should also be borne in mind that I had lived within twenty yards of Baumann for two and a half terms and he had never once passed my portal nor invited me to pass his. No shortage of cigarettes, no desire for a convivial sundowner, no primal urge for human companionship had led the South African to accord me more than a noncommittal grunt

"Fenton," he said abruptly in his thick, guttural accent. "I want to speak to you. Can you come into my room for a moment?"

I was so astonished that I could do nothing but open my mouth and shut it again. I seemed incapable of making any intelligible reply. However, there must have been a certain amount of antagonism in my speechlessness, for he seemed to think it necessary to urge me a second time.

"Please," he said, and there was a note al-



"... and Dr. Warren was there with his monocle on top of green striped pajamas," said Comstock, dangerously near to hysterics (CHAP. XI)

when chance brought us face to face upon the staircase.

Nor, indeed, had I ever known him to be more civil to others. His only friend was Hank, the gyp, whose claim to notice lay in the fact that he, too, came from the Orange Free State and could converse with Baumann in a strange language called Afrikaans. Nothing could have surprised me more than to find this arch recluse leaning against my mantelpiece and staring at me from dark, sombre eyes.

most of anguish in his voice. He was no longer the brilliant athlete whose cricket everyone admired and envied, no longer the fine classical scholar who was going to win the Lenox Scholarship and sail into an easy "first" in the Tripos—he was just a human being in what appeared to be a bad jam and, somehow or other, I could not gainsay him.

"Okay," I said quietly and followed him into his unfamiliar room. He shut the door behind us and sported his oak. As I sat down and lighted a cigarette to regain my composure, he stared at me so hard and so intensely that a feeling of annoyance and embarrassment crept over me.

"When you get your eyes full, fill your pocket," I remarked flippantly, the phrase

occurring to me out of some dim, kindergarten memory.

"I ignored my infantile banality. "Fenton," he said, starting to pace up and down the floor, "before I ask you to do what I called you in here for, I want you to swear that you will never, under any circumstances, tell anyone in the world. . . ."

"Stop being so dramatic," I interrupted impatiently. "Of course I won't tell."

"All right. I trust you. I suppose I have to. First of all I want you to witness my signature on a document here."

I nodded. He opened the door and called out to Hankin who came up from the landing below. Then the South African signed his name and the gyp and I solemnly affixed our own signatures. The proceeding was simple enough and certainly not sufficient to justify all the fuss and tumult.

When we were left alone together, Baumann folded up the document and remarked solemnly, "And now I want to tell you that I am probably going to have to leave Cambridge."

"*Exeat, absit or aegrotat?*" I asked, mentioning the only three methods by which one can leave Cambridge without spoiling one's chance of a degree. I was rather proud of being able to use a sentence composed almost entirely of Latin words to a classical scholar.

"If I go at all, I'm going down for good," he replied curtly.

Now this was news—real front page stuff, if you like. News of importance in the very highest circles, athletic and academic. Baumann was by far the most consequential undergraduate at All Saints.

"But what about the Varsity match against the M. C. C. this week?" I stammered.

"So much the better for that cocky ass, Somerville. I don't suppose he will object very strongly to taking my place on the team." The corners of his mouth drooped in an acid smile.

"But the Lenox scholarship?" I asked again, and this time I could not conceal my interest in his reply. "You must be crazy to give up your chances of that, Baumann."

"Make things a bit easier for your pal, Grayling," he remarked. "That's about all I have to offer you in return for what I am going to ask you to do for me. It's not that I am considering either Somerville or Grayling themselves—you can be sure of that. They're like the rest of these blasted Englishmen."

"They hate me because I happen to be good at the things on which they fancy they have a monopoly; they despise me because I won't interest myself in what they call their college activities—because I won't waste my time drinking tea with a lot of stupid undergraduates. . . ."

This was too much for me. I am not blind or besotted Anglophile—nor do I subscribe to the popular fallacy that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton—but I still feel that there is something to be said for England and her educational institutions.

"I think," I said coolly, as I threw my cigarette into the fireplace and rose from my chair, "that you had better ask favors from some stupid undergraduate of your own nationality. I am an American but I do happen to be at an English University. Both you and I have come over here to do or be done by Cambridge, Baumann. It has been remarkably generous to you. And as for me, I happen to like it. My best friends are English. Cheerio!" My hand was on the door knob.

"*Machtig!*" he muttered between his teeth, as he jumped up to stop me. "I'm sorry, Fenton, but I let my feelings get the better of me for a moment. You see, I'm a Dutchman—a Boer. The English have always treated us badly. We don't love them, we. . . ."

"We might try staying in our own country then," I remarked, but I could not help feeling sorry for this creature who was so warped and twisted with bitterness—for a man so friendless that he was obliged to ask favors of a total stranger. Besides, there had been a note of genuine homesickness in his voice.

■ SAT down again.

"I am going back," he cried, in a tone that was at once exultant and resentful. "I hate to leave just before I've got what I come for, but I see no other way out. Don't ask me my reasons."

"He who has drunk of Africa's fountains will surely drink again," I quoted lightly. "And—incidentally—I'm in a heck of a hurry. I'm due to lunch with Comstock in ten minutes."

"Don't worry, I won't keep you long."

He went over to his desk and started to slip some papers into an envelope. I caught a crackling sound suggestive of crisp, new bank notes. There was something desperate, almost final in his purposeful movements. I felt a vague sensation of uneasiness.

"Baumann," I remonstrated, "you are not going to do anything stupid, are you? Not suicide? I want to keep my promise to you but I don't want to get involved in anything that might be—er—embarrassing. I am an alien, you know. I'm registered with the Police and an object of suspicion. I'd hate to get into any sort of mess."

He paused in the act of licking the flap of an envelope.

"Suicide? Good heavens, no! But—" he added quickly, "I would like to feel you'd keep your word to me even if anything really drastic did happen. I am not asking you to do

something against the law. I'm merely asking you to post a letter for me—to safeguard the happiness of—but, never mind, I know I can trust you."

"Well, what is it you want me to do?" I looked ostentatiously at my watch.

He put into my hands a large, plain envelope. There was no address, no writing on the outside.

"In this envelope," he said, "is another envelope, addressed and stamped. I would prefer that you do not try to find out who it is addressed to, but if your curiosity—"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"All right, then. Now I told you that I may have to leave Cambridge. If I do so, it will be suddenly and at a moment's notice. The method and time of my departure are still doubtful. You will, of course, know that I am gone—if I go. I want you to take this package to the post, open the outer envelope and put the other in the box. If I do not go, I will ask for it back."

"Seems like an awful lot of fuss and mystery. I don't see why—"

"There are reasons," he interrupted, "why I may not be in a position to post it myself. Anything may happen. I may be—in- incapacitated. I might"—here he paused and seemed to shudder—"I might even be worse than that. But, whatever happens, it is a matter of life and death that this letter should be posted within the shortest possible time of my leaving Cambridge. No, I am perfectly sane," he added, seeing my expression of alarm.

"I'll do it," I said, "and if you ever want the package back and I am not in my room, it will be in the second volume of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*—on the shelf to the right of my fireplace."

A look of relief and gratitude had replaced the sullen expression.

"I don't know how I can ever thank you, Fenton," he muttered. "You've taken a great load off my mind and if there's anything I can do for you in return—"

"There is something," I replied in a tone of assumed indifference. "You could tell me who that girl was who came up here about an hour ago. The one in the raincoat. She went into your room, didn't she?"

While I was speaking I watched his eyes very closely. A hardly perceptible flicker seemed to pass over them, but he quickly turned away so that I could not see his face. For a moment I was consumed by an insane, humiliating jealousy.

"A girl did come up here some time ago," he replied, and I felt sure that it cost him an effort to control his voice. "She was looking for a John Bowman. I traced him in the registry list for her. He's at Trinity." Not once during this speech did his eyes meet mine.

"She told me she was looking for Professor Long," I said suspiciously.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps she changed her mind. You know what women are. Sorry I can't tell you more, Fenton, but I don't even know her name. And—thanks a thousand times."

I was late for my lunch with Lloyd Comstock, a nice but rather nondescript youth who occupied a room on the second floor of "A" staircase. He came to fetch me at length and I ran into him just as I was leaving Baumann's rooms. His cheerful face expressed surprise when he saw the direction from which I was coming and he made a few caustic remarks about "My new friend of two and a half terms' standing." Then he went down to lunch.

The rest of the afternoon was peaceful and uneventful. Lloyd Comstock and I played five leisurely sets of tennis and then took a canoe up the Cam to Grantchester. There we bathed and lay naked in the sunshine, talking about nothing whatsoever, reading at intervals, munching biscuits, smoking pipes and enjoying ourselves as only undergraduates know how.

Time seemed to have stood still for awhile and the whole world was bounded by pale blue sky, white scudding clouds and meadows golden with buttercups. There was no shadow to mar the perfection of my happiness.

But, as we paddled back under the college bridges towards evening, the sky had become blotched and angry looking. It was incredibly warm for May. An electric storm was brewing and we felt that we had to race to avoid the rain.

Before going into Hall I procured a students' registry and went through it carefully from Aaronson to Zymovitch. There was no John Bowman at Trinity. There was no Bowman or John Bowman registered at any college in Cambridge. Someone had been misrepresenting facts. . . .

### Chapter III



IT is generally believed at Cambridge that the Deity is especially partial to the Latin language and to the classical scholars. At any rate, it is their privilege to address Him at some length in that tongue before sitting down to dinner in the Hall. Those who do not understand

Latin must say a Quaker grace in silence, or sit down graceless like Charles Lamb.

On this particular Monday night it was Baumann's turn to pronounce the long bless-

ing. He did it sullenly enough and seemed to be throwing out the sonorous Latin words almost in defiance rather than in gratitude. But he had got no further than "Oculi omnium in Te sperant, Domine . . ." when he was interrupted by a terrific burst of thunder.

Everyone was startled, of course, by the unexpected noise, but I noticed that there was an almost terrified expression in Baumann's eyes as he paused and looked apprehensively around him. He seemed completely unnerved and (as Michael Grayling informed me later) actually made a false quantity in the last line of the grace. Which, for a brilliant classical scholar, was almost as startling as the thunderclap itself.

When we at length sat down to our meal, it was to an accompaniment of the pattering of hail. A regular tropical downpour had followed a day that was prematurely summery. I ordered a "college special" for Michael, Comstock and myself to keep the damp out of our bones. No beer in the world ever has or ever will come within nodding distance of the beer known as "college special."

Michael, Comstock and I consumed two or three more "college specials," finished our meal and passed outside to join the cluster of undergraduates at the notice boards. The storm—or the beer—seemed to have induced a state of unnatural excitement in all three of us and we decided, with one accord, that work would be out of the question with all this racket going on. The elements were on the rampage.

Finally it was decided that we should join forces in my room in half an hour's time.

As I passed alone up "A" staircase, I paused for a moment outside the door of Dr. Warren, senior tutor of the college. He must have left the Combination Room without waiting for his port, for strains of Chopin's Nocturne in E Flat were waiving weakly against the somber music of the storm. I thought that, if it was he who was playing, I had never heard him play so well before.

**WE** had barely assembled in my room and got a good brew of coffee going when the door opened to admit Mr. Stuart Somerville. We were all a trifle surprised at the condescension and there was an awkward pause. In the first place the young aristocrat had little in common with the plain, outspoken Comstock; in the second place, we had learnt during Hall that Stuart had once again been picked as twelfth man for the Varsity match that week. The difference between the twelfth and eleventh man is the difference between success and failure. But he was least embarrassed of us all.

"All we need now," he remarked, as he glanced cheerfully around him, "is a chorus

composed of Professor Long, the Merry Monocle and Baumann. Hank and the divine Bigger would do as front line comedians. 'A' staircase should all cling together on a night like this. Mind if I join you in a cup of coffee, Fenton on Torts?"

"Delighted, Somerville on Spinach," I replied, smiling. It was impossible to be annoyed for long with the irrepressible Stuart, even when he continued in his best pseudo-Americanized drawl:

"That was a slick little chick I saw you talking to on the stairs this morning. When are you going to introduce me to the girl friend?"

The question was merely rhetorical so I busied myself with the coffee cups and made no reply. I did not know that there had been a witness to the encounter. His agile mind now shifted to a totally different topic.

"You know I wasn't kidding when I told you this morning that North had got out. You'd better cable your old man to have his eye peeled. North escaped last night from the Cambridge Asylum for the Criminally Insane."

"I saw it too," said Comstock casually. "That case was a rum go. An old Saints man, wasn't he?"

"Lived on this staircase—so I've heard," commented Michael.

"See Fenton's Famous Second Trials, Chapter Twenty-three, for a full description of the case and increase the coffers of a penniless American millionaire," sang out Stuart. A well-aimed cushion ruffled his blond hair and made him look handsomer than ever.

"Well, it's a fine night for a murderous lunatic to come creeping back to his old haunts," said Comstock, who had a strong leaning towards the sensational.

"Goody-goody, creepy-crawly and spooky-spooky!" cried Somerville. "Let's all tell ghost stories and make a night of it. I've got half a bottle of whisky and some biscuits in my rooms. Come and help me fetch them, Fenton."

As Somerville and I returned to my room with the whisky, I noticed that Baumann's door was wide open. He was seated at his desk, working. The reading lamp was lit since the storm had made it darker than was usual at that hour. He did not look up as we passed, and his only reply was a grunt when Stuart called out pleasantly, "Congrats on getting on the team, Baumann."

For about half an hour we sat by my window eating cookies and drinking whiskies and sodas while we watched the storm lighting up the battlements of King's Chapel and throwing into sudden, splendid relief the perpendicular stained windows and the Tudor Roses above the doorway. Never had the

familiar spires of Cambridge appeared so fantastic or so exotic. It was a wild, extravagant night.

**A** PLEA for ghost stories was again urged, this time by Lloyd Comstock.

"Talking of criminal lunatics," said Michael, after we had drawn the curtains and turned on all the lights, "a queer sort of thing happened last year in the village next to ours. Just a tiny little Gloucestershire hamlet where everybody is either a hundred years old or landed gentry dating back to Edward the Confessor. It was all rather beastly.

"The first thing was that almost every young or youngish woman in the village got an anonymous letter—nasty obscene stuff. I saw one of them because my cousin is married to the village doctor and she got one, too. Somehow or other the writer of that letter had raked up an affair she had had years before with a young captain who was killed in the war.

"The thing had been innocent enough, but insinuations in the letter were perfectly cadish. Even the vicar's daughter, who's no chicken, by the way, got one and almost went potty, she was so upset. The letters were all neatly printed on a kind of old-fashioned parchment. The postmark was Bristol, which is about thirty miles away.

"The police were called in, of course, but they never found a shadow of evidence against anyone. But those letters had brought up more filth than all the dredgers of the Bristol Channel put together.

"Then, just as the excitement was beginning to die down a bit, things took a more gruesome turn. Complaints started to come in that someone was torturing domestic animals. Weird caterwaulings were heard in the dead of night and several cases of horrible mutilations were reported. My cousin's gray Persian kitten was found hanging in an old barn; a prize Sealyham of Lady Standen's had its back legs cut off, and several similar outrages occurred. It was too revolting.

"I was at home at the time and shall never forget the uproar it all caused. I heard of one old farmer who actually took his blue-ribbon sow to bed with him. The S. P. C. A. sent down a representative and several of the less reputable characters of the community were put under lock and key.

"But the thing went on just the same in spite of the fact that every suspicious person in the place, and every tramp for miles around had a perfect alibi in the local police station. Finally word got about that the perpetrator of all these horrors was not of mortal flesh. A supernatural agency seemed the only possible explanation.

"There was a mound outside the village where an Antichrist was supposed to have been buried in the Middle Ages. Frantic, the villagers flocked to the old vicar and begged him to come to 'lay' the evil spirit. He refused, steadfastly repeating that it was a case for the police and not for the priest. They then approached the young curate, who consented. The evil spirit was exorcised at midnight and a stake driven deep into the ground on the spot where its heart was supposed to lie.

"Next night the ten-year-old daughter of the village postman was found brutally murdered in a corner of the churchyard. The village was in a state bordering on panic. Of course the thing got into the papers. A Scotland Yard man came down and there was no end of a rumpus.

"Two weeks later the curate was found with his face deeply embedded in the mud of a shallow puddle three miles away. It could not have been a natural death, suicide seemed impossible and there were no traces pointing to murder. I forget what the verdict was.

"From that day on the trouble stopped, and not a soul ever knew who was really responsible. Some say it was all done by the curate himself, others are still confident that no human being could have been capable of perpetrating such horrors. Those were the facts. . . ."

[Turn page]

## Tired Kidneys Often Bring Sleepless Nights

Doctors say your kidneys contain 15 miles of tiny tubes or filters which help to purify the blood and keep you healthy. When they get tired and don't work right in the daytime, many people have to get up nights. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder. Don't neglect this condition and lose valuable, restful sleep.

When disorder of kidney function permits

poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may also cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, a stimulant diuretic, used successfully by millions for over 50 years. Doan's give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

(Adv.)

Michael paused and looked around him. There was a long moment of silence.

"Gosh, what a ghastly yarn!" shuddered Comstock, who was an impressionable youth. "You know, somehow or other I can imagine that blighter Baumann being capable of a thing like that."

"Piffle!" I exploded. "If Baumann wanted to kill anyone or anything he'd shoot straight and he'd shoot clean—he'd probably shoot with that revolver Mrs. Bigger is always complaining about. But," I added, "there's nothing the matter with Baumann except that he's homesick, poor devil." These words, coming from an alien, carried a certain amount of weight.

"We are little friends,  
Happy little friends,  
We are little friends,  
And tutor loves us so—"

chanted Stuart.

Neither he nor Michael had ever been heard to say anything against the man who stood between them and what they wanted most in the world. "Have some more whisky, everyone," he continued. "Just a single swallow to make us spring."

"Put a spike in it," I replied, mangling his metaphor and passing the glasses.

"Speaking of village horrors," pursued Lloyd Comstock, when we had all settled down to our drinks, "that was a pretty tragic and weird sort of business when all those women started to die off in Crosby-Stourton last summer. . . ."

"Hey, you, no family scandal," interrupted Stuart Somerville. "Sir Howard Crosby happens to be a cousin of my governor's and we won't talk about that little tea party if you don't mind."\*

**THE** argumentative Comstock was about to remonstrate when Stuart continued:

"But if you do want to hear a really creepy yarn I can tell you a story about a fellow I knew at Marlborough. It was a most amazing and uncanny affair. . . ." His voice grew low and serious. "This chap was of a nervous disposition—prone to fainting fits and nose-bleeds—you know the type.

"I got to know him first when we were alone in the school infirmary together—the last victims of an epidemic of some sort—chicken-pox, I think, or one of those kiddish complaints. I regarded it as a ripping chance to escape work and slack a bit, but he took it very hard although he wasn't really any more ill than I was.

"I remember one night well—it was the night before his birthday and he must have

been feverish or something because he begged me to stay awake with him and on no account to let him go to sleep. I can see it now—the long row of white covered beds, the black curtain, the night light flickering in a saucer of water on the mantelpiece, and his pale, frightened face imploring me to talk to him.

"I was sleepy but I promised I'd do my best to keep awake. Then he told me the reason. Ever since he was a kid, he said, he had been subject to a particular dream which was so terrible and frightening that he couldn't even describe it properly. It occurred quite often but he could always count on it the night before his birthday.

"In fact, when he was a kid his parents used to sit up with him on that particular night. They had been awfully upset about it and had taken him to a specialist for treatment. Finally he had found it easiest to pretend he had outgrown his childish fears and to keep the real truth to himself.

"In that sick-room at Marlborough he told me his dream, which, for all his pretended courage, grew more real and more terrifying each year. He dreamt he was in a large dormitory-like room such as they have in hospitals and public schools. There were eighteen beds in the room and he was always sleeping in the end one.

"Suddenly he seemed to be awake, watching the single fluttering gas jet that lighted the room, and knowing with that awful nightmare certainty that something fearful was going to happen. Fascinated and unable to turn away his eyes, he would watch the door under the gas light. It used to open very slowly, and then something—something he could not describe—would come into the room.

"It was not a man, it was not an ape, nor a bear nor a wolf, and yet it suggested all of these. With footsteps that were noiseless, yet somehow hideously menacing, it would creep toward one of the beds, and then—then, at that point, he always turned his eyes away, screamed and woke up in an icy sweat.

"But the worst part of the dream was yet to come. In his earliest recollections he never saw the Thing at all distinctly. It always went to one of the cubicles at the end of the dormitory near the door. But each year he seemed to see it more and more distinctly, and this was the worst of all—*every birthday he noticed that it came one bed nearer!*"

Stuart paused a moment and then continued in a more normal tone.

"Well, I did my best to cheer him up that night. We talked far into the early hours of the morning about cricket, the masters, our families, everything in God's earth. Finally, of course, I was so tired that I could hold out no longer. I fell asleep. I was awakened by

\*See *Cottage Sleister* by Q. Patrick for an account of this remarkable case.

an agonized scream. The night light had gone out, but I was aware that a figure in white pyjamas was standing by my bed and a voice gasped rather than spoke:

"It came again, Somerville. I am sixteen today and . . . it was only two beds away. . . ."

"I remember that I jumped out of bed and called the matron. She took his temperature and sent for the doctor. He was frightfully ill next day. Sort of brain fever the matron told me. It lasted for some time and he was finally obliged to leave Marlborough altogether. But—the funny part of it is that I met the fellow two years later. It was just before I came up to the Varsity.

"I was in Switzerland with my pater and stopping in a small inn right up in the mountains. We had just come in from a day's climbing and were feeling frightfully bucked with ourselves. I was drinking Neuchâtel at the so-called bar when suddenly I heard someone say my name. I turned round and found him standing beside me. At first I thought it must be a ghost, he looked so perfectly ghastly!

"Somerville," he said, and his face was so pale I could almost see through it like paper. 'Somerville, I shall be eighteen tomorrow. I want to tell you . . .'"

**B**UT Stuart never finished his story for, at this moment the room was suddenly plunged into complete darkness. A blinding flash of lightning showed us all sitting perfectly rigid in our seats like bodies excavated at Pompeii. There followed a long moment of absolute silence. Then there was a crash.

Whether it was the uncanny tales or the whisky or the storm, I shall never know, but we all seemed to make a rush for the door at the same time. Our nerves had apparently given way in a sort of collective collapse. I fumbled for the light switch, pressed it, but without result. Someone threw open the door. The passage outside was also in total darkness.

I am not at all clear as to what happened immediately, but the next thing I knew for certain was that I was banging against Baumann's sported oak and calling his name. As I waited for a reply in the awful stillness between thunderclaps, I could have sworn I heard a slight movement inside the room and the sound of a match being struck. But perhaps I was mistaken. Cambridge oaks are notoriously thick and I was far from being myself.

"Baumann!" I called again. "The damned lights are on the blink. Can you give me a candle?" There was no answer.

"Better go down and tell the porter," muttered Michael's voice behind me. "The electricity of the storm must have blown out the

"All right, I'll go," I replied, and started to feel my way down the stairs. When I passed Dr. Warren's rooms there was no light under the door, but as I continued downwards I heard the piano starting to play. This time it was Chopin's *Marche Funèbre*, but I did not stop to listen. Further on, a movement in the gyp's pantry told me that Mrs. Bigger must have been working late. Hank was standing on the ground floor staring out at the rain. He seemed unaware of the trouble on the staircase.

"The lights have all gone out, Hankin," I said.

"Is that so, Mr. Fenton?" he replied calmly. "Well, we can soon fix that up. The porter has the fuses."

We walked over to the porter's lodge together.

"Horl right, sir, horl right," smiled the fat, jovial porter. "Them fuses is busted, I s'pose." I nodded gravely. He turned towards Hank. "I shan't be gone long, Tom, but you'll have to stay here and close them gates at ten o'clock prompt if I ain't back. It's nine fifty-seven now and them gates closes at ten, fuses or no fuses, storm or no storm. Prompt, mind."

Hank nodded laconically. He was quite accustomed to pinch-hitting for the porter just before ten o'clock—the hour at which a heartless Defense of the Realm Act closes the gates of other, more popular, institutions.

The porter trotted off to the infernal regions below his lodge, leaving Hank to play St. Peter. I returned to my own staircase. My eyes were now more accustomed to the darkness but, even so, it was hard to find one's way and there was little or no lightning to help me out. The gyp's pantry was still occupied and Mrs. Bigger's "Goodnight, Mr. Fenton" answered my own. Dr. Warren's piano was still pouring out the saccharine strains of Chopin. There was no other sound except my own footsteps.

Just as I reached the third floor landing, however, I felt rather than heard that there was someone coming down towards me. An uncanny sensation of unreality began to creep over me. It was all like some strange waking dreams. As the sounds came nearer, the rustling of a dress became more and more distinct.

There was a woman on "A" staircase—a woman there at ten o'clock at night! It could not be Mrs. Bigger. I had passed her a few seconds before. Who on God's earth could it be? I stood aside, waiting. As I did so, once again there came to my nostrils that faint delicate perfume which I connected so intimately with the Profile.

There was now no mistaking that fragrance. It was so strong that it almost made my head swim. I felt as though I was in the

grip of some powerful hallucination.

And then, as I looked towards the passage window, I saw a dark shadow pass in front of it. The shadow of a woman. A sudden faint flash of lightning threw it into momentary relief and I caught a fleeting glimpse of the features whose image had been with me all day. A fleeting glimpse and that was all.

But it was enough to convince me that the Profile I had just seen must be the same as that which I had seen in the morning. The perfume, too, was the same. For a moment I stood there too dazed to speak. It was all so impossible, so story book, so utterly un-academic. I could hardly believe the evidence of my own senses.

Then a mad resolution seized me. I turned and ran down the stairs after her. I must demand an explanation. But, when I reached the court, I found it completely empty. Once again she had appeared—and disappeared—as if by magic. The pavement outside the gates was empty. No one could possibly have left the college within the last few moments. There was no sound but the chime of the college clock which was just striking the hour.

At the tenth stroke I saw that Hank was solemnly closing the heavy wrought-iron gates.

### Chapter IV



WHEN I returned to my room I found the whole staircase flooded with light. The illumination seemed garish and almost blinding after the prolonged period of darkness. Otherwise things were more or less normal. Lloyd Comstock and Stuart Somerville were no-

where to be seen but Michael was lying on my sofa, smoking a cigarette. He gave me a strange look as I entered.

"Gosh, you look pale," he said. "Have you seen a ghost?"

"I'm not at all sure that I haven't," I replied as lightly as I could. "Where are the others?"

"Dunno. When you went down after the fuses they disappeared. Own rooms, I suppose. I stayed here as I wanted to speak to you. Been waiting to talk to you alone the whole evening."

There was a note of seriousness in Michael's voice which I was quick to catch.

"Shoot," I murmured abstractedly.

"I had a letter today from my uncle," he said wistfully. "The one that runs a prep school in Clifton. He's offered me a job there

next term. Wants a reply this week. A degree is not necessary for his purposes. I'm afraid I'll have to accept it."

The mania for leaving Cambridge prematurely seemed to be assuming epidemic proportions on "A" staircase.

"But, my dear fellow," I cried impatiently. "You can't possibly give up your chance of getting a degree here. You must finish your third year."

"Can't be done. My pater is dreadfully hard up. The Lenox Scholarship was my only hope and, of course, Baumann will carry that off, damn him."

"How much is the thing worth?"

"Eighty pounds a year. It must sound absurd to you, but to me it's the difference between, well—"

I did some rapid calculations in pounds and dollars.

"Why, that's nothing," I said at length. "I'm not a ruddy millionaire in spite of Somerville's cracks, but I spend that much on 'Gin and Its' every term. Let me lend it to you, I'd be tickled to death to do it. You can call it America's contribution towards the depreciated pound sterling."

Michael sat up with a start.

"Good Lord, no," he answered. "I'm sorry, Hilary, if that sounds rude but I couldn't borrow money from you or anyone else. Not under any circumstances. I must carve my own way out," he continued rather stiffly. "Thanks all the same. I know you meant it well and it was ripping of you to suggest it."

"Damn your British pride, and damn you, Michael Grayling. Now get this straight. You're not going to accept that pokey little job in your uncle's pokey little prep school. You're not going to leave Cambridge. You're going to win the Lenox Scholarship and you're going to get a first in the Tripos. And right now you are going to promise me that you won't make any decision until after the exam results come out. I have a hunch that one of your chief competitors is going to be—er—eliminated."

"Eliminated?" Michael's voice was pathetically eager. And as he spoke I felt I would have given anything to be able to put things right for my friend. Inwardly I damned Baumann and his arrogant brilliance. This stupid little bit of money meant so much to Michael. It was nothing to the South African except another bauble to satisfy his vanity which was already overinflated.

And then, Baumann had lied to me that morning. There was no John Bowman at Cambridge at all. He had lied about the Profile. She had been in his rooms before lunch. She had, so I believed, been in his rooms again that night. He must know more about her than he was prepared to admit. He could have saved me from so much mental

anguish by telling me the truth.

And now, he could save Michael from disappointment and indecision if he would be more specific about his leaving Cambridge. Why should I go on treating him as if he were the Archangel Gabriel? Why not march into his rooms and demand an answer to both my questions. And if he refused, then I would give him back his rotten envelope and tell him to go, once and for all, to an even more torrid place than South Africa. I was in a fighting mood.

**I** WENT over to my bookshelf. The package was still reposing in the second volume of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. I shoved it angrily in my pocket.

"Wait here a minute, Michael. I'm going in to speak to Baumann." My voice must have sounded strangely purposeful because Michael sat up and stared at me in open-mouthed amazement.

Without another word I strode out of the room, crossed the passage and banged noisily on Baumann's sported oak. There was no sound from his room but a crack of light showed under the door.

"I'll get in if it's the last thing I do," I muttered, still haunted by that fleeting glimpse of the Profile.

I opened the passage window and climbed out on to the still dripping roof. Once outside, I walked along the narrow parapet that separated my window from Baumann's. So far it was easy, but as I looked through into my neighbor's lighted room, I almost lost my balance and toppled over backwards into the court four stories below. I had to look twice before I could believe that this was not all some hideous nightmare. I grasped at the window sash to steady myself.

Baumann was stretched face downward on the floor near the writing table with his head lying in a large pool of blood. Near his right hand I caught the dull gleam of blued steel. . . .

I have lived what is usually called a sheltered life and am consequently not accustomed to horrors. My first instinct was to turn around on the narrow ledge where I was standing and go back to my own room. It was only the memory of the Profile on the staircase that made me go on.

I climbed in through the window. One glance at the body was sufficient to tell even an inexperienced person like myself that Baumann was dead. He had been shot just above the mouth and the bullet had caused hideous wreckage in his upper jaw. A revolver was lying on the floor close to his hand and half covered also in the blood.

On the desk I saw to my amazement that, in addition to an open volume of the *Idylls of Theocritus* and a Greek lexicon, there

was a small tin of the liquid metal polish called Brasso, a cleaning rag and a piece of chamois leather. For a moment I stared uncomprehendingly and then light began to dawn. Every appearance pointed to the fact that Baumann had been cleaning his revolver at the desk when it accidentally went off and shot him in the face.

As soon as I saw Baumann's dead body through the window, some sixth sense told me that he had been murdered. As soon as I saw the tin of Brasso and the dirty rags I thought to myself, "How clever of somebody. This is a good job. I must keep up the farce."

I do not attempt to excuse myself. I can only repeat that I had seen the features of the girl I loved on the staircase that night and I knew that nothing I could do would bring Baumann back to life. I was not going to be the one to betray her until I had heard what she had to say for herself.

I looked carefully and critically around me to see if I could discover any little weak point that the murderer had overlooked. Then I suddenly saw, staring me in the face, the most damning and terrible piece of evidence in the world.

**N**OW the carpet in Baumann's room was a light red with a motif of large indeterminate flowers in crimson. About eighteen inches from Baumann's feet, I noticed that there was a crimson circle which looked, at first glance, like a floating peony or chrysanthemum which had come adrift from its moorings in the carpet's design.

I went over and touched it with my hand. It was sticky and my fingers were red where they had come into contact with the carpet. Blood! If Baumann's "accident" had occurred while he was seated at his desk, how could there reasonably be an isolated patch of blood several feet away?

As I stood there trying to puzzle this out, I heard my name called from outside the door and someone banged on the sported oak. I started like the guilty creature that I was. Michael's voice cried out:

"Anything up, Hilary?"

"Yes, there's been an accident."

"Let me in for God's sake." His voice sounded tense and strained as though he, too, had had a premonition of tragedy.

"Better not," I said as calmly as I could. "Go down to Warren's room and tell him to come up here as quickly as he can. It's pretty serious."

As I heard Michael's footsteps retreating, I turned back into the room. Quick, quick, I thought. I must get some alcohol—something to remove that tell-tale second stain. I ran into Baumann's bedroom and the first thing that caught my eye was a queer-shaped bot-

tle of what looked like perfume.

*Veldbloemen*, I read on the label, "a distillation of the odoriferous plants that are peculiar to the South African Veld." If I felt any surprise at finding perfume in the bedroom of an athletic Boer farmer, its South African origin explained it. The smells of home are the comfort and the despair of the homesick.

I drenched my handkerchief in the perfume and, as I did so, I felt a dull, sickening sensation in the pit of my stomach. This was the scent which I had smelled when the Profile pulled out her handkerchief that morning.

As I rubbed the sinister patch on the carpet with my sodden handkerchief, I could still hear the distant sounds of Dr. Warren's piano. Suddenly, however, they stopped in the middle of a bar. Michael had evidently reached the tutor's rooms. I redoubled my efforts on the stain.

The room smelt like a greenhouse. Throwing all the windows wide open, I looked desperately around to see if there was anything else to be done. Then I heard a soft tap on the still sported oak. . . .

Dr. Reginald Warren, Tutor of All Saints, was not at all the type of man one would expect to play Chopin during a storm. In fact, no one would expect him to play Chopin at all, especially as it had been played that evening, with an over-accentuation of the tremolo stop. True, he tinkled Bach and Mozart occasionally, but first and last he was a scientist—and he looked it. His nickname, the Merry Monocle, was ironical as far as the adjective was concerned, but exact as to the substantive. He had been a colonel in the British Army during the war, had won the V.C. for gallantry on the field and had never been known to show emotion of any kind whatsoever.

His face was quite dispassionate as he stood on the threshold of Baumann's room and caught what must have been his first glimpse of the body. I saw a look of horror and fear on Michael's countenance.

"Thank you, Mr. Grayling," said Dr. Warren as he adjusted his monocle in his left eye. "I think I must ask you to return to your room now and say nothing of this until there has been an investigation. Mr. Fenton, will you please stay here with me?"

**H**E shut the door on Michael and walked over towards the desk. His skilled medical hands touched the body in various places and then spread themselves in a little gesture of finality.

"Mr. Fenton," he said impassively, in exactly the same formal tones I had heard him use in discussing the requirements for Little-go, "he is dead, as you have probably observed. I am grateful that you have been so

discreet about this. I trust that Grayling will be the same. I should say offhand that Baumann has been dead only about twenty minutes, half an hour at the most." He looked at his watch. "It is now ten-fifteen. Did you hear a shot just before ten o'clock?"

"Well, sir," I explained, "there was the storm then and the thunder. Four of us were in my room next door. We heard nothing that we recognized as a shot." I went on to explain about the fuses and my visit to the porter's lodge.

"A curious coincidence," he murmured. "But I suppose it was the sudden darkness that startled Baumann as he was cleaning his revolver. Do you know, by the way, if it belongs to him?" He looked quizzically at the blood-stained revolver but did not touch it. I also noticed that he had been careful not to move the body in any way.

"I don't know for certain, sir. It was rumored that Baumann had a gun. The bed-maker has complained."

"It should have been reported immediately," said the tutor severely. "The possession of firearms is strictly forbidden by University regulations." He picked up the tin of Brasso and sniffed at it.

"There is a strange smell here," he remarked. Remembering the handkerchief in my pocket, I instinctively moved away from him.

After he had asked me a few more perfunctory questions he said, "Fenton, I want you to go to the Porter's lodge and call the police station. Ask for Inspector Horrocks and get him wherever he is. He served with me during the war. A splendid fellow and a personal friend of mine."

"Inspector Horrocks? I know him," I said with relief. "I report to him under the Aliens' Act every time I go down to Cambridge. He's been very decent to me."

"So much the better," he replied drily. I imagined that his eyes narrowed slightly as he looked at me. "Don't let the porter or anyone else overhear your conversation. We don't want a fuss tonight. You'd better come back here when you've finished. Horrocks will want to question you, I expect."

Inspector Horrocks had always been most affable on the not infrequent occasions when I went through the farcical performance of "registering" as a potentially undesirable alien. But his voice over the telephone sounded so stern and official that I could not believe it was my erstwhile jovial companion.

He was now very much the policeman and quite an alarming one at that. I reflected that I must dispose of the handkerchief before he arrived on the scene. The smell of the perfume still seemed to hover nauseatingly about me. My hand furtively sought my coat pocket and, as it did so, it came into contact with a

thick package. It was the letter which Baumann had given me that morning.

This set me thinking. Having done all I could to prevent the avenging of the South African's death, I felt that the least I could do was to comply with the last request he had made me. Perhaps I was rattled, perhaps I was overconscientious, but in the excitement of the moment I did something that I was to regret many times later.

I pulled the letter from my pocket, tore open the outer envelope and placed the enclosure in the letter box near the lodge. I did not look at the address, but as the envelope fell down the slot, I caught the letters B-R-I-D-G-E-S. Then I saw the porter look inquiringly towards me. I moved quickly away but not before I had noticed that the outer envelope, which I still held in my hand, was bloodstained from its proximity to my handkerchief.

Here was another piece of evidence to destroy. Well, there is a classical place to dispose of useless paper; and if paper, why not a handkerchief also?

Nodding good night to the porter, I strolled casually towards the one corner of the college where one can go without question at any hour of the day or night. There I tore the envelope and the handkerchief into small pieces and safely dispatched them on their long journey down the Cambridge sewer pipes.

I breathed a sigh of relief and lit a cigarette in a vain attempt to hide the fact that I still smelled like a lady's boudoir. Then I washed my hands and returned slowly and thoughtfully to the room where Baumann's body lay.

It was not until I saw him still lying there, defenseless under the cool scrutiny of Dr. Warren, that I reflected that Michael Grayling's problems were undoubtedly solved, and that Stuart Somerville would now get his much-coveted cricket blue. It was indeed an ill wind that had blown that night, but it could not fail to bring some good to my friends on "A" staircase.

### Chapter V

INSPECTOR Horrocks of the Cambridge Police always made me doubt that the war was really over. Though I had never seen him in any kind of uniform, I felt that he had just popped on his "civvies" for some sort of prolonged spree and that he would soon return to

was the final epitome of much beef and beer. The glorious, solid result of plain living, military discipline and no hanky-panky when it came to high thinking.

"Well, sir," he said, turning deferentially to Dr. Warren, who had been explaining his theory of the accident, "if he was cleaning his gun when it went off in his hand there'll be powder marks on his face to show it was point-blank range, as you might say, sir."

Dr. Warren lifted up the mangled head without speaking. Indeed, words were unnecessary, for no powder marks or anything else could be seen on that terrible, blood-stained countenance.

"Then there's the bullet, sir. It usually goes right through in such cases. We ought to find it somewhere in the room."

"I thought of that," replied Dr. Warren, "but the bullet didn't pierce the skull. You can see for yourself there's no hole in the back of the head. Strange," he mused, "the cerebrum is as soft as putty. The bullet must have been deflected on passing through one of the frontal bones. Now if it had been a spent bullet, we might have expected—" His voice trailed off.

Horrocks picked up the revolver and wrapped it in a large pocket handkerchief. As he did so I stole a furtive glance at the isolated blood stain and noticed, to my relief, that it was now almost invisible. "It's no good even trying to get fingerprints off this gun," he said in disgust. "I never did see such a mess. Worse than Dunkirk, eh, Colonel?"

The two old soldiers smiled gravely at each other and, as they did so, I noticed that Horrocks' eyes looked at Dr. Warren with an almost doglike devotion and admiration. I suspected then, as afterwards found out to be the truth, that it was by saving Inspector Horrocks' life that Colonel (then Captain) Warren had won his V. C. Our tutor could do no wrong in the eyes of Cambridge Law as embodied in Inspector Herbert Horrocks.

After he had washed his hands and taken a careful survey of the room, Horrocks produced his notebook and began to question me. I answered as best I could, and, indeed, there was hardly any need for me to be untruthful. No, I could not say that I had definitely heard the shot. Nor had I seen or heard any stranger go into Baumann's room.

I knew of no circumstances which should make the South African wish to take his own life. On the contrary he had everything that made life worth living. Yes, I had some reason to believe that the gun was his own, and, if so, he would presumably want to clean it at times.

One question, however, was not easy.

"If you didn't hear the shot, Mr. Fenton, what made you climb over the roof to get



the official khaki

into his room that way?"

"I wanted to speak to Baumann. I knew he was in since there was a light under his door. I hanged and banged. There was no answer. So finally—"

"I didn't know Baumann was such a close friend of yours," interrupted the tutor, looking at me narrowly.

"Well, sir, we were neighbors," I commented lamely.

"But even with neighbors, surely, one respects the sported oak." There spoke Cambridge and all its hoary tradition.

**B**EFORE I had time to reply, Horrocks suddenly made a dive towards the fireplace and staged a little act that was more suggestive of a detective of fiction than of the stolid British bull dog that he was.

"See here, sir," he said, holding up a partially consumed match, "here's a match."

There was indeed no doubt about it. Its significance, however, was not immediately apparent to us two victims of higher education.

"Well," explained the inspector, stating the fact as though it was the most obvious thing in the world, "the deceased young gentleman didn't smoke. Not an ash tray in sight. Not a packet of gaspers, as you might say, sir; not even for his visitors; not a pipe nor an ounce of baecy, and—what's more—not a match neither. Not even in the dead man's pockets."

Here was deduction indeed. Dr. Warren and I were flatteringly impressed.

"And what is one's first instinct when lights go out?" continued Horrocks sagely.

"Why to strike a match, of course. And if Mr. Baumann hadn't got a match, well, it may mean there was someone else here who had."

This was terrible. I could almost feel the color come and go in my cheeks.

"Perhaps I can explain that," I stammered out at length. "I smoked a cigarette in here this morning while I was—er—having a little chat with Baumann. You can see the end of it in the fireplace now. Probably that was the match I used to light it."

Horrocks' little balloon of triumph seemed to have been summarily pricked. He looked almost crestfallen, but I thought I saw a flicker of relief pass over the tutor's mask-like countenance. In fact, he had made no secret of the fact all along that, as far as the good name of the college was concerned, accidental death was infinitely preferable to suicide or—er—anything else.

After Horrocks had asked a few more questions and received generally satisfactory answers, Dr. Warren gravely summed up his own conclusions.

"I am quite satisfied myself, Horrocks, that this was a case of accidental death. At present I see no reason to suspect otherwise. The position of the body, the wound and the revolver all seem perfectly reasonable to me. Indeed, I sincerely hope that such will be proved the case. One point, however, I feel I ought to mention. When I entered this room I had a distinct impression that a woman had been here. There was a strong smell of perfume."

The word "woman" alarmed me so much that I completely lost my head and burst forth into a tissue of half-lies.

"I think I can explain that too, sir," I said in a voice so calm that I was surprised at my own duplicity. "When I saw Baumann lying there, I didn't realize at first that he was dead; I—er—have never seen anyone dead before. I ran into the bedroom to see if I could find anything to help him. Brandy, a towel, anything. While I was there I upset a bottle of perfume that was on his dressing table and got it all over my sleeve."

"Perfume?" The tone was skeptical.

## THE GRIMLY AMAZING MYSTERY OF THE

# DEAD TO THE WORLD

By

NORTH BAKER and WILLIAM BOLTON

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I went into the bedroom and produced the bottle, explaining its South African origin. Dr. Warren sniffed at it suspiciously and peered through his monocle.

"Well," he said at length, "there's no accounting for the tastes of these effeminate athletes. That's certainly the odor I smelled." And with this the matter closed.

The arrival of the police surgeon put a stop to all further inquiries that were not strictly medical. Dr. Warren counted the title M. D. amongst his other academic distinctions, and could talk to the medical examiner in his own language. Polysyllabic words such as intercranial pressure, cerebral hemorrhage, medulla oblongata and corpus striatum were tossed lightly to and fro like so many ping-pong balls. Horrocks and I indulged in a lay conversation on the side.

Finally Dr. Warren turned to me and said, "I think, Mr. Fenton, I must ask you to come with me while I report this matter to the Master. He has guests at the lodge tonight, but I'm afraid we shall have to trouble him." He turned to Horrocks. "Will you find your way over there when Dr.—er—Beverly has made the necessary arrangements?" The inspector nodded.

When the tutor and I reached the court, he started to walk across the grass in the direction of the Master's Lodge. Being absorbed in my own thoughts, I stayed by his side, thereby breaking one of the most rigid canons of the University, which decrees that only fellows and dons shall walk on the beautifully kept college lawns. As I did so, Dr. Warren made a remark that was typical of the man, typical, indeed, of an institution whose unalterable laws make no allowance even for murder or sudden death.

"Mr. Fenton," he said in cold, formal tones, "if you walk across the lawn, I'm afraid I shall be obliged to fine you two and sixpence."

His face was half turned toward me as he spoke, and at that moment I happened to notice a rather extraordinary thing. His monocle was now fastened in his right eye, whereas I was positive that he had fixed it into his left when he first entered Baumann's room. I have always been under the impression that a monocle is used to correct faulty vision in one eye only. Apparently Dr. Warren's was interchangeable.

When we finally came together outside the front door of the Master's Lodge, he seemed to have regretted his frigidity, for his voice sounded almost human as he said, "You've met the Master, I believe?"

THE remark, or question, was not so absurd as it sounded. For, although every man supposes that he will one day meet his Maker, it is, indeed, a rare and fortunate youth who meets his Master while he is an undergraduate at Cambridge. Thanks to my father's association with the college and his subsequent celebrity, I was one of the lucky ones, but normally Dr. Martineau Hyssop was as difficult of approach as a dogleg hole on a golf course on a windy day.

In the first place he was rumored to be over a hundred years old and had all the prestige and consideration that go with great age. But that tale was told even in my father's time, twenty-odd years ago. Having been appointed Master in 1892 he may well have been almost any age by now, though physically he looked as if he might easily make another century.

There was no trace of decrepitude or senility, and he bade fair to establish an all-time high for Cambridge, or a record even surpassing that of Clare College, which boasts two masters between Waterloo and World War I!

Dr. Hyssop was as warm and human as his

[Turn page]

## CORPSE WITH A DOUBLE IDENTITY!

This brilliant murder mystery novel concerns a brash but clever young intern, a girl who denies the saying that a wise child knows its own father, a policeman who yearns to be Santa Claus—and a corpse with a double identity! The medical student, Danny Michaels, hung around the morgue—and he thought he knew the identity of the hobo on the slab. Later he was sure he knew what illness had afflicted the hobo before his demise. Danny, working in the interests of public health, personal curiosity and his fondness for an old sweetheart, mixed in the affair to the point where he alienated everybody. But in the smashing, crashing climax of DEAD TO THE WORLD, Danny proves that science can yield some strange secrets! Look forward to this swift-moving top-flight crime novel in our next issue!



colleague, Dr. Warren, was austere and formal. We could now hear his benevolent voice booming out good nights to his guests as we stood on the porch waiting to be admitted.

The door opened at length and we saw the fine leonine head (he justifiably prided himself on his resemblance to his old friend, George Meredith), the snow-white beard and kindly, tranquil eyes. He didn't look a day over eighty, and his faculties were as alert as those of a mere boy of sixty.

After the party had dispersed, Dr. Hyssop turned to give me one of his famous electric handshakes.

"Well, Hilary, my boy," he said warmly. "This is indeed a pleasure. And how is my old friend, Aloysius Fenton? Is he still championing the cause of the desolate and the oppressed on the bench of the Supreme Court?"

I told him hastily that my father was well. As I smiled into that kindly face I felt instinctively that I wanted to put off the bad news about Baumann as long as possible. Dr. Warren had no such scruples, however, and as soon as we had seated ourselves in the Master's comfortable study, he launched forth into an account of the South African's death.

While he was talking I forgot for a moment the enigma of Baumann and the greater riddle of his death. My eyes wandered round the fascinating room. There was a signed portrait of Lord Tennyson (next to one of Bernard Shaw), another of Thomas Hardy in his younger days, affectionately inscribed "To Mart from Tom."

The mantelpiece was full of photographs. These I examined with interest; and finally, sandwiched between a delightful head of Ellen Terry and a dour looking picture of Swinburne (scandalous proximity)! I caught the face of my father, looking absurdly youthful and unimportant despite his court robes.

The sight of him brought me back with a start out of the dim realms of Victorian celebrities to the immediate and unfortunate present. Dr. Warren had finished his tale, and the Master was making clucking noises like a distressed hen.

"Poor boy!" he murmured, "how sad, how very sad, how very sad! I don't recall ever meeting him. What did you say he was in, Warren?"

"He's a second year man, Master. Plays cricket for the University and looks—or rather, looked—certain to get his blue this year. He was a good classical scholar, too. Came to us from the University of Grahams-town on a sixty-pound open scholarship—a South African of Dutch extraction. Well-to-

do people, I imagine. By nature he was morose and anti-social. Disliked college activities and had few friends. A most unpopular fellow with the other undergraduates."

I was amazed to learn that, despite all appearances to the contrary, each hair of our heads is numbered by the authorities.

"Dear, dear," sighed the Master. "It will mean an investigation, I suppose. The police, the coroner—all that kind of thing. I shall leave it to you, Warren. I just can't wrestle with it." The faded eyes lost their light for a moment and looked infinitely weary.

"It will do the college no good, I'm afraid. But we shall survive it, just as we survived that affair of William North. Dear me, dear me!" The Master passed a hand over his face as if to wipe out a painful memory.

AND indeed the story of William North, though it had sounded humorous enough when referred to by Somerville that morning, was one of the most tragic incidents in the history of the college. William North had been one of the most brilliant French students of his day and a world authority on Rabelais and the sixteenth century.

His book *Rabelais et Son Siècle* had been (and for all I know, still is) the last word on an intricate and hitherto little appreciated period in French literature. The young author had once had the academic world at his feet. It was even predicted that he would one day have his picture hung in the College Hall along with the other immortals. Today it was blazoned on the front page of every newspaper in England.

As an undergraduate, and before all his troubles started, North had made an unfortunate marriage with a local barmaid. The marriage was doubtless perpetrated in a moment of Rabelaisian impetuosity. It had not, however, hindered him from getting his fellowship at All Saints and his lectures were reputed to have been among the most brilliant ever given at Cambridge.

He lived with his wife and two children, happily enough, at Madingley. Every vacation he would rush off to France, where he explored the Rabelais country around Chinon, always seeking for fresh material to put in his ever growing volume. He was a terrific worker and a prodigious scholar.

And then, almost immediately following the publication of his book, the crash came. For some time he had been nervous and irritable; overwork during a neglected attack of influenza had induced a mild form of brain fever. He attended his classes as usual. One day the most horrible screams were heard from his rooms on "A" staircase (those now occupied by the staid Dr. Long).

The oak was sported; the screams died to a hideous, strangled gurgling. When finally the door was opened, a madman was discovered gloating in sixteenth century French over the dead body of one of his most brilliant women students. The corpse was hideously mutilated. There was talk of an outrage of an even more terrible nature.

William North was tried and condemned to death. The case attracted much publicity because of its unpleasant nature, its University background and the well-known family of the murderer. It completely eclipsed for a time the notorious Crippen trial with which it was almost contemporaneous. A clever counsel got the case appealed on a legal technicality.

case and a rare job I'm having of it, trying to trace his footsteps, though every police station in the country has been wired a description of him. I was thinking sir," here his voice dropped to a confidential whisper, "that, if Mr. Baumann's death wasn't accidental—well, there was murder on 'A' staircase once before, and they say that murderers invariably return to the scene of their crime."

Dr. Warren gave a little start, and there was a faint click as his eyeglass fell from his eye and hit one of his waistcoat buttons. His face was pale and tired in the moonlight.

"Nonsense, Horrocks," he exclaimed with fervour that seemed surprising in one usually so cool and aloof. "Your imagination is run-



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Then followed the second trial of William North, which was so interesting in the legal points involved that my father included an account of it in his *Famous Second Trials*. Indeed it follows after and rivals in interest the much-discussed second trial of Oscar Wilde which he dealt with in the preceding chapter.

My father happened to be present at both the trials of North and saw his sentence commuted from death on the gallows to confinement for life in the Cambridgeshire asylum for the criminally insane.

That this confinement had now come to an abrupt termination was the theme of Inspector Horrocks, who had joined us in the courtyard after we had said goodnight to the Master.

"It's a strange thing, Colonel," he said, biting the ends of his enormous moustachios, "that the two things should have happened almost in one day as you might say, sir, and both of them involving this college of yours.

"I've been working all day on the North

ning away with you. North was a scholar and a gentleman. His—er—unfortunate lapse occurred twenty years ago whilst he was very ill and his mind temporarily deranged. You know as well as I do that fundamentally he was not a criminal—and incidentally he was one of my greatest friends."

THE inspector mumbled an apology.

"Well, I must say, sir, he's been quiet enough and docile like in the 'home' there. Was allowed to do almost anything he liked, as you might say, sir. Given the run of the establishment almost.

"No one dreamed as how he was lying in wait for his opportunity that way. All the staff was surprised and hurt, sir—surprised and hurt. The superintendent felt it was casting reflections on his treatment as you might say."

We had now reached "A" staircase. Dr. Warren and the Inspector were talking together in low tones but I was not listening to what they said. I was thinking how little

inclination I felt to go up to my own room, past Baumann's door.

"Have you finished in there?" asked the tutor at length, with an upward jerk of his head.

"Yes, sir," replied Horrocks in the manner of a well-trained undertaker. "The body has been removed. Dr. Beaverly agreed with you as to the time of death, sir, and so far we have found nothing else of a suspicious nature. It will be 'Death by Misadventure' all right, Colonel."

"So much the better," said Dr. Warren with a sigh of relief which found echo in my own heart. "Good night, Horrocks."

"Good night, Colonel, sir. Good night, Mr. Fenton. I shall have to trouble you again tomorrow, I'm afraid. I hope the coroner can arrange to sit on the case by Wednesday or Thursday. Good night."

Dr. Warren and I parted at the door of his rooms. As I paused a moment to receive his final advice and instructions, I heard again the soft notes of his piano. A look of annoyance passed over his face and he wished me an abrupt good night.

Someone was in Dr. Warren's rooms—someone who did not know or did not care that musical instruments are forbidden after 11 p. m. And whoever was there played Chopin much better than Dr. Warren did—and very differently. There was a certain abandon, a Gallic passion, a divine delirium never achieved by our tutor in his sporadic and mechanical tinklings.

But I was too tired to worry my head about these further complications, so I ran upstairs as quickly as I could and went straight to bed. When sleep finally came, I dreamt a dream strangely similar to that of Somerville's unfortunate Marlborough friend. I was in bed in a strange room which suddenly seemed to become more and more familiar.

Eventually I realized that it was Baumann's, but instead of being a sitting-room it was now a dormitory full of beds, all empty except the one I was in, and one other. Outside, it seemed, a thunderstorm was raging. Then slowly the door opened and a figure entered.

It advanced toward the other occupied bed. I lay there fascinated, like a rabbit when approached by a weasel. I could neither move nor cry out. The figure glided onwards. I closed my eyes, and when I opened them I noticed that the occupant of the other bed was now lying face downwards in a position which I knew only too well. Beneath the head was a dark, growing stain.

The figure was now retreating towards the door, but before disappearing it half turned towards me. Once again I saw the features with which I was so infatuated. It was the

Profile. She was speaking—speaking to me in a clear, yet somewhat unearthly voice, and across that strange yet familiar room I heard her repeating the marvelous words of that macabre poem by William Blake:

"O Rose, thou art sick!  
The invisible worm  
That flies in the night  
In the howling storm,

"Has found out thy bed  
Of crimson joy;  
And his dark secret love  
Does thy life destroy."

## Chapter VI



I AWOKE next morning with what can only be described as an emotional hangover. The events of last night had left me worn out and desiccated. My head ached, my mouth felt dry and fuzzy, and I had the uneasy sensation of a thousand wrong things done, a

thousand others left undone. The outlook was overcast, meteorologically and spiritually. The only coherent thought in my head was that I must see the Profile today, and that I must talk to her and help her if possible.

As I took a deep draught of tepid water from my ewer, a delicate "Ahem" from my sitting room brought me back to a sense of everyday reality. It was Mrs. Bigger. She had been on the staircase last night. Perhaps she had heard or seen something. I must talk to her without frightening her—question her without arousing suspicion.

"Proceed, Sherlock," I muttered, lighting a cigarette with a kind of haggard nonchalance.

One glance at my good bedmaker showed me that she was near to bursting point with suppressed ideas. How long she had been waiting for me to wake I cannot tell, but my room had never been so tidy before in its life. This was my first intimation that I had become a Personality.

"Mr. Fenton," hemmed Mrs. Bigger, whose eyes were aflame with excitement and unhallowed titillation, "I didn't like to slop you up while you was a-sleepin', sir, 'cos I reckoned you must be tired, seein' as 'ow it was you what discovered 'im, sir"—here her voice dropped to a hoarse and gruesome whisper—"lyin' stark and rude in nothin' but 'is own blood, as I heard this mornin' from that there gentleman as was asking for you, Mr. Fenton."

I yawned ostentatiously.

"Has someone been looking for me, Mrs. Bigger?" I asked. The ostrich plumes nodded in affirmation.

"Yes, sir. A man with a big red moustache like me uncle 'Enry—'im as I told you used to suffer from the 'omologues, sir—and 'e said 'e'd be back again later and not to disturb you just now.

"It don't do to speak hill of the dead, Mr. Fenton, but I 'ad told Mr. 'Ankin that Mr. Baumann didn't ever hort to be of been allowed to 'ave a pistol in 'is room, sir."

"You'll probably have to identify the gun at the inquest." I remarked, and her eyes brightened visibly. "Perhaps you can give some more evidence, too. You were working here pretty late, weren't you? You didn't hear the shot by any chance, I suppose, or—er—see anything out of the ordinary?"

"I didn't 'ear nothing, Mr. Fenton, and as for seein', well, with the lights out that way I couldn't 'ave seen me 'and a inch from me nose. I'd been 'elping over at the Master's lodge till almost ten o'clock, sir, cos Mary Smith was alone and there was company to dinner and I'd asked her to come round to my 'ouse afterwards, Mr. Fenton, seein' as Tuesday is her day out, sir.

"I was waitin' for 'er in the pantry when the lights went out and I didn't 'ear nor see nothin' 'cept you when you called out good night and once a noise outside Mr. Somerville's door, sir. And then, soon after the lights went on again, Mary was waitin' for me and there was Mr. Hankin standin' there by her side and I thought how they two was a courtin', sir.

"And then Mrs. Fancher from "C" joined us and Mr. 'Ankin let us all out the gates and we went round and 'ad a dog's nose at Fancher's, sir, 'e being a publican we 'is wife's friends like it was orl right even after hours, sir—"

**C**UT her short. There was no shadow of doubt as to her movements on the previous evening.

"Mrs. Bigger," I exclaimed, "what in heaven's name is a dog's nose? I feel I could do with one right now."

"Well, Mr. Fenton, it's a mixture of stout and gin. You mix—" But here Mrs. Bigger paused, her face suffused with a maidenly blush.

We were treading on dangerous ground, and skirting the fringes of a dreadful secret which my bedmaker had, in an expansive moment, confided to me some time previously. She had once been a barmaid.

There was evidently nothing of real importance to be learned from Mrs. Bigger, and I was not altogether sorry when a deputation consisting of Lloyd Comstock, Michael Gray-

ling, and Stuart Somerville caused her to beat a modest retreat. My three "stair-mates," with the possible exception of Comstock, all looked rather the worse for wear this morning.

There was an expression on Michael's face that amounted almost to antagonism and a film of reticence over Stuart's usually frank blue eyes. I attributed this to the fact that both of them were likely to benefit through Baumann's death and they would naturally feel some embarrassment about squeezing their feet into the shoes of one so recently dead.

Lloyd Comstock, however, pressed me for details in a perfectly normal and ingenuous manner. All three of them had already been interviewed by Horrocks and another detective that morning, and not one of them had, as far as I could ascertain, contributed any facts of new or startling interest.

So far, so good. My next visitor was Horrocks, who brought with him a long, cadaverous individual whom he introduced as Sergeant Rollings. My old friend Horrocks was very smartly dressed, as for a journey, and carried a small suitcase in his hand.

"Mr. Fenton," he explained apologetically, "I've been called away to London on the North case. I'm catching the noon train, and don't know when I shall be back. Last night all indications pointed to the fact that North was still somewhere in Cambridge. This morning he's supposed to have been seen in London.

"It may be a false alarm, but—" here he brushed a large hand across his huge moustache and lowered his voice to a confidential whisper—"I've got to go. Sergeant Rollings will take care of this Baumann business in my absence. I'm sure you will help him all you can." We nodded gravely at each other. He continued:

"If all goes well—and I see no reason why it shouldn't—they will hold the inquest on Thursday. You will have to appear, of course." We nodded again and then Horrocks took his leave.

I accompanied Rollings into Baumann's room and once again went through the performance of discovering the body for his benefit. He took everything down solemnly and meticulously in his notebook, crossing each "t" and dotting every "i". His questions were, for the most part, neither intelligent nor pertinent. My only strong emotion in the whole business was a hope that he would not make me late for lunch with the Profile.

**A**T TWELVE o'clock, however, he departed and I returned to my room to shave, change my tie, and make the best of my rather limited store of natural attractions.

On the way to meet her at the "Whim" I

reflected that, often as I had heard Baumann's name mentioned, there had been no word of regret, no hint of personal bereavement from anyone. It is possible that his tutor would miss him as "the only person in Cambridge capable of appreciating at once the spirit and the text of Pindar," and the Varsity cricket captain would sigh for that famous cut past second slip which was to have played such havoc with the Oxford bowlers.

But other scholars would come up next term, other batsmen would be forthcoming to take his place on the team; he would soon be forgotten. Kindly is our fostering mother, kindly but fickle.

When I reached the "Whim," a fine drizzle was moistening the pavements. Instinctively I looked around for the Profile's mackintosh. There was no sign of it or her; only a sprinkling of elegantly dressed young men absorbing an excess of carbohydrates and all talking languidly about my unfortunate ex-neighbor. My own name was mentioned several times, and even as I entered I heard the words, "discovered by a chap called Fenton, an American." Like Lord Byron I had awakened to find that I had become famous overnight.

In another corner of the room a girl sat by herself avidly reading a newspaper account of the accident. One glance showed me that her profile was anything but the one I was looking for. I must sit down and wait. I did so, and as the minutes passed I told myself that I was a triple ass and conceited fool to expect her to come at all.

Ten more minutes and no sign of her. She was now half an hour late. I had had no breakfast. Even people in love must eat. I was torn between my desire for food and my longing to see her again—to hear her tell me with her own lips that there was no need for me to worry about last night, that there was nothing—

"Excuse me, but are you by any chance Mr. Hilary Fenton?" I jumped as though a shot had been fired. The girl from the far corner had come across the room and was peering at me through her thick spectacles. In her hand she held a letter—my letter. Then she must be bringing me news of the Profile. A thousand awful possibilities flashed through my head. She had been killed—arrested—she had run away—she needed me—

"Yes, my name is Fenton," I replied eagerly.

The girl simpered for a moment and then looked coyly downward.

"Well, I got your letter," she giggled, "I'm Dorothy Dupuis!"

Hell, damnation and the Furies—it was the prominent girl in spectacles who had been

sitting next to the Profile at the lecture. Confound those attendance lists. Confound the Profile. Confound Lady Snorting Lusinger. Confound everyone.

"Oh—h, so nice of you to come," I smiled weakly.

"Well," she replied primly, "it was rather a sketchy invite. I ought not to have done it but Lady Lusinger is my aunt, so I suppose it was all right. And then I was curious—feminine, I suppose—to see in the flesh the person who discovered the body. I read about it in the papers this morning and called up my fiancé to ask if he minded my lunching with you. He's an undergrad at Cats—reading theology, you know."

I didn't know, nor did I care. And I loathe the abbreviation *undergrad*.

"Well, what about some food," I suggested hungrily. As we waited for our orders to be served, Dorothy Dupuis bombarded me with questions concerning Baumann, Lady Lusinger, the depression in America and my church membership. Even my appetite had left me by now. I felt cheated and furious with the Profile, but alas! more in love with her than ever. Great is the power of contrast.

**WHEN** we got to the horrible English concoction known by the frivolous title of "Trifle," I decided that I would combine the cunning of the serpent with the softness of the dove. This luncheon should not be wholly wasted.

"Who was that girl you were sitting next to at the Blake lecture?" I asked as casually as I could. "And have some more trifle, won't you?"

"Yes, ta, you mean the one in the mac—" (the girl had a positive genius for odious abbreviations) "or Jean Higginbotham?"

"Oh, no, her name couldn't possibly be Higginbotham," I cried fervently.

The thick lenses of her prominent spectacles were flashed on me suspiciously for a moment, but I parried her unspoken thought by adding quickly, "If you're a friend of hers, why don't you tell her to buy a new raincoat. The one she wears is the limit. Is she very poor or something?"

"Heavens, no! Camilla Lathrop is as rich as Croesus. But her father is in the clothes business, so I suppose she thinks it's too much of an advertisement to dress well. You know Lathrop and Lathrop of Bristol. Besides Camilla affects to despise men, but I think she only does it to make herself more mysterious and intriguing."

(Apparently the theological fiancé was not the only link which this young lady had with Cats!)

"But why are you so interested?"

"I thought I saw her last night," I replied

indifferently, "somewhere around ten o'clock."

"It's quite poss. We all went to a debate in Sidney on the subject of 'Woman in Politics.' It ended at nine forty-five punc. Camilla didn't speak though I'd asked her to second me. She is always so unpredict. In fact she was down in the papers to be presented at Court this year, then flatly refused to meet their Majesties. Just as if they weren't good enough for her." Here she gave a snort that was worthy of her august aunt. "Ridic, I call it. All this posing as a bluestocking and turning up one's nose at society and men and dances and other things. When all's said and done a woman's a woman and—"

At this juncture the complement of her womanhood appeared on the scene wearing a St. Catherine's blazer and a rather vacuous smile which was meant to be jealous, ferocious and protective all at once.

"Oh, Perce, this is Mr. Fenton of Saints. A great friend of my aunt, Lady Lusinger. You two should know one another, even though you aren't at the same coll." Miss Dupuis removed what I am sure she would have called her "specs" and wiped them on a small piece of chamois leather.

My hand was seized in a clammy, lifeless clasp. I murmured polite banalities and finally surrendered Lady Lusinger's niece to her budding bishop. Then I went on my lonely celibate way, reflecting sadly that there are approximately four hundred women students in Cambridge to about five thousand males.

**S**UDDENLY a brilliant idea struck me. I purchased a small handbag and unblushingly fitted it with lipstick, powder and a few coins of the realm. Armed with this feminine paraphernalia, I approached the Porter's Lodge, where Hank and the porter were engaged in conversation on the all-engrossing subject of Baumann.

"I picked this up in the court at the foot of 'A' last night, Porter," I said casually producing the bag from my pocket. "Around ten o'clock, just after I had told you about the fuses. Has anyone been enquiring for it? I should say it belonged to a young lady, judging by its cosmetic contents."

The porter took it in his hand and peered inside.

"You can't tell these days," he said gloomily.

"Well, were there any young ladies in the college last night who might have dropped it?"

The porter turned to Hank.

"No, Mr. Fenton," replied the gyp, "there was no ladies went through the gate while I was on duty."

The porter nodded his head as if to affirm

that all erring females had left the college before sundown, according to regulations.

"It must have been dropped around ten o'clock," I insisted mildly. "Didn't any women leave around that time?"

"No, sir," replied Hank, "leastways there weren't no ladies, sir. There was a bunch of college servants, bedmakers and the maid from the Master's lodge"—here a faint blush tinged Hank's countenance. His infatuation for the red-headed Mary was notorious. "They left shortly after ten, sir. But that bag wouldn't belong to none of them. That's a real expensive bag, sir."

"I trust that owner was a very important person," I remarked. "Perhaps that might give you an idea."

The porter looked very uncomfortable, his eyes turning to the gyp as if for some help, but the latter shrugged his shoulders.

"Come now," I urged, winking meaningly. "You ought to be able to remember an important personage. We would certainly keep it in our confidence. Who else besides those you have already mentioned?"

"Then there was the Master's lady guests," continued the porter reminiscently, "but it couldn't of been any of them. They left around eleven in a body, sir, and they didn't go near 'A' staircase. I saw them walk across the lawn with me own eyes, Mr. Fenton. Right across the lawn they walked and them not fellows."

"Oh, all right, keep the bag and see if anyone claims it," I said airily. "And be discreet, Hankin. You're a lady's man yourself, you know—and—"

But Hankin was now blushing so violently and looking so uncomfortable that I did not finish my sentence. Instead I pulled out my cigarette case, winked knowingly at the porter and departed to my own room.

Detective Fenton, I reflected, had established at least one fact by this little subterfuge. If the Profile was in All Saints last night she had managed to get out without being seen. There is one and only one exit to a Cambridge college at night time, and that is through the main gateway past the vigilant and censorious eye of the porter or his subsidiary.

It could safely be presumed that my dark and mysterious lady was not a cat burglar who could climb over spiked fences twenty feet high or slide down drain pipes like the members of the Cambridge Alpine Club.

But even for the Alpine Club this was a tough proposition. All Saints had this much in common with Heaven—it was almost impossible of entrance by unauthorized persons at unseasonable hours. And as for getting out—well, to keep up my smile, it was as difficult as Hell.

And I know, because I have tried both.

## Chapter VII



THE rest of Tuesday and all of Wednesday were a complete blank so far as really interesting developments were concerned. In the first place I had hardly a moment to myself. The publicity given me by the newspapers quickly brought every American in Cambridge

to call on me, and a great many other people whom I had never met before. I felt like Exhibit "A" or a Madame Tussaud's effigy of Jack the Ripper.

Whenever I sought security behind my sported oak, Sergeant Rollins, who knew nothing of the Cambridge laws of sanctuary, would come and bang on it and ask me a lot more foolish questions.

And Comstock, who hovered around me all the time, was no help; for instead of keeping intruders at bay like a well-trained private secretary he took a malicious delight in acting as my impresario and showing me off to all and sundry.

Michael Grayling and Stuart Somerville kept out of my way. The one was doing a last-hour rush of work for the examination on Thursday and the other spent all of Tuesday practicing at "the nets," whatever they were. And on Wednesday the match against the M. C. C. started. Stuart had been given Baumann's place on the Varsity team and was grimly determined to deserve his vicarious laurels.

Each day I scanned the papers for news of the recapture of William North. Somehow or other I felt that he was mixed up in this affair, though in what connection, I was at a loss to say. He hovered constantly like a sinister figure in the background of my mind. Apparently he was still at large and sharing the honors with Baumann on the front pages of the more sensational journals. So far Horrocks' trip to London had evidently not been successful.

Once or twice I ventured out into the streets, and once I went to a lecture in the vain hope of seeing the Profile. I had not written to her again and I knew nothing of her whereabouts. She seemed to have gone out of my life as mysteriously as she had come into it. The idea persisted, however, that I should see her at the inquest, which I had been summoned to attend on Thursday at 2:30.

But in this particular I was doomed to disappointment, for when I reached the coroner's court at the appointed hour she was nowhere to be seen. The newly returned In-

spector Horrocks was there ahead of me and I saw him chatting informally with Dr. Warren as I entered.

The small room seemed to be pressed down and running over with people and, despite the fact that there was a Varsity match in progress at Fenners, I noticed a fairly large proportion of undergraduates. A shudder passed through me as I reflected how that shrouded form in the back room was one of the undergraduates who ought now to be engrossed in cricket rather than in this gruesome game of death.

A roll was called, and a number of rather seedy-looking individuals segregated themselves from the audience with little smirks of self-importance. These were the jurors. I watched the simple proceedings, fascinated. Though I am the son of a judge, I have always been very vague about courtroom ceremonies and coroners' inquests in particular. In fact, I had rather imagined that in England they were endowed with the pomp and ceremony—the wigs and robes—of a murder trial at the Old Bailey. But this was almost as informal as a breakfast party with the Dean.

The coroner, a sleek, personable man of middle age, reminded me for no particular reason of a croupier at Monte Carlo. I expected every moment to see him reach forward on his little desk and rake in some imaginary shekels. And when he gave a little rap with his gavel and announced briefly, "I declare this court open in the King's name," it was as if he had cried, "*Faites vos jeux, messieurs et dames.*"

The wheel of the inquest had now started to spin. The jurors were asked if they had viewed the body. They nodded grave assent. The witnesses were then called. Hilarion Aloysius Fenton—heavens, they must name me!

I flatter myself that for a normally truthful young man I gave my evidence in the calm, cool manner of an accomplished prevaricator. There was, however, no occasion for me to tell a direct lie. What I should have done if the temptation had arisen, I cannot say.

As it was, I merely described how I had banged on Baumann's door and, receiving no answer, had climbed in by the roof. I went on to tell the Court in a brisk conversational manner, all about the position of the body, the cleaning materials, and something about Baumann's relations with the outside world.

I repeated for the hundredth time that, although I was not a close friend of the deceased, I knew of no reason why he should wish to commit suicide and certainly knew of no one who might wish to take the South African's life. The coroner, who was as different as possible from the fussy self-important coroner of fiction, thanked me for my

evidence as though I had just put a hundred-franc note in the croupier's box.

HE then gave the wheel another turn and produced Inspector Horrocks. His evidence was dull and very much to the point. It dealt chiefly with the fingerprints, or rather the lack of fingerprints on the pistol.

He was soon followed by Dr. Warren, who did little besides corroborating my testimony. The tutor added a brief summary of Baumann's position in the college, his success at work and at athletics and his enviable record in South Africa. The unacademic jurors looked slightly bored.

Dr. Beverly was the next witness and a much more interesting one. He described almost dramatically how he had been sent for at about ten-thirty on Monday night to examine the dead body of a young man about twenty-four years old. Death had been caused by a bullet from a .32 calibre revolver which had entered the head in the region of the superior maxilla, been deflected by one of the frontal bones and finally lodged in the cerebrum, whence it had subsequently been extracted at the autopsy.

Death had not been instantaneous—the amount of blood proved that fact—but must have occurred very shortly after the shot had been fired. This, he opined, probably accounted for the fact that the revolver lay by the side of the dead man and was not clasped in his hand.

Here the coroner interrupted with what seemed to be a very sensible question: "Would you say that the shot was fired at point-blank range, Doctor Beverly? If so, were there any powder marks on the face of the deceased?"

The police doctor hesitated a moment before replying. Finally he said, "In my opinion, judging from the nature of the external wound, the bullet was fired at very close range. There were no discoverable powder marks, however, since the deceased fell forward on his face and the skin around the

wound became obscured by clotted blood.

"Before examining the wound it was necessary to wash away the blood and in doing so we naturally removed any traces of powder, nor could we find any such traces in subsequent analysis of the blood. If, however, the gun had been fired at a distance of two or three inches, as might have happened in the case of suicide, there would be traces of burnt skin around the wound. Such traces were not found, and it is my opinion that the pistol was at least a foot away from the deceased's face when it was discharged."

At this point one of the jurors, who was obviously a medical man, asked whether it was significant that the bullet had lodged in the head without passing through the skull, as might have been expected.

Dr. Beverly looked very judicial when this question was propounded. "Of course," he finally elucidated, "the cerebrum and the medulla are well known to be very soft. In seven cases out of ten a bullet fired at close range will pass right through the cranium, but in some instances, when deflected by a bone, it follows the course of the bone and finally drops downwards.

"That in my opinion is what happened in this present case. I do not think that we must necessarily argue that the bullet was fired from some distance on this account. A few yards or a few inches make very little difference; the bullet might have acted as it did if fired from anywhere in the room."

Everyone seemed to be completely satisfied by this explanation and I noticed that Dr. Warren screwed his monocle firmly into his eye and regarded the police surgeon with cold approval. It was evident that he was pleased by the turn the inquest was taking.

The next witness was a complete stranger and caused a little ripple of interest on that account. He gave his name as Johann Van der Walt, lawyer, and head of the London branch of the South African law firm who had handled Baumann's affairs. His evidence

[Turn page]

CAN YOUR SCALP PASS THE

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1 "It's F-N, the test for men! Scratch your head—if you find dandruff you need Wildroot Cream-Oil. Buy the large economy size.

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death with the family life and financial status of Julius Baumann.

The deceased, he explained, was the adopted son of Heinrich Baumann (bachelor), deceased, of Bloemfontein, Orange Free State. In 1929, when he came of age, Julius had inherited ten thousand morgen of farm land in the Orange Free State, and several thousand pounds in cash. Now that he was dead the property reverted automatically to a nephew of the late Heinrich Baumann, also of the Orange Free State.

The money, however, over which Julius had complete control, could have been willed in any way the deceased wished. In this connection the lawyer added that the young man had withdrawn money fairly heavily of late and only about eighteen hundred pounds remained to his credit. This would normally have been supplemented in due course by the proceeds from the farm, but now that Julius was dead, the revenue would revert to his cousin.

The deceased was of an economical disposition and at no time had he been embarrassed financially. There was no reason why the young man should have wished to take his own life as far as monetary troubles were concerned. Nor, indeed, was there any very strong reason why anyone else should have wished for his death (except possibly the cousin in South Africa) for testamentary reasons.

Mr. Van der Walt was not prepared to say what Julius had done with the sums he had withdrawn lately, though he had every reason to believe that he had a considerable amount of cash by him at the time of his death. The estate would be settled as soon as it was definitely established that the deceased had left no will.

**S**ERGEANT Rollings was called next and gave some routine information with regard to the revolver found by Baumann's side. It was made by Hinder and Dapp, of Cape Town, and carried a .32 calibre bullet such as had been extracted from the dead man's brain. Nor, indeed, was there any doubt as to its ownership since the name Julius Baumann had been engraved on the handle.

Inspector Horrocks had already given evidence that no fingerprints were discoverable since the pistol had of necessity been wiped free from blood before examination was possible. A search through the dead man's personal belongings had revealed nothing of any significance.

There was no more testimony to be called. The coroner looked amiably around him, twiddled his thumbs, and then rose to make his summing up. "Rien ne va plus" . . . The jury was whisked off to consider the verdict and returned in a very few minutes with the

only possible decision according to the evidence presented—Death by Misadventure.

No one was surprised. Indeed, everyone, except the morbid sensation seekers, seemed quite gratified. I was delighted at my own success at compounding a felony without any deliberate lies or hopeless distortion of the truth. I passed out into the May sunshine with the cocksure conviction that I had put something over.

But Nemesis was stalking close behind me, and though I could not hear her halting footsteps, she plodded after me through the narrow streets of Cambridge and finally caught up to me soon after I reached my own room.

As I threw myself down on the couch, I began to take stock of my position. I had kept faith with Baumann by posting his letter and saying nothing about it. I had stood by the Profile in destroying any evidence that there had been a second party in my neighbor's room on Monday night. I had followed the line of least resistance at the inquest.

But my conscience was not altogether at rest. A still small voice kept telling me that the Law is not mocked—at least, not for long. And suddenly an uncomfortable impression began to assail me—an impression that I was not as clever as I thought I had been. I was restless and uneasy.

Then as though it were the echo of my own uneasiness, I heard sounds in the room which had lately belonged to the ill-starred South African. Someone was moving the heavy trunks and boxes which I had noticed yesterday by the doorway—the trunks that contained all Baumann's personal effects, the clothes, sporting implements and books with which he was to have conquered Cambridge—the trunks which were now all packed and corded, ready to be sent to Mr. Van der Walt in London.

Curiosity impelled me to go and see who was there. Through the half-open door I caught a glimpse of a broad man's back bending over the largest packing cases. As I entered the room, Inspector Horrocks straightened himself and mopped his brow with a large purple handkerchief.

There was an expression on his face which made me think of a naughty little boy who had been caught stealing apples. In his hand he held a recently disinterred bundle which looked as if it could do with a wash.

"Looking for the missing link, Inspector?" I asked with every appearance of innocent unconcern.

The detective stared at me curiously for a moment and then shut the lid of the trunk slowly and deliberately.

"Mr. Fenton," he said without smiling. "I'd like a word with you—a word in confidence like you might say, sir."

"All right. Come into my room. I've got two bottles of Guinness. We both need a pick-me-up after that inquest. I've also got some gin so you can fix yourself a dog's nose if you like."

"Guinness is mine," he replied, and again the purple handkerchief was passed over the florid countenance.

Clasping the bundle beneath one arm, he followed me into my room where I produced two fat brown bottles and a pair of tumblers. I must have appeared jaunty enough, but there was an uncomfortable sensation in my bones that an axe was falling—that a noose was being slowly but surely tightened.

The inspector cleared his throat lengthily and loudly. "Mr. Fenton," he remarked, as he laid his dirty-looking bundle down on the table, "I'm in what you might call an awkward predicament, sir. Seeing as how we are kind of old friends like, I thought perhaps I could talk to you as man to man—"

"Shoot," I murmured, inwardly cursing the previous sessions at the Plumed Cock and the inverted snobbishness which had made me so anxious to be "buddies" with a police inspector.

"You see, sir," he continued, "the coroner is satisfied as to the cause of Mr. Baumann's death, but I can't honestly say that I am. And that's where the awkwardness of it comes in, Mr. Fenton. As you know, it was not, strictly speaking, my case. I only came into it to oblige Colonel Warren, as you might say, Mr. Fenton."

"What on earth do you mean, Horrocks?" I asked, filling up his glass with a none too steady hand. "Have there been any fresh developments?"

The inspector took a long pull at his stout, taking meticulous care not to get any froth in his moustache.

"No, sir, nothing fresh. Only the things that would have been obvious to any man in the world except Sergeant Rollings. That man, Mr. Fenton—" he paused and tapped his broad forehead with a significant gesture, "—of course, this is all confidential and would be very bad for the Cambridge force if it got out, but what with me being called to London after North on a fool's errand and Dr. Warren having been my colonel and saving my life there behind the lines—well, you see my position, sir."

His incoherence positively took my breath away.

"No, I'm afraid I don't," I answered, "but I have half a dozen more Guinnesses in the cupboard if that's any help. And why not fill your pipe?"

I pushed a crested tobacco-box towards him and fetched two more bottles. When Inspector Horrocks had made himself com-

fortable on the sofa and tossed off another glass of stout, he turned towards me and said in a voice whose very quietness accentuated the awful gravity of his words:

"I think, Mr. Fenton, you appreciate my position better than you are prepared to admit. I think you have suspected all along that Baumann did not die accidentally. I believe that, in your heart of hearts, you know that he was deliberately murdered in cold blood, and murdered by one of the cleverest and luckiest criminals that you or I ever came across. Isn't that the truth?"

When I was in America I have been told by speculators that, when their margin accounts were sold out by their brokers and they lost everything they owned in the Stock Market collapse, their first feeling was one of intense relief. I did not believe them at the time.

Now that the truth about Baumann was actually coming out at last, I understand what they meant. In trampling down my carefully raised structure of half-falsehoods, Horrocks had taken from my mind a terrific load of responsibility. I felt almost light-hearted. But I did wish that my color didn't come and go so easily.

"So you are a psychologist as well as a very considerable detective, Horrocks," I said, smiling into his kindly red face and lighting a cigarette with exaggerated insouciance. "But I really think that before you go any further you ought to substantiate such a very dangerous and damning remark. You haven't by any chance got a warrant for my arrest in your pocket—as an accessory after the fact?"

"No, sir," he smiled, "I know you didn't have anything to do with it. I was watching you all through the inquest and I think you were telling the truth. The only trouble is you weren't telling all the truth. I'd only just got back from London so I didn't have time to work out your reasons for acting as you did. I know there are a great many things that are puzzling you, too. Perhaps we can help each other."

"You are talking through your hat and acting on a haphazard hunch, Horrocks," I cried with creditable alliteration. My voice, however, sounded thin and rather far away.

Horrocks gave me a comfortable smile and stretched his legs. "Now, Mr. Fenton, as the son of a judge and being, like you might say, older and more experienced than the average undergraduate here, I can surely ask you to listen to reason. The thing is as plain as the nose on your face, begging your pardon, sir."

"When I first came in on Monday night I was prepared to accept things at their face value and seeing as how it was the colonel's college, the wish was, like you might say, sir, the father to the thought. The next day I was

called away and the case was officially handed over to Rollings. Even then I did not think there would be anything in it. It looked perfectly plain sailing to me.

"But, while I was in London hunting for William North, I suddenly got to thinking about young Baumann, how he was a cricketer and a South African and how he was probably a good shot too. They live by the gun out there, I understand—"

"But what on earth—?" I interrupted.

"Just a minute, just a minute, Mr. Fenton," he continued. "If you'd lived with firearms as long as I have, you'd realize that ten o'clock at night is the worst possible time to clean them. You can't even see down the barrel properly to find out if it's clean, which is the most important part of any gun, sir."

"And then, if Mr. Baumann was used to firearms, as he must have been, he would never have started out to clean his pistol without first removing the bullets. In the middle of a thunderstorm, too. The thing is not reasonable—it just doesn't fit."

He looked at me quizzically and reached out a hand for his glass. It was empty. Mechanically I filled it. This time the inspector was not so careful about getting froth in his moustache.

"But, hasn't it struck you, Horrocks, that you might easily be working up an excellent case for a rather deliberately and carefully planned suicide?"

**T**HE inspector spread out his hands in the hopeless gesture made by schoolmasters when faced by the density and wilful stupidity of their pupils.

"I thought I had explained to you," he said patiently and politely, "that Mr. Baumann was born with a gun in his pocket as you might say, sir. Well, if he wanted to make his suicide look like an accident, he would hardly have left on his desk materials that are never used to clean guns or revolvers. When all's said and done, Mr. Baumann had some brains."

"But I don't follow you, Horrocks," I cried, now really mystified. "There were cleaning materials on the desk!"

Horrocks shook his head sadly. "Army training," he murmured. "Army training! It ought to be compulsory in every country in the world, even in America. Then perhaps everyone would have realized that Brasso is used to clean brass buttons and not gun-metal or blued steel."

"I wonder the colonel didn't tumble to it himself."

This was amazing. Horrocks was actually talking like a detective of fiction, except that what he said appeared to make excellent sense. I stared at him in undisguised admiration.

"I have just established two further facts, Mr. Fenton," he continued quietly. "Facts that I should have established long before the inquest if I had not been called away like that. In the first place there was nothing made of brass in Mr. Baumann's possession—nothing on which he might reasonably have used Brasso."

"I have also found the materials which he did use when he wanted to clean his revolver." He pointed to the dirty bundle on the table. "They were in the bottom of a trunk and I'd say they have not been used for some months, but they are the kind of things a real shooting man might have used and not been ashamed of, sir."

The man was obviously headed for a high place in Scotland Yard.

"Now, look at this, Mr. Fenton," he cried, warming to his subject. "Here's my revolver." He whipped a dangerous little repeater from his pocket. "And here's a tin of Brasso. See what happens when I try to clean it."

He sprinkled some Brasso on the shining gun-metal and rubbed it with his handkerchief. A nasty gray smudge was the result.

"*Demonstratio ad oculos*, and very conclusive, Mr. Holmes."

"Then you agree with me that the tin of Brasso and the chamois leather were deliberately planted, Mr. Fenton? Planted by a clever murderer, but one who was not clever enough to find out the first thing about cleaning guns?"

"But how on earth did he know where Baumann kept his revolver?" I asked.

"I don't imagine Mrs. Bigger was very backward in coming forward about a thing of that sort, sir. You know what women are when they have a grievance. She knew herself where it was kept and probably broadcast the news around like you might say, Mr. Fenton."

"Well, your murderer had a lot of luck," I commented briefly. "The storm to drown the noise of the shot. The blood to hide the fingerprints. You'd have a job to convince a jury, Inspector."

"You may call it luck, but I think it was mostly good management, Mr. Fenton. And then, there are some more facts to come out, sir. You are not the only one who is keeping information to himself. There are other people on this staircase, sir."

"Well, it's a good thing you are not relying on what I can tell you, because I assure you that my knowledge won't get you far. I'll admit quite frankly that the possibility—or even the probability—of murder did occur to me, but that was simply because Baumann was so generally disliked."

"I know of nothing that would be helpful to you. I have no suspicions and my only suggestion is that you find out from the

porter who came in or left the college around ten o'clock on Monday. If it really was murder, it was probably an outside job."

"I've already done that, sir." He produced a dirty piece of paper from his pocket and passed it on to me. I hoped that he did not observe the eagerness with which I took it from his hand. It was a list of the exits and entrances on Monday night. Before ten o'clock there was no record of importance.

After ten there was the mention of numerous undergraduates, a few college servants and the Master's guests. After twelve there was one entry only—"Dr. Warren and friend." This interested me enormously. I should love to have known the sex of that "friend."

"Why do you show all this to me?" I asked suspiciously.

"Well, Mr. Fenton, my position is awkward, sir. If I'd thought of it all sooner, it would have been quite easy. But then I was away and it wasn't really my case, as I've said before. Any disclosures now would merely discredit Sergeant Rollings and besides, if the coroner is satisfied, the matter should really be closed. But I am convinced that Julius Baumann was foully murdered.

"I hoped," he added simply, "that seeing we were pals like, you might be interested in helping me to prove it."

**I** WAS touched by the childlike naïveté of this big policeman. It was obvious that he disliked as much as I did the conclusions which his intelligence had forced upon him.

"Horrocks," I said, "I want above all things in the world to find out who murdered Baumann. I will do everything I can to help you—under two conditions. The first is that you trust me sufficiently to let me keep to myself the things that concern me only"—he nodded without smiling—"and the second is that you tell Dr. Warren what you have just told me and let him know that you intend to continue your investigation in spite of the coroner."

"It will break his heart," he murmured sadly.

"Nonsense, Horrocks. You are a gross sentimentalist, and, talking of hearts, your own is far too soft for a policeman. Now, finish up your glass of stout and I'll go down with you right now. Courage, my friend—the devil is dead, but we'll find out who killed him."

Reluctantly Horrocks followed me down to Dr. Warren's rooms. There he told the story which he had just imparted to me. Dr. Warren listened to him in silence, staring at his fingernails through his monocle and fidgeting occasionally with his feet. It was obvious that he wished his old friend Horrocks in Jericho.

"So you see, Colonel," finished the in-

spector, "as soon as I've traced North, I can turn my attention to this case and work on it myself. Tactfully like you might say, sir. I hate to reopen old wounds, but I did feel it my duty. . . ."

"Of course it's your duty," snapped the tutor. "Facts are facts and we have to face them. I think we've been very lucky with our coroner's verdict. Now no one need know that you suspect foul play. Mr. Fenton, you will be discreet, of course."

"I've promised the inspector to help all I can, sir," I replied, "and I shall, of course, keep it to myself."

"Good. Then you have my full permission to go ahead, Horrocks. I can trust you to keep it out of the papers."

"You can indeed, sir, and thank you. It will be a great thing for my reputation on the force if—"

"And a great thing for the reputation of the college," said the tutor, grimly. "Still, a duty is a duty, even if it is an unpleasant one."

We realized that we were dismissed.

As I shook hands with Horrocks outside Dr. Warren's rooms, I felt that the clasp sealed an unspoken pact. We liked and understood each other and—to use his own picturesque phrase—there was to be no hanky-panky. I was glad, at last, to have the Law on my side.

When I returned to my room, I was surprised to see that someone was standing by my bookcase, casually pulling out a volume and examining it with the eye of a connoisseur. The face was turned away from me but I saw at once that my visitor was a girl wearing a red hat and a smartly cut white silk dress. As I entered the room, she wheeled round and faced me.

It was the Profile. . . .

## Chapter VIII



**I** HAVE already mentioned the fact that nice English girls do not run around loose in the men's colleges at Cambridge. This applies most especially to the women students at Girton and Newnham. Meters of red tape must be unraveled before they can accept an innocent invitation to tea. If they come uninvited, they are flying in the face of all the standard conventions and acting as hussies. The statement is unqualified—and yet, here it was, time for tea or cocktails, and the Profile was in my room, uninvited!

"Hullo," she said calmly, as I entered. And

indeed, she did look rather a hussy in that flaming red hat and the stunning white dress. But an exquisite and perfectly adorable hussy at that. Whatever poise or good breeding I have acquired at the two Cambridges completely deserted me as I took in the miracle of this sudden re-appearance.

"Where in the name of all that's wonderful do you come from?" I asked fatuously.

"Fenners. The M. C. C. is all out at last for three hundred eighty-six. I'm afraid the Varsity hasn't a chance. Cricket, by the way, is almost my only vice—if you exclude an occasional cigarette."

I passed her my case in a dazed manner.

"Thanks. I do hope you don't think this is cheek of me, but I wanted to see you. I feel I owe you an apology, Hilary Fenton."

"Several, Miss Lathrop." The memory of that lunch at the "Whim" still rankled.

"Come, it's not so bad as all that," she smiled. "But, I am glad you've got my name right at last. I only heard today about your tête-à-tête with Dorothy Dupuis. She told me all the 'circs' during the match this afternoon. I've been laughing ever since."

"It's almost as funny," I said sulkily, "as when an old lady slips on a piece of orange peel in the street and breaks her leg."

Her face grew serious for a moment. "Please don't be cross with me," she said penitently. "When all's said and done, you can't blame me for not being the person you thought I was. You got the girl you invited. Dorothy Dupuis is Lady Lusinger's niece and she's really a very good sort, if a trifle earnest."

"There's nothing wrong with her except that theological fiasco. I thought, in common charity, it would be amusing for her to have a change from him. You must admit I'd have been a cat—and a rather conceited one—if I'd taken it all to myself and done her out of what you call a 'date' for lunch."

"All right," I said, melting, though my legs already felt as though they had been turned to water. "I'll forgive you if you'll stay and have tea with me now. I have three rather stale cakes, a box of chocolate biscuits and some Graham crackers. We can make toast."

"I'd love to. I'm dying for tea after all that cricket. And you are going to let me help, aren't you?"

She removed the red hat and started to busy herself with the loaf of bread and the teapot. The late afternoon was growing a trifle chilly, so I put a match to the fire. We chatted gaily and inconsequentially as we prepared our informal meal. It was all very pleasant and cozy but, somehow or other, each of us seemed to know that the other was acting a part—that we were both marking time before a stampede of inevitable questions and answers.

It was not till after she poured out my third

cup of tea and urged me to take the pink merzipan cake before it went completely bad, that she broached the subject which was uppermost in both our minds.

"Hilary Fenton," she said suddenly, "have you forgotten that you saw me on this staircase last Monday morning?"

"You know perfectly well I haven't forgotten. How could I?" I moved out of my chair and sat beside her on the couch.

"I hoped you had," she said softly.

"Oh, I see what you mean. Well, as far as that goes, I haven't told anyone about it—nor about that other time; but naturally I am curious."

She looked at me for a moment as though she was trying to make up her mind about something. Then she said with a lift of one eyebrow:

"And what are you curious about, Hilary Fenton?"

I drew a deep breath. Now or never, I thought, and both feet are better than one.

"Well, it all boils down to this, Camilla. It's really rather unimportant in the general scheme of things, but I should like to know whether or not it was you who murdered Baumann."

"Murdered—" She sprang from her seat and stared at me with wild and startled eyes. For one second she stood there speechless and then, gradually, every trace of color disappeared from her face. Her knees seemed to sag beneath her and, almost before I had had time to realize what was happening, she had fallen back on to the sofa in a lifeless little heap.

AND as I saw her lying there, looking so small and defenseless on my enormous, overstuffed Chesterfield, an irresistible wave of love, pity and incoherent stupidity swept over me. I suddenly lost all control of myself.

"Camilla, Camilla darling," I burred, as I chafed her cold hands between my own, "don't take it to heart, dear. What does it matter even if you did do it? I don't care. No one need ever know. Just open your eyes and tell me that you forgive me."

Then, I am ashamed to say, at a moment when reason dictated that I should have emptied the contents of the water bottle on her, I started to kiss her eyes, her hair, her forehead. And I probably said more foolish things in those few seconds than in the twenty-four years of my life which preceded them. Her very frailty seemed to enhance her loveliness. It was a moment of delirium.

But, like all the great moments of my life, it was destined to be cut short. For the next thing I knew was that the little hand, which I had lately held so tenderly, was now hurtling through the air to land a stinging smack

on the side of my face.

"Ouch!" I cried, stepping quickly away from the prematurely recovered Camilla, who was now sitting up and glaring at me ferociously.

"I'm ashamed of you, Hilary Fenton," she said, half laughing, half crying. "First of all you call me a murderess and then you start to maul me like a—like a tiger. And my hair's a mess and I haven't a comb, and—and, oh Lord—where is your chivalry and your mirror?"

I rubbed my stinging cheek. "Chivalry, my dear Camilla, is a mere bluff invented by men to hide the shallowness of women. You'll find a mirror and a comb in my bedroom there."

But she did not move. Instead she pulled out her pocket handkerchief and started to cry. She didn't do it as well as the girls in the movies but it was quite a creditable effort. Neither her eyes nor her nose became unduly red or shiny. Perhaps she sniffed a bit too much, but that was doubtless due to the sincerity of her feelings.

"Oh, what a nasty great hoyden I am!" she gasped. "To come into a young man's rooms uninvited and then smack his face. I'll never forgive myself—never—and, oh, Hilary Fenton, there's a purple patch on your cheek."

"Purple patch!" I replied with some heat. "The whole darned thing is like a purple patch in some penny novelette. It's all too utterly—too incredibly fantastic!"

"Well, it's no good my trying to be dramatic about anything when I look as though I'd just been pulled backwards through a haystack in the floods. Wait a minute."

She jumped up from the couch and disappeared into my bedroom. When she returned, the ravages of the last few minutes had been superficially repaired and an April smile played about her lips. But there was still tragedy in her eyes.

"Now, I feel better," she cried, "and if you'll give me a cigarette, I'll sit still as a mouse whilst you tell me why you accuse me of all the seven deadly sins and breaking all the commandments." Here her voice grew more serious. "Incidentally, I am particularly interested in the sixth. Whom am I supposed to have murdered?"

"Camilla," I said gravely, "do let us be frank with each other. This is no time for fooling, pleasant though our dalliance be." My hand again sought my burning cheek. "You came here today either because you wanted to tell me something important or because you wanted me to tell you something. You've made it very obvious that you didn't come for the sake of my *beauz yeux*."

"But they are rather beaux," she murmured. Bless her!

"Now listen." Then I launched forth into the whole story, beginning at the moment when I found Baumann in my room on Monday morning and ending with her unexpected presence in my room that afternoon. I omitted nothing—not even the part about Baumann's letter.

It was only when I described my seeing her silhouette on the stairs that a puzzled frown passed over her forehead. For the rest of the time she sat perfectly still, her cigarette forgotten, her face as emotionless as if she had suddenly been metamorphosed into one of the Elgin marbles.

**E**VEN after I had finished speaking she continued to look straight in front of her as though she had not heard a word. When she did turn towards me, her eyes were shining with a soft, tremulous light and her voice was very low as she said, "And you did all this for me, Hilary Fenton, without even knowing who I was."

"It's the most wonderful—well, I can't use long words—but to think that I dared to talk to you about chivalry and then—may the Lord look sideways on me—to slap your face!" Here she paused for a moment and looked at me with a strange, enigmatic smile.

"But, much as I appreciate all you've done, I must tell you quite frankly that I was nowhere near your college on Monday night. I was at a horrible debate in Sidney."

"But, Camilla, it must have been you. I know your profile better than I know my own mother's. It has never been out of my thoughts since that Blake lecture. And then, that perfume. How could I mistake it? I'm frightfully sensitive to perfumes—I'd know that one anywhere and, God knows, I hate it now."

"Listen," she said slowly and thoughtfully. "I can explain everything. At least, I believe I can. Even the vision on the stairs. You saw me at the lecture. For some reason or other my face struck you as funny—or something. No—don't interrupt."

"You met me and, being keen on nice smells, you naturally noticed that perfectly lovely *Flowers of the Veld* which I've used for some time now. (Ask any of my friends in Newnham. They are all crazy to know its name and where I get it.) Well, to resume. My image was on your mind. You'd been telling ghost stories. The lights had gone out suddenly. You had, I'm afraid, been drinking too much whisky."

"At any rate you were all strung up and someone passed you on the stairs. Probably it was just another undergraduate or your bedmaker, but you imagined it was me. I often do that kind of thing myself. Sometimes I see the same person a hundred times on one morning."

"A tune will run in my head for hours on end. Once I smelt a narcissus for a whole week. It's quite obvious what happened, and I think I understand the rest, too."

"Well, that's more than I do. I'll admit, if you like, that the chances are against its being a woman that I saw Monday night. If it was, she either disappeared into thin air or slid down a drain pipe. Maybe my imagination was overheated with regard to the face, but the perfume was real. That I'll swear to."

"I don't think so—at least, unless the person you saw had taken it from Baumann's rooms. Now, I'm going to tell you something in exchange for your frankness. Something I never meant to tell anyone. I did know Julius Baumann slightly. No, there was absolutely nothing between us. I didn't even like him much."

"I met him first two terms ago. We had friends in common. It was then that he gave me some of his wonderful South African scent. I liked it so much that I ordered a bottle from the *Parfumerie Française* in Rose Crescent. They said they never sold it and would have to get it all the way from South Africa. Finally I got it and it cost a small fortune, but it was worth it."

"I never saw Julius Baumann again until last Monday morning. If you don't mind, I'd rather not tell you exactly why I went to his rooms, but one of his friends was in trouble. He was the only person who could help. That's why I am so thankful—yes, and so grateful—to know that you posted his letter and that you never told. I really came here this afternoon because I thought you might be a friend of Baumann's and that you would know something—"

"But, Camilla," I interrupted, "Inspector Horrocks knows that Baumann was murdered. He is investigating the case and he seems like a jolly good detective. It may be dangerous for you to keep things to yourself."

"If I thought for one single minute that any knowledge I have would help find out who killed him, I would gladly and willingly tell," she said simply. "As it is, it would do more harm than good and make me and several other perfectly innocent people very unhappy. You must continue to take me on trust—up to a certain point."

"But one thing is definite. I did not kill Baumann. I was nowhere near his room that night. I hadn't the remotest idea that it was anything but an unfortunate accident. The word murder was an awful shock. That's why I made such an ass of myself by fainting or whatever it was I did."

"But if ever I do learn anything that might be useful, I will tell you immediately. The only suggestion I have at present is that you ask at the perfume shop whether anyone else

has bought *Veldbloemen*. That might be a help. In the meantime could you go on forgetting that you ever saw me on the staircase at all?"

"And could you forget that vision—that weird hallucination—which you saw later on in the evening? I'm sure it will only cloud the issue. You yourself admit that it couldn't have been a woman. Could you do that for me, Hilary Fenton?"

SHE was now putting on her red hat and making ready to go. I could see that she was deeply moved by all that I had told her and evidently could not trust herself to talk much more.

"I'd forget anything in the world for you, Camilla," I replied quietly, "everything except the fact that I love you."

She took a step towards me and looked at me so long and searchingly that my head began to swim.

"You are a dear," she whispered at length, "a perfect dear, and I wish I loved you too. But girls don't go quite as fast as all that, I'm afraid. However—" here she bent suddenly forward and her lips brushed the place on my cheek where her hand had slapped me—"now we are quits, aren't we? And friends?"

I smiled. "Okay, pal. But don't be a sister to me. I've got three already. And when do I see you again?"

"Well, you know I never can resist cricket. I'll be watching the Varsity match tomorrow afternoon."

"Oh, Lord," I groaned, "we certainly are friends if I have to endure the horrid mysteries of cricket for you!"

She laughed happily. "I wish you knew how sweet you look, Hilary Fenton, when you are sulky and disgruntled that way. And I wish you knew how lovely it is for me when you stop treating me like a woman of mystery or a kind of poisonous lotus. And you'll go on that way, won't you, please? You'll treat me just as though I was another man or, at the worst, a simple, uncomplicated English girl who works eight hours a day and minds her own business?"

She had now reached the doorway.

"That'll be all right by me, buddy," I called after her retreating figure. "But if you wear that damned mackintosh tomorrow, I'll—"

But she never heard the completion of the threat, for, with a swift valedictory smile, she had disappeared down the staircase.

I looked at my watch. It was five minutes to six o'clock, which left me no time to dwell on my emotions if I wanted to get round to the *Parfumerie Française* before they closed. I dashed towards Rose Crescent. There I found that the misty blonde who presided was just about to call it a day.

"Good evening," I said politely. "Do you happen to have some perfume called *Veld-bloemen*? It's South African, I believe." I wrote the name down for her on a slip of paper.

"Oh, yes. *Flowers of the Veld*, as it's called. I haven't any in stock but I can get some for you," she said. "Our London dealer can obtain it. Of course we don't get many calls for it and it's rather dear."

"Some people buy it though, surely?" I said naively.

"Why, yes, occasionally. I remember that a young lady bought some here last October. A nice-looking young lady—a most refined face. And then, this term it was, a young man ordered some most particular and then made quite a fuss about the price when he got it. I explained to him that with the duty—"

"Was he an undergraduate?" I asked.

The woman looked doubtful for a moment. "I don't hardly know, sir. He was older than the usual run of undergraduates, and his voice was a bit furry."

"No one else?"

"No, sir, that was all. Can I order some for you, sir?"

"What's that? Oh, no. I think I'll take something simple, uncomplicated and English. How about a shilling bottle of Yardley's lavender?"

As she wrapped it up for me, I reflected that Camilla's suggestion had not got me much further. The two people who had bought *Flowers of the Veld* were just the two that one would have expected—Camilla Lathrop herself and Julius Baumann.

There seemed to be no possible doubt as to that.

### Chapter IX



I AM rather ashamed to admit it, but during this whole week I was happier than I had ever been in my life before. I should be an unmitigated humbug if I pretended that Baumann's death had been a matter of personal sorrow to me. True, it had been a great shock, but it

had coincided with something which had proved an even greater shock to my nervous system and metabolic processes. I refer, of course, to the fact that I had fallen in love for the first time in my life.

This devastating occurrence had driven the unpleasant and gruesome aspects of the case to the background of my mind. I could enjoy the agreeable stimulation of an abstract problem. I could enjoy cutting lectures with-

out a qualm of conscience; and my unofficial peeps behind the scenes at the stage properties of a great university made me feel pleasantly important.

Then, there was the warm weather to add to my happiness. The roses were beginning to bloom in the fellows' gardens. The college lawns were unbelievably green, while the fields around Cambridge were dotted with moon-daisies, buttercups and purple vetch.

Even the old gray buildings had a jaunty, rejuvenated air; and on the undergraduates' cheeks I noticed a healthy, brownish tinge—the first promises of a deeper summer tan. And one evening, as I strolled along the banks of the Cam, I heard a nightingale, late in its wooing, expressing all the love and tragedy in life—all the emotions which I myself had been experiencing that week.

There were some signs that the much maligned English summer was actually on its way. This was part of the miracle which I was sharing with the great ghosts of Chaucer, Milton, Wordsworth and Tennyson.

For they too had lived in Cambridge; they too had (who knows?) loved their respective Camillas here, had seen the dog-roses whitening the lanes in Madingley or Grantchester and watched the fleecy clouds sail high above Great Trinity Court and King's Meadow. In sharing thus their secret, the fringes of their mantles seemed to rustle constantly around me. No wonder I was happy and uplifted.

But there was one thing which slightly clouded my happiness at this period. I was worried about Michael and unhappy about our relationship which, for the past few days, had been strained and totally lacking in spontaneity. I liked Michael better than any man I had ever known.

His quiet humor, his steadiness of purpose and his English sincerity were the complement of my somewhat flamboyant flippancy and American ebullience. He seemed to possess all the characteristics which I most admired—all the qualities which were outside my own very limited reach. He had always been a real person and a real friend.

But since Monday night Michael had been unaccountably reserved, cold and unsympathetic. True, he was very busy with his work for the Lenox Scholarship. There were other competitors besides Baumann—less formidable, perhaps, but competitors none the less. I knew that he was obliged to work hard, but one is never too busy for a smile a cheerio or a hastily snatched cigarette with a friend. But the trouble was that Michael acted almost as though he no longer regarded me as a friend.

Friday was the day of his examination. Before going off to join Camilla at Fenner's, I decided to try to catch Michael and wish him luck with his afternoon papers. I found him

munching a piece of bread and marmalade over a battered copy of Homer's *Iliad*. He looked tired and despondent.

"How d'you make out this morning?" I asked with the fatuous cheerfulness one adopts with people who are going through any kind of ordeal.

He gave a noncommittal grunt.

"What is it this afternoon?"

"Greek and Latin Unseen," he replied shortly.

"Well, keep smiling, old man. Remember how Browning says that we should 'greet the unseen with a cheer.'"

"There's nothing very cheerful about it," he replied with a slow, unwilling smile.

"Bosh, Mike, don't be a chump. You know you are a snip for the school..."

Instead of laughing, as he usually did, at my exhibition of English public school colloquialism, Michael turned towards his desk and started to collect some pens and pencils. When he faced me again, there was a strange expression on his countenance.

"Perhaps I am," he said slowly, "since, as you were obliging enough to tell me yourself, my chief competitor has been eliminated. And, some time when neither of us is quite so busy, I imagine you are going to tell me exactly how you knew the fact at least ten minutes before it—er—became a fact!"

**W**ITH these words he picked up his gown and strode out of the room.

"Michael, you ass!" I called after him, but he did not stop or look round. Then, suddenly, an amazing truth began to dawn upon me.

Michael must think that I killed Julius Baumann, or, at least, that I knew who did.

And what was more natural? I tell him that one of his competitors is going to be eliminated. Within a few moments his dead body is discovered. Why should I blame Michael for suspecting me?

But here another, even more terrible thought struck me. Might not the strange expression which I had just seen on Michael's face have been nothing more or less than—fear? What if he himself had killed Julius Baumann just before I returned to my room on Monday night?

Would not my innocent remark about elimination have been fraught with a terrifying significance—an indication that I either knew or suspected his guilt? He had heard nothing about Baumann's letter or the fact that the South African had planned to leave Cambridge. Nor could I tell him—at least, not yet.

It was all a ghastly muddle.

And there were plenty of other muddles for me to think about as I walked along the narrow, winding streets of Cambridge on my

way towards Fenners. But the problem which absorbed all the people I passed was the outcome of the cricket match. From stray remarks I gathered that the prognosis was none too favorable for the Varsity.

"Five wickets down for ninety," was one comment I heard. "That leaves three hundred for the last five men—and no Baumann. If only Somerville—"

But at that moment, I caught sight of a familiar figure mounted—horrors!—on a bicycle. It was Camilla Lathrop. Camilla on a "push-bike." The ways of the English female are indeed strange and past all seeking out!

I advanced towards her through the milling traffic and seized the handlebars rather in the manner of Dick Turpin.

"Please," I cried in anguish. "Please let me take this—er—vehicle. On the whole I'd rather have had the mackintosh."

She dismounted meekly and said with a seraphic smile:

"I like your cheek, Hilary Fenton."

"I'm afraid you do," I replied, rubbing it reminiscently.

After which unsentimental greeting we joined the brightly dressed throng of young men and maidens who were busily pushing their way into the playing field. I parked the offending bicycle and joined Camilla who had found a delightfully secluded spot under some elm trees.

She was wearing a light grayish-green costume which made me think (though I had never seen them) of the olive groves of Greece and the gray-eyed Pallas Athene. The cricket had just started again after the lunch interval.

As viewed from a train or any other safe distance, cricket is undoubtedly the most effective and picturesque game ever devised by men. The immaculate white flannels against the green of the English meadow—the long-legged, sturdy young giants, the grace of their seemingly casual movements—the scent of clover and the droning of bees—all these go to make up a charming picture in vivid contrast to the dusty, noisy, peanut and soda-pop atmosphere of a baseball game.

But when watched in a concentrated manner through field-glasses, or with each of its intricate points carefully explained—even when the explanations are made by the girl of the moment—cricket is, to my mind, still beautiful, perhaps, but dumb, hopelessly dumb. It lacks the virility and élan of baseball. It has no speed, no vigor, no vitamins. It is altogether too polite.

"Oh, well hit, Somerville," murmured Camilla, as a ball sped over the ground in our direction.

"Somerville?"

"Yes, he's batting now, and he's nicely set too. Looks like making fifty at least, if not

his century."

"What on earth are they doing now?" I asked presently, as the players began to move in an apparently aimless manner about the field.

"Oh, you poor American," sighed Camilla good-naturedly. "It's over. That means one of the bowlers has bowled six balls. Then the umpire—he's the man in the long white coat—calls over and another bowler starts at the other end. See, there he goes."

**T**HE bowler was taking a long run behind the wickets preparatory to hurling the ball at my handsome stairmate.

"Why doesn't he chuck the ball if he wants it to be really fast?" I asked.

"It's against the rules to bend the arm at the elbow. Well hit, sir!" Somerville had run forward and smacked the ball in a manner worthy of Babe Ruth. There was a mild burst of conservative English applause.

"But why don't they run?" I asked, pleased at my friend's success.

"Boundary," replied my mentor. "No need to run. It counts four anyhow. Six if it lands outside full pitch. Things are beginning to look up. One hundred and fifty for five wickets. Oh, damn, the captain is l.b.w."

The captain of the Varsity team, having stopped a ball on his pad, was now walking slowly towards the pavilion. Tragic voices were raised on all sides.

"But the ball didn't knock those funny little sticks down and he wasn't caught out," I exclaimed mystified. "What on earth is l.b.w.?"

"Leg before wicket," sighed Camilla. "Oh, damn that umpire."

"But I distinctly saw the ball hit Somerville's pad just before in exactly the same way. Why wasn't he put out too?"

"Well, that ball either wasn't straight or it had a break on, probably. The umpire has to decide. Here's Malden. He's a stone waller. Now if only he can keep his wicket up and let Somerville do the scoring. . . ."

I was completely bewildered. One point alone was clear to me. Great things were expected of Stuart and so far his filling of a dead man's shoes had been more than competent. He now had a chance to rescue his side. In the meantime I was happy under the elm trees—more or less alone with Camilla.

But our solitude was destined to be short-lived. A couple was approaching with purposeful strides—a large purple female in spectacles with an etiolated male bringing up the rear. A well known voice started to quack:

"Why, Millie, here you are again. Put your mac down here, Perce."

I winced at the abbreviation of Camilla's

name, but she hid any annoyance she may have felt with admirable fortitude.

"Why, Dorothy, how nice!" She jumped up to make a place beside her, then added with a mischievous smile, "By the way, let me introduce Mr. Hilary Fenton."

"Ah, Mr. Fenton and I are old pals, but I didn't know that you two were." Dorothy Dupuis looked at us for a moment with myopic suspicion. "I do think Somerville is a nib!" she breathed, gazing rapturously towards the cricket pitch. "A real nib! He's going to have the match. And he's in your coll, isn't he, Mr. Fenton?"

"Yes, and he's on my staircase."

"Well, you must give me an intro some time," she said archly. "Now don't be jel, darling." She turned towards her fiancé who was fingering a pimple on his chin and gazing abstractedly at the scoring board.

"He's made his fifty," muttered the prelate presumptively. "That's two hundred for six wickets and Malden is blocking like Ely Cathedral. There's one chance in a thousand—"

For awhile I let the cricket take care of itself and gradually dropped off into a pleasant state of day-dreaming. Suddenly there began to creep over me that uneasy sensation that someone was staring at me. A man standing a few yards away seemed vaguely familiar. Could it be—? Yes, it was—Inspector Horrocks.

Now, what on earth was he doing at a cricket match when he was supposed to be occupied on two important cases? And why was he scrutinizing Camilla and me so persistently? Fully awake, I jumped up and went over to him.

"Hello, Inspector," I said, approaching from the rear. "So you are not too busy to enjoy the sport of men?"

**H**ORROCKS put one colossal forefinger up to his nose and murmured with a cryptic smile, "Baumann wasn't the only person in this business who liked cricket, Mr. Fenton."

"Hot on the trail, are you?" I asked with interest. "or just playing hookey?"

"I don't care for hockey, Mr. Fenton. Oh, well hit, sir," he cried with animation, as a ball from Somerville's bat soared over our heads for a boundary (six runs—*vide* Camilla!) "Your friend will make his century today or I'm a Dutchman. He's up to eighty-six now. It's a great chance for him, Mr. Fenton, a great chance."

But whether or not there was a sinister inflection in his voice I did not have time to consider, for at this moment a pleasant-looking man came up to him, touched his elbow and passed him an orange envelope. Horrocks opened the telegram and read it

through slowly. As he did so, his florid face almost rivaled the purple of Dorothy Dupuis' dress. The two men conferred in whispers. At length the inspector turned towards me and handed me the telegram.

"You might as well read this, Mr. Fenton, seeing as how we are old friends and have no secrets from each other, like you might say, sir."

It came from a town called Oakham (Rutland) and it stated the fact that the authorities there were holding a man who answered in every detail to the broadcast description of William North.

"Matter of fifty or sixty miles," I heard the pleasant-looking man say. "The car's waiting outside."

"Can't I come, too?" I cried. "Rutland is the smallest county in England, isn't it? So Oakham must be the smallest county town."

Horrocks smiled broadly. "Plenty of room for a friend," he said casually.

"Oh, but—" For the first time since Monday I had forgotten Camilla's existence. As I looked towards her, I saw that she was surrounded by a noisy group of undergraduates. "Just let me park my obligations," I murmured.

I went over to the little cluster of boys and girls beneath the elms and whispered an explanation to Camilla. At the word "North" she seemed to start and the color rushed to her cheeks.

"Yes, Hilary, go—please go," she cried eagerly. "And be nice to him, poor man, and make them nice to him, too. Remember that—"

"—there but for the grace of God goes Hilary Fenton," I finished, kissing my finger tips.

But she paid no attention to me for her head was turned away as if to hide tears of pity.

I rejoined the two men and we all three piled into the front seat of the waiting Morris. Johnson was a good driver and we were soon making fast time along the Huntingdon road.

"What direction are we going?" I asked.

"North by northwest," replied Johnson. "We hit the Great North Road very soon."

"Very suitable," I murmured.

We passed through Huntingdon, famous as the birthplace of Oliver Cromwell, and continued towards Stilton, even more famous as the birthplace of the eponymous cheese. Here a signpost bearing the word "Peterborough" caught my eye.

"Are we going through Peterborough?" I asked excitedly. "I'd give my back teeth to see that Cathedral."

Horrocks cocked an eye good-humoredly at Johnson.

"It's not really out of our way," said the

driver smiling, "and Bill North is a good sort. He wouldn't mind waiting."

"I'll give you exactly five minutes," said the inspector as we drew up outside the cathedral close. He produced an enormous watch from his pocket and smiled in a paternal manner.

Five minutes to see one of England's grandest cathedrals! And me without a Baedeker! Another American tragedy.

I did have time, however, to admire the clerestory and triforium and to crick my neck in looking up at the perfect Norman woodwork of the ceiling. I stood for a few seconds by the tomb of Henry VIII's first and most unfortunate wife. Then I came out and bought a picture postcard to send to my father.

We jumped in the car and continued on our interrupted journey through the fast-receding fenland. Some deep, primeval instinct made me love this flat unpromising landscape even better than the more pretentiously picturesque sections of England. Was not my own name Fenton—undoubtedly a corruption of Fentown—and was it not possible that in this very neighborhood my ancestors first saw the light of day and had their peaceful beings?

**A**FTER leaving the fen district behind us, we passed through Stamford, the Oxford of the Middle Ages, with its magnificent churches, almshouses and its atmosphere of ancient and intellectual aspiration. Within twenty minutes we were entering Oakham and all other considerations went out of my mind at the prospect of seeing one of the most famous figures in English criminal history.

The car finally drew up in front of the small brick police station and we all entered the building together. A bobby took us into a back room where a slight, bearded man sat quietly reading an old, musty volume.

He looked up as we entered and I noticed that he had a broad, intellectual forehead, thinning gray hair and sad eyes whose expression seemed vaguely familiar. A smile spread over his face as Johnson advanced, holding out his hand.

So this was the famous William North whose moment of madness had set England talking for twenty years. This quiet, scholarly figure was the desperate criminal lunatic whose face had for the past week been on the front page of every newspaper in the country. And I had expected him to look like a cross between Charlie Peace and Tarzan of the Apes! It was unbelievable.

"Why, Bill," Johnson was saying, "here you are at last. We've been missing you up at the home. You shouldn't have gone off that way." His tone was that of an indulgent

mother whose child has been caught in the larder.

William North smiled again—a sad, dreamy smile. "I'm sorry if I've inconvenienced you," he said gently, "but I'm quite ready to come back now. I had to get into a decent library somehow or other. I had to get hold of this book."

Johnson scratched his head in good-humored bewilderment. "What's that?" he asked.

"Ravisius Textor's *Officina*. I had a theory that Rabelais used it to compile his famous lists. I believe I'm right."

"Well, you can bring it along with you—and we've had the piano tuned while you were away," said the warden cheerfully. "The superintendent is looking forward to hearing some more Chopin."

But I could stand no more. The kindness, the incredible kindness of these two officials moved me more than any display of coarseness or brutality would have done. Truly England is a wonderful country for concealing the iron hand beneath the suède glove of gentleness. No wonder it has a lower criminal record than any other country in the world!

I strolled about Oakham in the twilight and gazed idly at the old butter market and stocks—grim relics of the days when police authorities were not so kind as Inspector Horrocks—its fine old church and school where I could hear the happy laughter of the boys as they came out of "prep." It was a charming, peaceful town.

When I returned to the police station, the formalities had apparently been concluded and North was sitting in the front seat of the car next to Johnson. I was introduced as a young American who had come because he wanted to see Peterborough Cathedral.

"A beautiful place," commented North with a reminiscent light in his eyes, "but it's a pity that they moved the body of Mary, Queen of Scots." Involuntarily he spoke of this event (which occurred in the reign of James I) as though it had happened last

week. His mind, apparently, no longer belonged in this century. The present did not exist for him. He showed no disinclination whatsoever to being taken back to the "home."

"You're very fond of Chopin, aren't you, Mr. North?" I asked suddenly.

"Why, yes," he replied with his sad, far-away smile, "Chopin is the only composer whose works I care to play now. There is an other-world quality about his music which seems to be especially written for those who are—er—barred from this world and all its activities." He turned towards Johnson. "I'm glad you had the piano tuned," he said simply.

We reached the outskirts of Cambridge at about half past eleven. After bidding my companions good night. I beckoned Horrocks aside and whispered into his ear.

"Did you notice that suit which North is wearing? No? Well, examine the button-holes and you will see something interesting. The person to whom it originally belonged was obviously in the habit of wearing a monocle."

Horrocks solemnly placed one forefinger along the side of his nose and closed one eye. "It doesn't always pay to see everything. Mr. Fenton. Good night, sir."

Apparently I was not the only person who had guessed the identity of Dr. Warren's visitor on Monday night.

I STROLLED leisurely towards All Saints, thinking about the extraordinary events of this extraordinary day. Everything had been so contradictory. Everybody had insisted upon acting in the way that one would least expect. The staid Dr. Warren had entertained in his rooms a desperate, hunted criminal.

The criminal had turned out to be a scholar and a gentleman who played Chopin and talked like the Dons at high table. His relentless hunters had behaved like angels of peace and mercy instead of hard-boiled

[Turn page]

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## Chapter X

sleuths. They had even halted their chase to allow a young American dilettante to look at a cathedral. And the other dramatic personae were no less topsy turvy.

Camilla, the mysterious midnight vision of my dreams, was a nice flesh and blood girl who liked to watch cricket matches and rode a bicycle. There was nothing sinister about Dorothy Dupuis except her abbreviations. The invariable Michael was sulking like a schoolboy while Somerville—

"Hello, Fenton on Torts." I heard my name called from across the street. "Come on, chaps, let's de-bag Hilarious Hilary from Phila., Pa., the son of Fenton on Legal Theory . . . the son and only heir . . . oh, come let us de-bag him!"

Four youths were advancing towards me. It was obvious from their gait that they had been entertaining themselves well, but not too wisely. I stood my ground.

"What was the result of the cricket match?" I asked nervously, feeling that something was expected of me.

Stuart groaned. "Listen, you chaps, he doesn't even know that we licked the M. C. C. He doesn't even know that his own blue-eyed boy friend made one hundred and sixty-eight, not out. If that isn't a case for de-bagging . . ."

I shall never know whether or not they really intended to commit violence on my nether garments, for at this moment some one called out:

"Look out, chaps! The Progs."

There was a general scurrying in all directions as the proctor turned the corner, followed by his two attendant bulldogs in their top-hats and black coats. These are the University police and all gownless or inebriated undergraduates flee before them like leaves before the winds of winter.

Above the white band around the proctor's neck I saw the stern, pale face of Dr. Warren. Beneath the old-fashioned top-hat of the younger of the two bulldogs I caught a glimpse of Thomas Hankin. They advanced towards us in perfect phalanx. Somerville was seized.

"The proctor would like to speak to you, please, sir," said the deferential voice of our staircase gyp.

But I waited to hear no more for the other "buller" was moving menacingly towards me. I fled to the sanctuary of my college. Once within its precincts I knew that I was safe.

As I entered the gates, I noticed that the hands of the clock pointed to five minutes before midnight. A few moments later and my escapade would have cost me thirteen and fourpence. As it was, I had come in without my cap and gown, which would set me back to the tune of six and eight pence.

Well, the day had been worth it!



SATURDAY morning at Cambridge is a moment of respite. It is the death of each week's life, intended by God and undergraduates as a period for sleep and for forgetting. And after my hectic Friday I had hoped to slumber on until it was time for that hybrid meal

technically known as "brunch"—a movable feast midway between breakfast and lunch. But Fate had decreed otherwise; for, at the premature hour of 7:30, I was brought back to life and all its grim realities with a very decided jerk.

"Hilary, Hilary, wake up, man!"

Someone was tugging at my bedclothes and shaking me none too gently by the shoulders. Through one half-opened eye I took in a hazy impression of Lloyd Comstock in pyjamas and dressing-gown with his dark hair sticking out in all directions. He looked like a disgruntled gollywog.

"Listen, man, you must listen," he urged. "If I don't have someone to talk to I shall go stark staring mad. I've just had the most horrible experience. . . ."

I turned toward the wall. "Let me dream again," I murmured, pulling the covers over my ears. "It's too early for horrors."

"But, my God, man. I've just—I've just discovered a dead body—a corpse. Here in the college." His voice was shrill with excitement.

I sat up, not quite certain whether I was asleep or awake.

"What?" I asked, bewildered.

"About an hour ago, in the court. The police are there now. They told me not to talk, but everyone must have seen it by this time. When I came away, there was a crowd of servants and four policemen, and oh, it was too utterly—beastly."

He paused and looked around, wildly. I jumped out of bed, ran to my cupboard and poured a stiff tot of brandy.

"Here, take this," I said, half choking him in my efforts to get it down his throat, "and that is what comes of getting up at such ungodly hours as you do!"

But he did not smile. The neat brandy had made him blink and splutter. Presently he gasped out:

"I got up about six. It was such a ripping morning for a stroll. I just couldn't stay in bed. Besides—" he added, running a hand through his hair, "I've been sleeping rottenly since—since Monday."

"Yes, but—"

"Well, I was going across the court to the baths when I suddenly noticed a top hat lying on the ground under the white lilac bush just by the front door of the Master's Lodge. You know?"

I nodded.

He gulped again.

"Well, I thought some of the fellows had probably been having a rag last night—celebrating the cricket match or something—so I stopped to pick it up. As I did so, I saw a man's boot sticking out from under the bush.

"Of course, I thought it must be some sort of dummy—a wax figure that some bright boy had pinched from a tailor's shop. I went up closer to have a look and—and then I saw that it wasn't part of a rag at all—that it was grim earnest—"

He paused for a moment and then continued more slowly:

"It was Hank lying there—our Hank, all covered with blood and dressed up in his black clothes like an—undertaker. He was stone dead and there was a silly smile on his face, you know, the sort you see on the effigies of Guy Fawkes."

His teeth were chattering so I threw something round his shoulders and poured some more brandy. "Buck up, Lloyd," I exhorted him, though I felt anything but bucked up myself.

"Well, I've no idea what I did next. I imagine I must have called the porter because all at once there seemed to be a crowd of people round me. Dr. Warren was there and he looked so funny with his monocle on top of green striped pyjamas—and the Dean had put on his surplice obviously in mistake for his dressing gown. Oh, it was bloody, bloody funny."

Comstock was dangerously near the point of hysteria. I looked at him helplessly. Presently he continued in a slightly more normal tone:

"And then that inspector came—what's his name—Horrocks. I heard Dr. Warren say that Hank must have died shortly after midnight. And that he had been stabbed in four places. There was some talk about a knife. Then the policemen began to turn everyone away. They told me to wait in my room until I was sent for. And now—"

"And now you are going to have some good strong coffee," I said with decision. "My God, poor old Hankin! You just lie down, Lloyd, while I get some breakfast. You look all in, man."

I tumbled into some clothes and made a brew of coffee. Comstock's hand trembled as he took the cup but he appeared eager to discuss the matter. In fact, his state of mind improved visibly as he unburdened himself. We talked for about an hour and then a policeman appeared and told us laconically

that we were both wanted. We followed him down to Dr. Warren's rooms where an animated scene was in progress.

ALF—wrapped in a white napkin, on the table lay a small knife of primitive design. It seemed to be the centerpiece of the room and focused everyone's attention. The senior tutor was standing near the bay window, staring at it gloomily through his monocle. Horrocks was seated at the table, and was in the act of dismissing Mrs. Bigger, who stood, poised for flight, near the door as we entered.

"Well, sir," she was crying with righteous indignation of one who suspects that her word has been doubted, "if it's the last thing I say when they come to screw me down in me coffin, I shall sit up and tell them that that knife belonged to Mr. Baumann, that I shall. And it 'ung above 'is mantel and cluttered up my cleaning every morning until Monday last—and as soon as I kleps me eyes on it, I sez . . ."

"All right, Mrs. Bigger. Thank you." Horrocks' voice cut through her monologue.

The bedmaker stalked majestically from the room. Then the inspector turned toward me and pointed at the knife on the table. "Now, Mr. Fenton, have you ever seen this knife before?"

I replied that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it had been the property of my South African neighbor; that it had been in his room last Monday morning but I had not seen it since. No, I could not be positive that it had not been there on Monday night when I discovered the body.

I recognized it by the primitive design on the handle. I knew it was a Kaffir knife—probably one of the crude weapons used by the African savages. Baumann had had a number of similar native trophies in his room. Dr. Warren nodded as if to signify that he agreed with me.

Horrocks then asked Lloyd Comstock to go through the details of his finding Hankin's body. My staircase had now completely recovered his composure and went through the recital in a calm, even voice. He added nothing to what he had told me earlier that morning.

The college porter was next sent for and questioned. He told the inspector that Hankin had come in from his duties as bulldog at about five minutes past twelve on the previous night. He had then gone straight over to the Master's Lodge in the hopes (so he said) of catching a glimpse of his girl. Dr. Warren had come in shortly afterwards.

Hank slept in a little room just above the porter's lodge and next to that occupied by the porter himself. He had never heard him come back to his room, but he had said no

attention to this fact since Hankin, who was anything but talkative, often went straight upstairs without speaking or even saying good night.

The porter expressed himself as quite certain he had seen no strangers or suspicious looking characters hanging about the court. He would have sent them about their business at once. No one had come in after Dr. Warren with the exception of Mr. Somerville, who had rung the bell at 12:16 according to the records.

The young gentleman, he added, had a paper cap on his head and seemed to be in a slightly tipsy condition; he was not wearing academic dress and—here the porter coughed slightly and cleared his throat—he had appeared to be amused by the fact that he had just been "progged" and by his own gyp at that!

"That is quite correct," said the tutor. "Hankin was one of my bulldogs last night. We caught Somerville shortly before midnight without a gown."

At this point Horrocks recalled one of the policemen, who left the room and returned in a few minutes. He was followed by Mary Smith, the housemaid at the Master's lodge.

She was dressed in a black alpaca dress and the spotless white apron which makes English domestic servants so picturesque. A small cotton cap was perched on the top of her magnificent red hair. The poor girl was snivelling into a handkerchief as she entered, and her usually pretty face was swollen and distorted with grief.

The inspector rose from his chair as though she had been a duchess and patted her into a seat. For a few moments she cried noiselessly without speaking. At length she looked up and made a helpless little gesture which seemed to signify that she was ready to answer any questions that might be put to her.

"Your name?" asked the inspector gently.

"Mary Smith, sir," she replied into her handkerchief.

"And you live—"

"At Trumpington, sir, alone with my mother—that is when I'm not at the lodge, sir."

"Yes, yes. You were engaged to marry Thomas Hankin, I believe?"

"Oh, yes, sir." Here she looked across at Dr. Warren. "And I didn't mean no 'arm meeting him like that outside the lodge door, sir. I know as 'ow I didn't ought to of, not reely, sir, but Tom he worked so 'ard and it wasn't often we had a chance to see each other. He was saving up his money, sir, to buy us a 'ome in South Africa and—oh, oh—" She burst into tears.

**H**ORROCKS looked at her sympathetically. "And you were the last person to see him alive?" he asked softly.

The girl looked at him sharply and her tears seemed to dry up as if by magic.

"Oh, no, sir," she said almost eagerly. "The gentleman who spoke to Hankin when we were by the front door. He was the last, sir."

Everyone was staring at Mary Smith with interest. There was a long pause.

"Suppose you tell us exactly what happened," said the inspector. "In your own words."

With another apprehensive glance in the direction of Dr. Warren, the maid replied in a low voice: "Well, sir, I knew as 'ow Tom—that's Hankin, sir—would be finished bulldogging soon after twelve, so I waited for him by the front door of the lodge. The master and the mistress had gone to bed long since. I didn't see no 'arm and there wasn't any of the young gentlemen about."

"No, no, quite natural," said Horrocks hurriedly. "Don't distress yourself."

"Well, Hankin came at about ten minutes past twelve and we—er—talked a minute or two, sir, and then I heard footsteps coming—a man's footsteps. I went back inside the front door cos I didn't want no one to see me there, sir, and I closed it a tiny crack and waited a minute.

"And then I heard Tom say, 'Certainly, sir, I'll come at once,' and when I opened the door the two of them had moved off together and that—that was the last I saw of him, sir, the very last. No good night, no good-by, sir." The handkerchief was again produced.

"Did you recognize the voice of this individual who spoke to Hankin?" interposed Dr. Warren.

The maid looked at him timidly. "No, sir," she said, dabbing at her eyes.

"Would you say, from the manner in which Hankin replied, that it was one of the tutors who spoke to him or one of the gentlemen?" asked Horrocks with unconscious humor.

The ghost of a smile fitted for a moment around Dr. Warren's grim mouth.

"I didn't catch what he said, sir, but Hankin answered very respectful like. But then, he was always respectful even to the young gentlemen, sir."

"I see. But it wasn't a fellow servant?" The girl shook her head. Horrocks turned to Dr. Warren. "Have you any idea who it could have been, Colonel?" he asked deferentially.

"I have nothing to add to the evidence I have already given," replied the tutor coldly.

"You two young gentlemen have no idea?" He turned towards Comstock and me. We both shook our heads. There was another long moment of silence.

"I hate to say such a thing," suddenly interjected Dr. Warren, "but I should say that it was probably Hankin's murderer." (There

was a gasp from Mary Smith.) "When all's said and done, he must have died between twelve and twelve-thirty. It is a great pity that this young woman cannot have been more precise. Was the man tall or short, for example? Did he wear a gown? Was his voice loud or soft?" He looked at the housemaid quizzically through his monocle.

"I didn't see him, sir, and I couldn't hear what he said," she answered humbly. "There was only a crack of the door open and Hankin was standing in front of him. But if I'd only known," she added with some spirit, "as how it might have been his murderer, sir."

"Yes, yes," interrupted Horrocks, who appeared anxious to avoid anything in the nature of an emotional outburst. "And now, I wonder if you could tell us whether Hankin had any enemies, whether there was anyone who might have had a grudge against him?"

The girl raised her head and, for the first time, I noticed what good, intelligent eyes she had. In the general way one had only a vague impression of a pretty face topped by abundant auburn hair; but now it was obvious to me that she was no fool.

"Enemies? Oh, no, sir. Hankin didn't have no enemies, least not as I knew of. He always worked very hard and was the saving, quiet sort, sir. He didn't have no time to make friends or enemies."

"Did he ever mention Mr. Baumann to you—the young gentleman who died last Monday night?"

"No, sir, not particular. I think he did say once as how he come from South Africa, too, and how he was homesick like."

"He never hinted that he knew anything about Mr. Baumann's—er—accident, I suppose? Or anything about Mr. Baumann's past life that might account for his sudden death?"

"No, sir."

THE inspector looked at her fixedly for a moment and then said very slowly and distinctly: "But several people have told me that Hankin had been rather strange and—er—different since Monday night. He seemed to have something on his mind—to be worried. Now, you were closer to him than anyone else. Did you notice anything of the sort?"

The girl looked nervously towards Dr. Warren. His presence seemed to fascinate and frighten her at the same time. The tutor, evidently feeling that he was the cause of her embarrassment, rose and went into another room. A look of relief passed over Mary's face.

"Well, since you mention it, sir," she stammered, "Hankin had been sort of, well,

different since last Monday. Once or twice he seemed like he was going to tell me something and then—he was not one to talk much, sir. But only last night, just before that man came up and spoke to him, he was saying as how there'd been funny things going on on 'A' staircase and funny visitors coming and going—"

(Was it my guilty conscience, or had she turned her eyes deliberately towards me?)

"Was that all?"

"Yes, sir, and then the man came up and spoke to him and I closed the door."

"So you think that perhaps Hankin knew something about Mr. Baumann's death—something that he hadn't told the authorities?"

The maid rose from her chair with simple dignity. "I only know what I have already told you, sir."

It was obvious to the inspector and, indeed, to all of us, that nothing further could be gained by additional cross-questioning. The thing was too recent, everyone was too much upset by the tragedy to be able to give testimony that was either valuable or constructive. We all needed time to elapse before we could get a proper sense of perspective.

The hearing was adjourned and I strolled out into the court with Lloyd Comstock. The college looked more like a Hollywood attempt to represent Cambridge than an actual corner of the great university itself.

A motion picture cameraman was busily photographing various corners of the old building and a group of undergraduates were making theatrical gestures to each other in animated conversation. Newspaper reporters were buttonholing recalcitrant policemen, whilst college servants stood around with empty trays like so many errand boys.

The whole thing gave the impression of a badly arranged set in an indifferently produced amateur performance. The shock seemed temporarily to have upset even the immemorial dignity of Cambridge.

While Comstock and I stood by the foot of our staircase, Michael came down with a book under his arm.

"You've heard about it?" I asked.

He nodded, looking with disgust at the garish crowd at the far end of the court.

"Can't they clear up that mess?" he murmured. "It's a disgrace." And without another word he strode off through the main gateway.

No sooner had he disappeared than Stuart Somerville's door opened and the blond young cricketer emerged. He was wearing a bathrobe and his hair was dishevelled. I noticed that his usually candid eyes were slightly bloodshot and his cheeks were pale beneath their light coat of tan. The roses and raptures of a heroic yesterday had been re-

placed by the lilies and languors of this tragic morning.

"Tough luck on Hank," he said, anticipating our question. "He was a good egg, too, even if he did prog me last night. Mrs. Bigger has just been expounding on his virtues though I must confess that she has discovered them rather late in the day. Cripes, but my head is splitting! I need a cold tub."

He moved off towards the bathrooms and Comstock, who was still in his dressing gown, started to follow him. For a moment I stood alone, engrossed with my own thoughts and speculations.

"Well, Mr. Fenton," said a voice at my elbow, "there are certain aspects of this case which will no doubt be a source of great personal satisfaction to you."

I wheeled round to find myself looking into Horrocks' paternal countenance.

"How come?" I asked, puzzled.

"You needn't look so surprised about it," Horrocks said with a smile.

"But I am," I maintained.

"My error," Horrocks hastily said. "I thought you would deduce the result."

"How so?" I asked.

"Well, sir, if Hankin was killed after midnight, that certainly eliminates some people who couldn't possibly have been in the college at that time, like as you might say, sir. And if they weren't guilty in this case, it looks as though they probably didn't have anything to do with Baumann's death either. My guess is that one person was responsible for both."

"It certainly lets poor old North out," I said guardedly. "If ever anyone had a cast iron alibi for his movements last night—a police inspector, a keeper and an irreproachable undergraduate . . ."

"Come, come, Mr. Fenton," he smiled genially, "you know I wasn't referring to Bill North."

With this cryptic utterance he left me and started to disperse the newspaper and cameramen who clustered round the Master's lodge like vultures hovering over a piece of carrion.

It was a few moments before the full implication of his remarks began to dawn upon me. Now how the deuce did the old fox know that I had just been feeling relieved that Camilla was now cleared at last? For at 12:30 last night she was undoubtedly safe in her bed at Newnham.

And if he knew that I was relieved, he must have guessed that I had been worried about her previously. Well, the only explanation was that Herbert Horrocks had missed his vocation; he ought to have been on the halls in a thought-reading act.

Sometimes the man was decidedly uncanny.

## Chapter XI



CAMBRIDGE, apparently, is proof against all outward chances and inward circumstances. It goes serenely on. Dynasties may totter, currencies may crash and a sick world may writhe in post-war agonies. But undergraduates still attend or cut their lectures.

They plan their rags, they hold their debates at the Union and they continue to exchange rather painful persiflage on religion, sex and communism over pale tea and improbable cakes from Matthews. So it has been, so it shall always be.

Yet I don't mean to imply for one moment that Cambridge is heartless or indifferent. On the contrary, it is as awake and aware as any place in the world. Having been in existence since the 13th century, it has seen cataclysms, wars, heresies, revolutions and schisms. Long years of wisdom and experience have taught it to realize the ephemeral nature of things temporal.

Even a sensational murder within its gates, therefore, could not be expected to clog the wheels of its eternal machinery. One unfortunate college servant had been killed in a small corner of one of its smaller colleges. Hankin undoubtedly was dead; but some 7,000 members of the university were still living. Life—and Cambridge—must go on.

But it did come as rather a surprise to me when, after leaving the somewhat vitiated atmosphere of All Saints Court, I went out into King's Parade and found that a rag was in progress. Saturday morning at noon is the classical time for Cambridge rags, and this one now seemed like the return to normal after a crisis or comic relief following a period of tragedy.

And it was one of the most amusing and elaborate rags I had ever seen. Apparently it had originated out of a recent debate at the Union. The subject of this debate had been—*That this house deploras the growing influence of women in the activities and management of the University.* The motion had, surprisingly for Cambridge, been lost. The house obviously was far from deploring the growing influence, etc. Something had to be done about it. Hence this rag.

The streets were lined with undergraduates who stood with bowed heads in postures of mock mourning, as a hearse was pulled slowly by. The coffin bore the inscription in large black letters the *last Cambridge male*. Following the hearse was a group of plain, intellectual students, dressed in severe

feminine garments with spectacles on the tips of their noses and dizzy women's hats perched on their heads. They bore a banner with the legend *Cambridge dons of the future*.

Close on their heels was a carefully picked party of pretty youths dressed in the most alluring feminine garments. Each one carried a heavy chain to which was attached a large, hairy-chested football hero, clad in the sackcloth and ashes of desperation and slavery.

Now and again these wretched victims would raise a tattered standard on which votes for men had been scribbled and then defaced by daubs of mud and stains suggestive of rotten eggs. Each movement towards insubordination produced a twitch of the chain from the dainty undergraduate at the other end of it. To an American like myself the whole allegory seemed almost too true to be funny.

The traffic of Cambridge was obliged to come to a complete standstill or go by another street. Proctors and bulldogs rushed madly about in a kind of impotent frenzy. The policemen, however, looked on with a kind of blasé resignation, though one unfortunate young "Robert" was foolish enough to try to make way through the crush for a passing Rolls Royce. He was promptly deprived of his helmet and sat on by a number of stalwart undergraduates.

The feminists swept all before them. And, as I looked at those young men dressed as women, a sudden inspiration struck me. How clean-cut, how clear their profiles were. Might it not have been some such vision which I saw last Monday on the darkened stairway, the night when Julius Baumann was murdered?

How easy for a nice looking young man to put on the clothes of a woman, drench himself in perfume and thus baffle a chance observer as to his sex. Any one of the boys dressed as girls for this rag—boys who were well-known for their histrionic achievements in the Footlights and C. U. A. D. S.—could have walked down Piccadilly in female attire without attracting undue attention. Supposing one or the other of them had had a spite against Baumann?

AND this led me to think of the undergraduates in All Saints who might conceivably have passed as women. There were plenty of them. Even the people on "A" staircase were not beyond suspicion on this score. Lloyd Comstock was small, dark with regular features and unobtrusive extremities. He played female parts occasionally at the footlights.

Somerville could have been made up to look like a remarkably handsome Amazon, and even Michael, though he was what was

technically known as broad in the beam, might have passed muster in an age where the sexes are almost indistinguishable anyhow. The whole thing had given me furiously to think.

The procession had now paused outside the gates of Corpus. The horses that drew the hearse had seated themselves in the middle of the road and were mopping their sweaty faces. The "last male" was sitting up in his coffin and eating a doughnut.

The female dons were regaling themselves with large tankards of beer, while the beautiful undergraduates had produced enormous pipes at which they puffed uncomfortably but ostentatiously. The muscular athletes, still in chains, were producing knitting from their reticules and talked to one another in mincing voices.

The proctors were still running up and down, scribbling names and colleges on their pads, and trying to combine an air of insouciance with the I-was-young-myself-once expression which usually means that someone is going to get sent down the next day.

Finally hunger, more potent than police or proctors, dispersed the crowd and the undergraduates betook themselves lunchward. The rag was over but it had left me with the germ of an idea.

After I had made up for my scanty breakfast by a substantial lunch in Hall, I found myself strolling idly about near the college notice boards with a crowd of other undergraduates. The words, "Lenox Scholarship" caught my ear and I pushed myself forward to see the announcement round which people were clustering. The results of the examination had been posted. A brief glance showed me that Michael Donwell Grayling was the successful candidate.

With one whoop of delight I rushed over to "A" staircase, barely stopping to pick up a typewritten, unstamped envelope which lay on the bottom step addressed to me. Michael was in his room. Inhibitions, petty misunderstandings and all other complications were thrown to the winds. I ran up to my friend and almost embraced him in my enthusiasm.

"Michael, you old horse thief," I shouted. "Thank the Lord something decent has happened at last and now you won't have to leave Cambridge to teach smelly little boys. Oh, you egg, you bright-eyed boy. . . I'm tickled pink, I'm tickled skinny."

Michael looked at me soberly. There was a smile on his face but his eyes were still tired—desperately tired.

"Thanks awfully, Hilary, old man. It's ripping of you to be so pleased. I'm bucked about it myself too, of course. But—"

"But nothing. The thing is over and done with. You've won it and there are no buts."

"There is always the thought of a dead man's shoes and the knowledge that I could never have got it but for a terrible accident."

"Accident my foot," I said tactlessly.

"Exactly," he replied quietly. And then we both looked at each other awkwardly and did not speak, though each knew what the other was thinking.

Whether or not an explanation might have been immediately forthcoming, I cannot say, for at this moment the door was thrown open and Lloyd Comstock and Stuart Somerville burst in.

"Hail to Grayling," cried Stuart, who appeared to have recovered from his hangover. "All hail to Grayling who has brought honor to a much dishonored staircase. May his children be many and may his daughters be as the polished corners of the temple."

"Oh, shut up," said Michael, blushing furiously as Comstock shook him by the hand. "Polished daughters indeed! Can't you wish me anything better than that, Somerville?"

"All right, then," cried the irrepressible Stuart. "They shall make you a fellow of the college and you shall write dull text-books like Fenton Senior on Torts. I can see those endless marginal notes—*emendavit amplissime Grayling*."

"And each year you'll get grimmer and grimmer like the Merry Monocle, and finally you will discover that Livy didn't write Livy or that Ovid never had a love affair in his life. You will be famous and then, when you are old and full of years like the Master—"

"That reminds me," interrupted Comstock, "the Old Pill has invited me to tea tomorrow."

**T**HE nickname, by which the undergraduates of All Saints referred to their venerable Master, Dr. Martineau Hyssop, was not as derogatory as it may sound to American ears. The word "pill" is less a term of reproach in England than it is in the States. In this instance it was merely a play on the purgative nature of the Master's last name.

"I've been asked, too," said Michael, "but I've been wondering whether, in view of Hank's death and all the consequent fuss, he will expect us to go."

I tore open the envelope which was in my hand. It was an engraved card announcing the fact that the Master of All Saints requested the pleasure of Mr. Fenton's company to tea on Sunday, the following day.

Stuart had walked over to the door, thrown it open and was examining the landing outside with mock seriousness.

"What on earth are you doing, Somerville?" I asked.

"Just trying to see if I couldn't pry the staircase loose from its moorings and take it along with us tomorrow. Apparently he

wants the whole show, woodwork, banisters and all. His invitation is wholesale. Even I have been asked, and he actually got my name right!"

Somerville had never forgiven the Master for invariably mixing him up with some obscure and pimply freshman. Another grievance was that, having once seen him in the court, talking to the captain of the college boats, Dr. Hyssop had said kindly, "Well, well, are you two gentlemen up for Littlego?" The mistake had obviously rankled.

"Well, I think we ought to call up his secretary and ask if we are really wanted," said Comstock. "The Old Pill is a pal of your dad's, Hilary. Why don't you do it?"

"All right," I answered. "I'm going up the river this afternoon and I'll do it on my way out. Coming along with me, Mike?"

Michael nodded.

"Okay. I'll call for you in about ten minutes."

I went up to my room, where Mrs. Bigger was wearily cleaning up the remains of my breakfast things.

"Oh, me 'ead, me pore 'ead," she complained. "There's 'eads in my family, Mr. Fenton. We run to 'eads, so to speak, and mine is splitting like it was caught in a nutcracker."

"Well, why not sit down and rest a few minutes and take off that heavy hat," I suggested mildly.

She started and looked at me as though I had made an improper suggestion, as indeed I unwittingly had.

"Mr. Fenton," she said solemnly, "seeing as 'ow you are a Hamerican you couldn't be expected to know that there is a statue—a university statue—which says that no bed-maker shall remove 'er 'at in the presence of the young gentlemen. Why, sir, it would cost me my position if I was so much as to take out one of me 'atpins." The perennial ostrich plumes quivered in asseveration.

The idea that the sight of Mrs. Bigger's braided tresses might be a snare and a temptation to the hot-blooded undergraduate was too much for my gravity. I laughed weakly as Mrs. Bigger subsided on to my sofa. And indeed she looked completely worn out, poor soul.

Without a word I poured out some of the brandy I had used that morning for Comstock and handed her the glass. Before taking it, she looked furtively around her as though she expected Hank's admonitory ghost to pop out of the gyp cupboard and summon her to renewed activity.

"Sich goings on," she said, sipping appreciatively at my Hennessy. "Sich goings and carryings on I never did see, not in my long years of bedmaking. But I knew as 'ow it was coming, Mr. Fenton. All last week I had

a feeling in me bones that something was going to turn out wrong.

"Three times I dreamed of me great uncle Alfred, 'im as was took with the tapeworms and ate six full meals a day without puttin' any more flesh on 'is bones than there is on a clothes prop.

"Louisa," 'e sez, 'I sees a dark cloud 'anging over you, Louisa. Trouble, trouble and no rest for them weary feet of yours!' And now with all Mr. 'Ankin's work for me to do and me arches falling fast, Mr. Fenton, I sometimes wish as 'ow it was me that was in me grave where there's no more stairs nor slop pails."

I made consoling noises in the back of my throat.

"And I wasn't the only one as knew that there was trouble coming, Mr. Fenton. There was Mr. 'Ankin, too. Unhappy and wretched 'e was, sir, ever since last Monday night when Mr. Baumann was took. Brooding, too, and frightened.

"Why, he even forgot to empty Mr. Somerville's coffee pot two nights running and he didn't draw Dr. Long's curtains to keep the sunlight off them precious books of 'is. He wasn't hisself, sir. I could see it with me naked heyes though he never did say nothing, not being one to talk. And now 'e's took too. Well, well . . ."

With this dreary reflection she wiped her mouth with her duster and walked a trifle unsteadily from the room. I ran downstairs and found Michael waiting for me. As we passed the porter's lodge, I called the Master's secretary to ask whether, in view of the recent tragedy, we should be expected to attend the tea party tomorrow. She replied that the invitations had been issued at eleven o'clock that morning and the Master had expressed himself as particularly anxious that the smooth running of college activities should not be interfered with.

Then Michael took me on the step of his bicycle to the upper reaches of the Cam where the boats were busy practicing for the May races. The banks of the river were crowded with brightly dressed boys and girls who were cheering lustily for their favorite crews.

As the boats cut through the water behind the willow trees, Michael and I talked and ragged as we used to in the old days. We called out rude things to the boats that were planning to bump All Saints off the river.

We cheered the Varsity crew as it rowed majestically by, like a proud swan followed by a flock of ugly ducklings. We acted as though nothing serious or tragic had ever happened in our lives. We were like a couple of kids out on a spree who know that there is trouble ahead of them when they get home. But today we did not care.

And so neither of us even mentioned the topic that was uppermost in both our minds.

## Chapter XII



THE next day was Sunday and a memorial service was held in the college chapel for Baumann and Hankin. All Saints attended in a body, from the youngest pantry boy to the Master himself, who sat through the service like a figure hewed from the granite of another era.

The Dean preached a moving sermon and when, after the benediction, we all remained standing for Chopin's Funeral March, I am sure that there was not a soul in the chapel who was not mindful of his mortality and grateful for the gift of life which had been snatched so suddenly and so tragically from these two.

I say that the whole college had assembled to pay a last tribute to its dead. Fellows, agnostic and theist—servants, male and female—undergraduates, Jew and Gentile—all were there. And when I looked round at that sea of faces, I felt a sudden clutching at my throat as I reflected that someone in that vast congregation must be harboring within his breast a terrible and guilty secret.

That someone had knelt in the sight of God with a lie on his lips. He had stood with bowed head in mock reverence towards those whose death he had caused. And no thunderbolt from heaven had descended upon him. But I did not envy him his conscience.

When I came out of chapel, I found that even the weather seemed to reflect the general atmosphere of gloom and depression. It was a cold, dreary day. A thick Scotch mist hung tenaciously over Cambridge and it showed no sign of clearing when I presented myself at the front door of the Master's lodge at four-thirty in the afternoon.

To my surprise it was Mary Smith who answered my ring. Though her face now bore the masklike composure of the perfect English servant, the traces of yesterday's ordeal were still apparent. I muttered a few conventional words of sympathy as she ushered me into the Master's study. Dr. Warren, Michael, Comstock, Somerville and one or two other undergraduates were already seated stiffly around in a semicircle.

Dr. Hyssop greeted me in his usual affectionate manner, asked after my father and started to chatter so amusingly that his gaiety soon infected his guests and made them forget themselves and the dreary weather. He

had evidently decided that the watchword of the college should be "Business as usual during the crisis."

But while we were waiting for tea to be brought in, Dr. Hyssop managed to create a few minor crises in his own inimitable manner, doubtless with a view to diverting our minds from the major one which occupied us all. He began by warmly congratulating Somerville on his success in winning the Lenox Scholarship.

When the slight flutter caused by this remark had subsided, he turned to Michael and said that he had heard of his wonderful performance against the M. C. C. on Thursday. He went on to remark that he considered All Saints to be singularly blest in its blues and brains.

Though he did not mention the fact, it was also singularly blest in having the most original Master in Cambridge. For, during the past eighty or ninety years Dr. Martineau Hyssop had abundant opportunity to perfect the art of saying the right things to the wrong people.

His little mistakes had made him almost as famous as the much misquoted Dr. Spooner of New College, Oxford. It amounted almost to genius. But he dropped his little bricks so charmingly that they seldom, if ever, fell on sensitive corns. A great deal is forgiven a man who has lived through four or five generations and retained his interest in the things that go on in the world around him.

Still more must be forgiven a man who has always been careful never to say the wrong thing to the right person, which, when all's said and done, is a very different kettle of fish. Whatever his eccentricities, the Master of All Saints will always be my ideal of the perfect type of perfect English gentleman.

The ball of conversation had started to roll smoothly along when Mary appeared bearing a stand of cakes, some hot buttered toast and the diminutive sandwiches which grace the British teatable more as an ornament than to satisfy hunger. These she placed in front of the fire. The Master was now busy talking to two very young freshmen, one of whom I recognized as the son of the Governor of Senegambia. Both of these youths were hugging the fire in their jejune shyness and embarrassment.

"A fire is pleasant on a day like this," remarked our host genially. "But it has been so warm recently I didn't think that even my old bones would need any more artificial heat this term."

"It has been very warm," shivered the son of the tropics.

"But not so warm as where your father is," said the Master turning politely to the other youth, whose father had been dead for years.

AT this juncture Mary appeared again, bearing a large silver teapot which she set reverently on a side table. There was the sound of a distant bell ringing.

The Master rose from his seat and started to busy himself over the tea for which he was so famous among the connoisseurs and which he never allowed anyone but himself to pour. He had barely filled one cup when Mary entered again, this time from the direction of the front door. She announced in clear, matter-of-fact tones:

"Miss Camilla Lathrop."

Dr. Hyssop put down the cup which he had just poured and turned towards the door. I looked round in amazement, hardly able to believe my ears or my eyes. Camilla, dressed in soft, dove-gray, was moving hesitatingly across the room towards her venerable host.

In her left hand she held an engraved invitation card like the one I had received yesterday. Her expression showed that she was not to be damped by the fact that she was the only woman present, but I could tell that beneath this outward poise and assurance she was as nervous as a girl of sixteen.

The Master had bustled over to greet her.

"Delighted, delighted, Miss—Miss—?"

"Lathrop," supplemented Camilla.

"Of course, of course. So nice of you to come, Miss Haytop. Won't you sit here?"

The rest of us, who had been strolling round the room and examining the Master's interesting souvenirs, were then called over and introduced by perfectly good names. The only thing wrong with them was that they did not happen to be our own. After the introductions our host resumed his interrupted occupation of pouring out tea, leaving Dr. Warren to entertain Camilla.

As I watched these two together and noticed the warm, cordial way in which the tutor talked to her, I could not resist a sudden stab of unreasonable jealousy. Though old enough to be her father, he was still a very attractive man. It was obvious that she liked him and also obvious that they were not meeting for the first time.

The glorious profile was glowing with animation and response as she listened and replied. The dark blue eyes were full of intelligent, almost affectionate understanding as they met the serious gaze of Dr. Warren. I was curious and perturbed.

It was a relief when the teacups began to circulate and the Master went back to his place on the couch by Camilla's side. The senior tutor took a cup of tea from Mary's hand and gave it to his neighbor. The nicest looking of the freshmen passed the toast with overenthusiastic alacrity.

Camilla was the pivot around which everyone's solicitude revolved. So far she had not given me so much as a fleeting smile. My

nose was completely out of joint, but not to such an extent that I could not appreciate the calm dexterity with which she was handling what would have seemed an exceedingly difficult situation to nine girls out of ten.

Why on earth had the Master elected to invite her to an entirely male tea party? It was obvious that he had never met her before. He did not even know her name! Such a thing must be unique in the annals of an anti-feminist university. It was as fantastic as Alice's sojourn in Wonderland—as improbable as her tea party with the Mad Hatter!

Suddenly the tutor looked up and caught my eye fixed jealously upon him and his neighbor. An extraordinary expression passed over his face. He rose from his seat.

"Mr. Fenton," he said, with his nearest approach to a smile, "we old men must not monopolize the only lady present. Perhaps—"

I glared at him sulkily without moving. But Stuart Somerville had caught the remark and quickly rushed forward to fill the place where at least one angel had feared to tread.

"You are not drinking your tea, Miss Claythorn," I heard the Master say. "You must appreciate my tea, you know. John Masefield told me the other day that I am the only man in England besides himself who really understands the finer points of tea. He got this for me on one of his cruises!"

Camilla raised her cup to her lips. "It has a remarkable bouquet," she said, smiling, "like—er—almond blossoms. I love China tea."

As she spoke, the Master leaned forward so suddenly that he almost upset her cup. Very gently he laid one of his wrinkled old hands on Camilla's wrist. A look of pain and bewilderment had come into his mild blue eyes.

"My dear young lady," he said earnestly, "you mustn't, you really must not talk about China tea to me. No self-respecting fellow of a Cambridge college ever serves China tea to his guests. To a real tea lover the Chinese product is nothing more or less than decadent dishwater. Now this comes to me specially from Ceylon. It is the finest hand-picked leaf, packed in lead boxes."

Poor Camilla blushed furiously. "I'm sorry," she murmured.

EVERYONE had stopped talking and was staring at her with a mixture of sympathy and pity. Dr. Warren, evidently suspecting an uncomfortable situation, started a loud conversation in another corner of the room. No one paid much attention to him.

The Master had now taken the cup from her hand and was shaking a finger at her playfully.

"Don't be distressed," he said. "It's quite natural that you—" Here he sniffed delicately

ly at her cup with the flair of a connoisseur. "Why," he cried suddenly, "you are quite right! They must have made some mistake in the kitchen because it is China tea. God bless my soul!

"Warren, here is a young lady who knows more about tea than I do. She is that *rara avis*, a woman with a palate—a discriminating sense." He looked at her almost affectionately. "You never learnt anything as useful as this at Girton, my dear. It is a gift—a heaven-sent gift!"

The unfortunate Camilla looked more uncomfortable than ever. Her eyes sought mine in mute appeal, but I had no help to offer. Surely the old man must be in his dotage. The atmosphere of the room was stiff with nervous embarrassment. Dr. Hyslop, however, seemed carried away with enthusiasm for his subject.

"Will you please ring the bell, Mr. Somerville. Thank you."

The maid appeared.

"Mary," said the Master with mock severity, "through some unfortunate error, China tea has been served today. I thought the household knew that I never use it myself or offer it to my guests. Will you please take the pot away and bring in some of my best Ceylon."

"It is the same as what you always have Sundays," said the girl, blushing apologetically.

"Please do as I say. Cook must have made a mistake. You can take away the cups too."

Mary took the teapot and collected the cups on a tray. I noticed, however, that the Master retained his own and Camilla's. I also managed to take a hurried sip before my cup was removed.

Now, I am only an American and, as such, cannot be expected to understand the finer points of so essentially British a beverage as tea. But I had been in England almost a year and I did know China tea when I tasted it. As a matter of fact I prefer it, though nothing would have induced me to admit my Philistinism at this moment.

At any rate, I was certain that this was no more China tea than it was bathtub gin. Whether from India or Ceylon I was not prepared to swear, but it was not from China—no, definitely no! Again I asked myself what had come over the Master. Was he just making a beautiful gesture to cover Camilla's mistake and his own subsequent lack of tact?

Was he deliberately putting himself in the wrong for some obscure reason of his own? Or was he merely dropping a few more of his characteristic bricks, oblivious of the fact that he was causing a most unpleasant social contretemps?

He had now risen from his seat to place Camilla's cup on the mantelpiece. "Now you

shall have some real tea, Miss Dunlop," he said smiling and bowing slightly in her direction. "It will be a great privilege to hear the opinion of an expert on my own particular brew." He turned toward me: "And while we are waiting, Hilary, there is something I want to show you. A letter from your father—over here."

I followed him to his desk in the far corner of the room, noting, as I did so, that Stuart lost no time in switching on Camilla the full battery of his charms.

The Master started to fumble among some papers in his desk. He beckoned me closer. "Listen to me very carefully," he whispered. "Can you hear me, Hilary?" I nodded my head. "Well, in a few minutes I am going to clear the room. I am going to be rather impolite and get rid of my guests. I have a reason."

"Go when the others go, but stay with the young lady. Ask her to return here immediately and come with her. Is that clear?" I nodded again. He handed me a blank sheet of paper. I looked at it with assumed interest. "Here is the letter," he said out loud.

"Very, very amusing," I replied, staring unseeingly at its blankness.

We then rejoined the group by the fireplace, where the Master started to talk as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

"I am sorry about this little mistake," he said brightly, "but we must stick by the British Empire. We must uphold the great industry of which your father is such a worthy pillar."

This remark was doubtless intended for the son of the Governor of Senegambia. It was addressed to Lloyd who is the only son and heir of a notorious industry known to the public as Comstock's "Comfy-Knicks." The idea of the Master's trying to support this particular article of merchandise was too much for our sense of gravity. A little ripple of merriment ran round the room.

Dr. Martineau Hyslop looked from one to the other. His face had puckered up into a thousand wrinkles like that of a child who is about to cry.

"I'm sorry, gentlemen, but I've—I've—" Here he sank into a chair and his white beard fell forward on his chest. "One of my attacks," he murmured. "Warren, Warren—" His voice died away and we all sprang forward. The smiles faded from our faces. Dr. Warren was the first to reach his side.

"Stand back, please," cried the tutor firmly.

The Master raised a valedictory hand. "I think perhaps—"

**D**R. WARREN nodded towards the door. We were quick to take the hint and left the room one by one to collect outside.

"Poor old Master," said Somerville to Camilla, but I caught her arm and pulled her gently away before she had time to reply. She looked at me in bewilderment.

"Hilary Fenton," she said, "I believe everyone in All Saints is completely dotty. I have never in all my life—"

"Listen, for God's sake listen to me, Camilla," I whispered earnestly. "Something happened in there just now. I don't know what, but there was a crisis of some sort. You and I have got to go back. That attack of the Master's was a put-up job. We must shake the others somehow. Get me?"

"How about finishing this jolly little tea party in my room?" said Stuart with a collective look round him. "I don't serve decadent dishwater." His cornflower eyes rested questioningly on Camilla.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but I have got to get back to Newnham. Mr. Fenton is going with me. Thank you all the same."

We moved off in the direction of the Backs and waited until the little group had dispersed from the vicinity of the Master's lodge. Then we snatched our opportunity and returned.

We found the Master and Dr. Warren in the study where we had left them. Dr. Hyslop had completely recovered from his "attack" but his face was exceedingly grave. A cup of tea was on the table in front of him. Dr. Warren picked it up and passed it to me.

"Mr. Fenton," he said seriously, "you are not a scientist, I know. But perhaps you can tell me what this cup smells of. It is the one which was given to Miss Lathrop a short while ago."

I took the cup from his hand and sniffed at it wonderingly. I have already said that I am peculiarly sensitive to odors. There was no mistake about this one.

"Peaches and almonds," I said unhesitatingly.

The senior tutor nodded. "And do you happen to know what chemical smells like bitter almonds or the kernel of peach stones?"

I searched back in my memory to the early scientific groundings of my prep-school days. A sudden hazy recollection made cold beads of perspiration stand out on my forehead.

"Prussic acid. Oh, my God!"

"Potassium cyanide. Exactly. That is my guess, too, though we cannot be certain until we have made an analysis." Dr. Warren's voice was calm and level. "Unless I am very much mistaken, someone has deliberately tried to kill Miss Lathrop with one of the most deadly and virulent poisons known to man. And that someone would have succeeded had it not been for the extraordinary dexterity of the Master."

Camilla had subsided into a chair and was

staring at the two men in horror.

"Poison me!" she gasped.

A warm expression of sympathy spread over Dr. Warren's usually impassive face as he looked at her. Once again I had the feeling that there was something between these two—some secret which they shared against the world.

"I'm afraid so, my dear," said the Master gently. "We can come to no other conclusion. Here is my own cup. It is harmless. Hilary, I saw, drank some of his, and the others—well, they are still alive, I presume."

"Good God!" I cried, "this is the most ghastly, the most awful—" I was shaking with rage and excitement.

"Please, Mr. Fenton, keep control of yourself," cut in the cool incisive voice of the tutor. "I have telephoned to Inspector Horrocks. He will be here immediately."

"And I owe you a profound apology," said the Master to Camilla. "Throughout the whole course of my life I have never deliberately caused embarrassment or distress to a lady. I regret to say that my manners this afternoon were execrable.

"But there was nothing else to be done. I knew there was something the matter with your tea as soon as you spoke of almond blossoms. I did not wish to make a scene in front of the young men. I confess I acted clumsily but it was for the best."

"I don't know how to thank you, Master," said Camilla simply. "But you must forgive me for asking you just one question. Why did you invite me here today? When your card came this morning—"

The Master had risen from his seat and was looking closely into her eyes. "My dear young lady," he said at length, "it has been a pleasure—a great pleasure and privilege to meet you. I know I am old and absent minded, so I am sure you will forgive me when I tell you that I did not invite you here today.

"The invitation which you received was sent without my knowledge. Indeed, before this afternoon, I had never heard of you in my life. But I sincerely hope that this is only the beginning of a long and pleasant friendship."

### Chapter XIII

FOLLOWING the surprising announcement of the Master's there was a moment of general consternation. It was broken by the arrival of Inspector Horrocks. His florid countenance and large, tangible presence seemed to bring us back from the fantastic realms of Jabberwocky. It was as though an errant rav of

sunlight had filtered through the fog which darkened the day. His very feet inspired fresh confidence. Here, at last, was something solid and real.

The detective listened with intelligent interest while Dr. Warren outlined the salient points of the affair. His expression, however, was serious and perplexed as the tutor concluded:

"Of course, I cannot be positive that this cup actually contains prussic acid. It is remotely possible that the whole thing is some kind of unfortunate lark. That the tea had been tampered with is obvious. Pending an analysis, I think we may assume that it is potassium cyanide."

"I'm prepared to take your word for it, Colonel," agreed the Inspector, as he held the cup to his nose. "Smells familiar to me, too."

He turned to the Master. "And now, sir, if you've no objection, I think I shall take down the names of the people who were here today."

Dr. Warren and I supplied the necessary information which was promptly transferred to the inspector's notebook. "Funny how we always seem to get back to 'A' staircase," he murmured, as he scanned the list. "Thank you. Now perhaps Dr. Hyssop would be kind enough to give me some idea of what happened when he poured the tea."

The Master passed a hand reflectively over his beard. "As I recall it," he said slowly, "I had poured out one cup only when the young lady was announced. I was rather up—no, upset is too strong a word. Shall we say that I was pleasantly surprised? I put down the cup and walked across the room to shake hands with my unexpected guest. That took me, at a rough estimate, about two minutes."

"And the others? What were they doing?" asked Horrocks with deference.

The Master looked at me helplessly. "Did you notice what they were doing, Hilary?"

"Yes, Master. While you were welcoming Miss Lathrop the rest of us were wandering about the room, looking at your pictures and souvenirs. Everyone must have gone past that side table where the cup was."

The inspector turned toward me with interest. "You mean, Mr. Fenton, that anyone could have taken this opportunity to doctor up the tea?"

I nodded.

"If that is so," interposed Dr. Warren, "then we have no proof that it was Miss Lathrop for whom the poisoned tea was intended. No one could possibly know that this particular cup would get to her."

Something in the tutor's tone annoyed me to an unreasoning pitch of acerbity. "In America," I commented drily, "it is the custom to serve ladies first. Miss Lathrop was the only lady present. Anyone who was ac-



It was as though an errant rav of

customed to polite society could have figured that she would be the natural person to receive the first cup that was poured."

The inspector looked at me with an expression of amused approbation. "And was it the maid who gave her the cup?" he inquired.

Dr. Warren screwed his monocle into place and looked his ex-sergeant squarely in the eyes.

"No, I regret to say that I myself handed it to Miss Lathrop. The maid passed the back of the sofa with two cups in her hand. I took the nearest and naturally passed it on."

"H'mm. Then we have no actual proof that it was the first cup to be poured that the young lady received. In view, however, of her extraordinary invitation, I think we may take it that she was the intended victim." The inspector paused and cleared his throat. "Did you leave the side table again while you were pouring out, Dr. Hyssop?"

"No," replied the Master. "After I had left Miss Lathrop next to Dr. Warren on the sofa, I poured out the rest of the cups and went back to join them."

"And what happened next?"

"The next thing I remember is that Dr. Warren left the sofa and offered me his seat," I said as casually as I could.

"Did you take it?"

"No. Somerville went over and sat by Miss Lathrop. She was between him and the Master when she made her remark about the China tea."

"Yes, yes," agreed the Master, "and such a fortunate—such a very fortunate remark it was. As soon as she mentioned almonds, I knew that something was amiss."

**H**ORROCKS puffed out his enormous moustache. "And did anyone else come up to Miss Lathrop at this time—that is, near enough to slip anything into her cup?"

"Several people came over to pass her the toast, the cakes or something of that sort," replied Dr. Warren, "but I did not see anyone standing near her for any length of time."

"I see. Then as a matter of actual fact, we cannot be at all certain as to when or how the poison was administered," commented the inspector. "One thing seems to be certain, however, and that is that no one acted in a manner to create suspicion. Am I right?"

There was no reply. Horrocks then turned to Camilla, who had been sitting still throughout the whole conversation with her chin resting on one hand. Once again she reminded me of a marble figure, magnificently impervious to all that was unpleasant or unlovely in the world around her.

"Perhaps, Miss, you would be so kind as to tell me something more about this strange invitation you received."

"I really have very little to tell," she said

reluctantly. "I am as completely mystified as the rest of you. I was in my room at about twelve o'clock this morning when a girl called Dorothy Dupuis brought me Dr. Hyssop's card. She said she had found it in the hall."

"I asked the porter but he did not know anything about it. It had obviously been delivered by hand—and quite recently. Of course, I thought it a little odd and that the invitation should be for the same day, but I didn't attach much importance to that. I was so pleased and flattered to be invited by Dr. Hyssop. I've often heard of him, naturally, and I wanted to meet him."

"So I came, and you know the rest. With the exception of Mr. Fenton, whom I know slightly, there was no one here whom I had ever seen before. I know Mr. Somerville by reputation, as a cricketer, of course. I saw him play the other day."

"And—and Dr. Warren—" She broke off and looked earnestly at the serious faces in front of her. "But it is quite inconceivable that anyone should have wanted to poison me. Nor can I imagine why anyone should have tried to get me here with a forged invitation."

"Do you happen to have that card with you, Miss?" asked the inspector.

Camilla produced from her bag the small square of cardboard, engraved with the All Saints crest, which informed her that the Master requested the pleasure of her company to tea at four-thirty o'clock that afternoon. The name, Miss Camilla Lathrop, had been filled in by typewriter, also the time and the date of the party.

"It is one of my regular cards," commented the Master. "I have a number of them in my office. But, as a rule, my secretary fills them in by hand."

Horrocks nodded. "May I see your typewriter, please, sir?" he asked.

We followed the Master into his secretary's office. He pointed to the machine on the desk. "It's an old model Underhill," he explained, "but that won't be much help as almost every typewriter in the college is the same make and the same—er—vintage."

"I don't know anything about those that are privately owned, of course. But the college bought about a dozen of these some three years ago when the company either changed their model or went out of business. I remember that we got them very cheap. Isn't that so, Warren?"

The senior tutor nodded.

**B**Y this time the inspector had slipped a piece of paper into the machine and tapped out "Miss Camilla Lathrop. Tea. 4.30" several times.

"It's the same type," he remarked, after he had compared it with the invitation card. But it might have been done on this or any

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of the Underhills that had a black ribbon. None of these letters is broken or defaced in any way so as to distinguish them. I will examine some of the others later. I suppose," he added with some diffidence, "there is no chance of your secretary's having made a mistake?"

"My secretary," replied the Master, "is a very efficient young woman. She does not make mistakes, and she would not dream of sending out a personal invitation that had been filled in with the typewriter. I gave her a list of names yesterday morning. I invited all the people who live on 'A' staircase for reasons of my own.

"Indirectly they have all been involved in the two terrible tragedies that have occurred lately. I wanted to see them for myself. But under no circumstances would I have invited a single young lady to a party composed solely of men. In some respects I am old-fashioned.

"Or, perhaps, by now the circle has gone round and I am in fashion again. It has made so many revolutions since my young days." He looked around him with a bland smile. "However, I will call my secretary, if you like—just to make sure."

He lifted the receiver and gave a number. A clear, efficient voice replied:

"Indeed, no, Master, I always fill them in by pen. Yes, you gave me the list at ten-thirty yesterday morning. There was no lady's name. Most of the young gentlemen were on 'A' staircase. Yes, I am quite sure. Goodbye."

"Well, that leaves us, like you might say, just about where we were before," commented the inspector, as we returned to the Master's study.

Dr. Martineau Hyslop seated himself in his favorite chair and held his shrivelled hands out toward the fire. The benevolent countenance was clouded and weary. He looked cold and pinched.

"I simply can't believe it," he whispered. "In all my long life—at my own tea party—poison—a charming young girl!" the old voice drifted away dispiritedly.

The military tones of Horrocks cut through his dying monologue. "There's one thing we ought to look into, Colonel, and that is what you might call the source of supply. I wonder, now, where anyone could get hold of prussic acid here in the college."

The tutor seemed to reflect for a moment. "There is—or was—some in my science laboratory," he said at length.

"Where's that?"

"It's just off my rooms on 'A' staircase. I give my lectures there sometimes and use it for practical demonstrations with my students. Hankin used to look after it and keep it clean. It was one of his regular jobs. As a

rule, he kept the place locked, but it's just possible that since his death—" A sudden thought seemed to strike him. "I think I'll go over and see. I won't be a moment."

Dr. Warren left the room and returned in a few minutes carrying in his hand a half-empty bottle labeled "Potassium Cyanide (KCN) poison." The lines around his mouth looked deeper than usual.

"There doesn't seem to be much doubt as to what you call the source of supply, Horrocks," he said grimly. "At the beginning of last week this bottle was full. I have used none since that time. It looks as if someone had been helping himself pretty freely. And he's taken enough to kill several people."

The inspector took the bottle and removed the stopper. As I moved toward him, I noticed an odor suggesting oil of bitter almonds.

"I wouldn't smell that too closely," warned the tutor drily. "It gives off hydrocyanic acid gas, which won't do you any good.

"There's not much need to do that," answered Horrocks, as he restoppered the bottle. "It's easy enough to tell now what was in that cup!" He addressed the Master in grave tones.

"Dr. Hyslop," he said quietly, "I've seen enough to be convinced that someone in this room today deliberately attempted to commit a murder." A look of understanding passed between him and Dr. Warren. He resumed. "Both Dr. Warren and I have a very good reason to believe that Miss Lathrop was the intended victim. I think that she herself—"

"I know what you mean," interposed the Master gently. "But isn't even that rather fantastic?"

"The plain facts are before you, sir," said the inspector, pointing to the cup and bottle. "Now there remains the important question of motive."

CAMILLA had jumped up from her chair and was looking anxiously around her. When she spoke, her voice was low and tense. "Don't!" she cried, "please don't go into that. Not here—not in front of me—or Hilary. He doesn't know about it. And I've had all that I can stand. I want to go—please."

Everyone was looking at her compassionately. I would never have believed that Dr. Warren's face could be so gentle. He came over and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Yes, yes, Miss Lathrop," he said. "We all understand. You are quite right. It would be better for you to go. Mr. Fenton, I am sure, will be glad to go with you. And, perhaps, if you feel like it, you would come to my room in about an hour's time. There are one or two things—yes?"

Camilla turned blindly towards the door. Then, as if she had suddenly remembered her manners, she went over to the Master and

held out her hand.

"Goodbye, Dr. Hyssop," she said simply, "and thank you. I'm sorry to have been such a nuisance to you."

The Master took her hand between both of his and looked up into her glistening eyes.

"My dear," he said softly, "I would not have had this happen for anything in the world. Now that I know more about you, I shall make it my duty to protect you from any unpleasantness that may come to you through no fault of your own. I want you always to look upon me as your friend.

"You have acted splendidly throughout the whole miserable business. If what has happened today, if the two tragic events of the past week have undermined my belief in human nature, you have helped to restore my confidence in the essential goodness and courage of my fellow beings.

"Will you come and see me tomorrow so that I can tell you how much I have admired you—not only for your conduct today but for other things, too? At about four o'clock? You can bring my young friend, Hilary, with you, if you wish. And now, good-by, my dear. Good-by and God bless you."

He accompanied us to the front door and we passed out into the misty atmosphere of the court. I took Camilla's arm and my eyes sought hers.

"Let's go up to my room," I whispered. "You are tired and overwrought. I won't worry you to talk. You shall just listen to me."

"All right, Hilary Fenton," she agreed wearily.

When we reached "A" staircase both of us instinctively looked back toward the Master's lodge. By some strange trick of vision we could see that Dr. Hyssop was still standing by the front door. Only his white beard was visible, but that seemed to pierce the fog like a beacon light—a patch of pure whiteness against the gray obscurity of the day. The sight comforted me strangely.

"He's like a guardian angel," I murmured.

"He's my idea of God," said Camilla with decision.

## Chapter XIV



THE first thing I did, after returning to my room, was to light a fire and draw the curtain. It was a relief to shut out the cold, dreary day—to anticipate the night by creating darkness artificially—to watch the firelight flicker over Camilla's pale face and to feel that I was

shut in with her, warm and cosy in a private

little world of our own.

It was now too late for tea and toast. A bottle of brandy (much depleted by Comstock and Mrs. Bigger) was all that I had to offer. Camilla was adamant in refusing, so I was obliged to commit what to all right-minded Englishmen is the only unforgivable sin—to drink spirits before the official setting of the sun. I felt, however, that the occasion demanded something drastic. The Master's tea party had reduced me to a state of pulp.

After I had completed my medicinal potations, I went across and sat on the sofa by Camilla. I took her cold hand in mine and for a few minutes stayed perfectly still without daring to speak. I could not tell whether she was even conscious of my presence. But I did not care. For the first time in my life I was completely happy.

Suddenly, however, she sat up with a little start and looked at her wrist watch. A slow smile spread over her face.

"Only forty minutes before I have to go down to Dr. Warren's rooms. You'd better hurry up and ask some of those questions, Hilary Fenton. I know you're bursting with them."

She had not withdrawn her hand.

"I haven't any questions to ask," I whispered, "except one; and I'll go on asking that all my life until you give me the right answer."

Almost imperceptibly she shook her head, but there was a promise in her eyes. All the thoughts and images she had evoked in my mind during the past week now rushed to my lips for expression.

"Camilla," I said, as our faces drew nearer together, "I wish I could talk with tongues. I would tell you that you are like all the best things I've ever seen or heard in my life. You make me think of the light of a sunset reflected on the breast of a seagull—the dogwoods in Valley Forge—the opening chorus of Swinburne's *Atalanta*—the smell of mignonette—"

But Camilla had pulled her hand away and was covering up her ears.

"Please, Hilary Fenton," she cried. "I can't bear that kind of thing now. It's very beautiful and you are a dear, but not now. I want you to be absolutely sincere with me.

"Anyone who had a little imagination or—" here she smiled almost roguishly—"or who happened to be reading English literature, could talk that way. But just at this moment I'm lonely. I'm miserable. I feel an outcast. I want solid ground under my feet. I want—I don't know what I want, but it's not poetry."

I rose from the couch and stood in the Englishman's favorite attitude with my back to the fire. We looked into each other's eyes without smiling.

"Speech, my dear," I said at length, "was

given us so that we could conceal our thoughts. I talk a lot of nonsense, I know. But I can't hide the big, fundamental and ridiculously simple things that I am thinking. You know perfectly well that I love you and want to marry you. I've always loved you—years before I even met you.

"It's not the springtime nor just a young man's fancy. It's the real thing. I'll admit frankly that you haven't made me miss any meals, except possibly my tea today, but you've kept me from looking at or thinking of other girls for a whole week. You've given me something I've never had in my life before."

"But, Hilary, that's nothing—nothing at all. It's happening in Cambridge all the time. Boys and girls are attracted to each other. They make fine speeches. They fall in love at lunch over lamb chops on Monday and they separate forever on Thursday afternoon over walnut cake and sundaes at Fuller's. Life's been pretty grim for me. I can't play. I can't even pretend. Lots of people have talked that way to me. Men do it to almost any girl who isn't positively hideous."

"In other words, Miss Lathrop, you think it's just that Graeco-Roman profile of yours that I am in love with. That Doric nose; that Byzantine chin. Well, let me tell you I'll love you even better when you have seven chins and seven babies—and I hope they'll all be mine. The chins and the babies, I mean.

"I love you in spite of the awful mackintosh you wear, that unspeakable bicycle you ride. I love everything about you. The Devonshire cream in your voice—the little mousetrap which goes snap, snap in your mind—your manners to older people—and the fact that you can sit down and stand up without showing your—"

■ PAUSED and looked at her. To my surprise her eyes were wet like forget-me-nots under the water. She was making frantic efforts to get at a handkerchief.

"Camilla, darling," I cried, and as she lifted her mouth to mine, I could feel her trembling like a child. For awhile we remained thus without speaking.

"And now," I cried exultantly, "the only thing we have to decide is whether you can bear the thought of living in America—for a while, at any rate. Philadelphia isn't a bad place and it has the advantage of being quite close to Atlantic City."

She held up her hand to silence me. "No, Hilary, I—"

"All right, we'll live in England—in Timbuctoo—in Guatemala, I don't care. I've got a little money of my own. I'll buy a shack in the Andes or in Alaska."

Camilla had now risen from her chair and

walked across the room. She took a cigarette from the box on the table and puffed it gloomily. Presently she spoke:

"Don't you think you've talked long enough, Hilary Fenton? Your nonsense is very charming, my dear, but it's about your turn to listen to mine for awhile. And mine is anything but charming—nor is it nonsense, unfortunately. Of course, if I married you, I wouldn't care where we lived. In fact, I'd love to get out of England, but I'm afraid I am not going to marry you."

"Then you are not going to get any peace this side of the grave," I cried excitedly.

"I am not going to marry you," she said, throwing her cigarette into the fire, "and I'm not going to marry you for the simple reason that you . . . are . . . not . . . going . . . to want . . . to marry . . . me."

Her face had gone strangely and suddenly gray. She walked back to the couch. I tried to laugh reassuringly but there was a cold, clammy feeling in the pit of my stomach. I started to speak.

"Hilary," she cried, "do please listen to me and don't try to be funny any more. I do want to talk to you seriously. I had hoped you would ask me questions about today—about what happened at tea—why the Master said what he did. It would have made it so much easier."

"Consider all the questions asked," I replied gently.

"Then you really want to hear about me? You know so little, you see, and—and I don't want to be dramatic about it—but there is so much."

I nodded. "Begin with the birds and the flowers, my dear. I bet you were a beautiful baby."

As I lit a cigarette and arranged myself comfortably on the couch, I felt her hand on my sleeve.

"No," she said, "I won't begin at the beginning. I'll come back to that later on. First of all I want to tell you about my family life. About my father. You've heard of Lathrop and Lathrop of Bristol?"

I nodded again. "Yes, Dorothy Dupuis told me your people were as rich as Croesus and that King George took it as a personal affront when you refused to be presented at Court."

Camilla smiled. "How funny it sounds when it's put that way. As a matter of fact, Hilary, my father—that is, Mr. Lathrop—is rich, but it doesn't mean anything to me. He has cut me off. I don't get anything from him at all. I don't even go to him in the holidays. Fortunately I don't have to because my mother left me a small income when she died.

"Last year when I was twenty-one, I went to my father and told him that my ambition was to go to Newnham. I was tired of leading a so-called social life in Clifton. I hate the

place with its silly women quarrelling like cats over their wretched threepenny bridge—with its interminable crocodiles of school girls. Have you ever seen a crocodile, Hilary Fenton?"

"No, but I'm like Hamlet in that I'm prepared to eat one—under certain circumstances, of course!"

"Well, when I presented my ultimatum, my father told me that he had other plans for me. I knew just exactly what those plans were and we quarrelled. He is obstinate and cold. He can see no point of view but his own. He has never cared about me particularly except as an instrument to promote his own particular schemes. Finally I asked him to give me at least one good reason why I should not go to Cambridge with my own money. It was then that the storm broke."

CAMILLA paused and looked at me anxiously. I pressed her hand.

"This is hard to say, Hilary Fenton. You've got to be very sympathetic or I can't go on." I squeezed her hand again and raised it to my lips. She turned her head away from me and continued, addressing the far corner of the room.

"Then Mr. Lathrop—I can't call him father—lost his temper with me completely. He called me a charity brat, a waif, a—oh, I don't know what he said, but I learnt then, for the first time that I was not really his daughter. That Mrs. Lathrop, whom I had adored, was not my real mother. I had been adopted by her after the death of their own child.

"Her money, so he said, had come to me under false pretences. The name of Lathrop merely covered the shame and disgrace of my own family. I was nothing but the daughter of a criminal—a notorious homicidal lunatic. In short, Hilary, I am not Camilla Lathrop at all, I am—my real name is . . . is . . . Corinne North."

She had turned toward me and her eyes were looking searchingly into mine as though she was trying to bore a hole through my brain. It was one of those moments when the fate of a lifetime—two lifetimes—hangs in the balance. I threw my arms about her.

"My dear, my dear," I stammered, "as if I cared about that. You are you and that's all that really matters. Besides, Corinne North is a beautiful name. It's much prettier than Camilla Lathrop. I love you all the more. I don't give a damn about your family. When all's said and done, only God can make a family tree and I'm rather proud of yours. I've met your father. He's a dear. I like him. I'd be delighted to have him for a father-in-law. Now, don't cry, darling."

I wiped her eyes and after a moment she continued.

"But quite apart from the tragedy of my

father, there were other reasons why he—Mr. Lathrop—did not want me to come up to Cambridge. He told me that he had been given to understand that I had a brother up here. He did not wish us to meet each other and revive the old family scandal.

"William North, as perhaps you know, had two children. One of them was adopted by the Lathrops—that was myself. The other was a boy about a year older than I. His name was Jules. He was adopted by a rich South African farmer named Baumann."

I sat up suddenly. "Great heavens! Then Julius Baumann was your brother. Oh, you poor kid!"

SHE nodded. "Yes, he was my brother. As I told you before, I met him when I first came up to Cambridge. I sought him out of my own free will and against Mr. Lathrop's wishes. But he need not have worried about anything coming of it. I found that poor Julius was terribly sensitive about his parentage. It seemed to prey on his mind all the time.

"That was why he was always so anxious to pass for a real South African of Dutch extraction. I believe he hated me for reminding him of—well, at any rate, we agreed that we had better keep apart. You see he was firmly convinced that his—my father was a desperate criminal and a dangerous maniac. I could not agree with him."

"He was wrong on that score," I cried. "William North is a scholar and a gentleman if ever I saw one."

"Well, whatever the truth about father, I realized that it was impossible for Julius and me to be friends. I never saw him again until the day I met you. After that Blake lecture I happened to see a newspaper and read that William North had escaped.

"I hurried round to Julius' rooms. I found him in a dreadful state. He was convinced that father would try to do him some mischief—that he would be involved in some hideous catastrophe. Also, he worried about our mother."

"Your mother? Is she alive?"

"Yes, and I believe she lives somewhere near Cambridge. After the trial she went to Canada with another man. Julius wouldn't tell me anything more about her except that he promised to provide for her financially. I don't even know what name she goes under, but I imagine she has sunk pretty low, poor thing."

"I bet the letter I posted on Monday night was to her," I remarked. "It had money in it. I wish I had looked at the address, then we might be able to trace her. I saw only B-R-I-D-G-E-S on the envelope. I thought it might be the name of a place; I see now it was probably just part of *Cambridgeshire*."

"Anyhow, I'm glad you did post it. Poor Julius was worried to death about her and about himself. You see, he was sure that my father had some sinister purpose—"

"His only purpose was to get into a decent library and look up some sixteenth century books."

"Yes, in my own mind I've always been sure of his innocence. But you can understand now what a terrible shock it was to me when you told me that Julius had been murdered. Suicide would not have surprised me much—he was in such an unbalanced state of mind when I saw him last Monday—but murder! You see, I didn't know. I couldn't be sure."

"You poor, poor kid," I murmured. "It must have been hell. I see it all so much more clearly now than I did before. You have explained such a lot of things. But I do wish you'd tell me where you went that day after you left Baumann's rooms. I hung out of the window for half an hour just to see you cross the court."

The shadow of a smile passed over Camilla's face for a moment, then she said seriously:

"I went into Dr. Warren's rooms. He was my father's greatest friend here in All Saints. He knew about me and Julius. I wanted to ask him about my mother, but he knew nothing of her. He was awfully kind. He said he'd let me know if there was any news. He still believes in my father."

"Yes," I said gently, "he believes in him to the extent of sheltering him in his rooms and giving him clothes and money. You know, Camilla, I am practically certain that your father was on the staircase the night that Baumann was killed. Of course he had a perfect alibi for the time of Hankin's death, but—"

"Oh, he didn't do it," cried Camilla, "I'm sure he didn't do it. There is someone else—some stranger who hates us all. Someone who knew about Julius and me and who hates us because we are Norths. It was this same person who killed both Julius and Hankin . . . Julius because he hated him and Hankin because he knew too much . . . the same person who put prussic acid in my tea this afternoon."

"It was the man who spoke to Hankin in the court the night he was killed. They haven't found him yet, but they will, dear. He must have been at the tea party today. The field is getting narrower and narrower. In the meantime, you have got to take care of yourself. I only wish I could protect you against this invisible enemy. You mustn't trust anyone. I don't even want you to go down to Dr. Warren's rooms."

She glanced hurriedly at her wrist watch. "Heavens, I'm late now. I must go. I'll see

you tomorrow afternoon at the Master's. Apparently he knows the worst about me too. In the meantime—"

"In the meantime, I shall be loving you even more than ever. I don't care who or what you are. If ever you doubt me, remember that I loved you even when I thought you had taken the law into your own hands with regard to Baumann's death; I loved you when you packed me a wallop on the jaw. I—oh, Camilla, you darling."

For one moment I held her in my arms. "Till tomorrow," she whispered, "and thank you, Hilary, thank you for being so decent about everything."

The next thing I knew was that she had gone.

As I heard her footsteps on the staircase, I reflected on several things. Her story had been a revelation, of course. It had thrown light on several dark places. It had altered several possibilities and perspectives; but it had not brought the main problem any nearer to solution.

As a matter of fact, when I came to think it over, I realized that it had merely made things more diabolically complicated than ever.

## Chapter XV



THAT evening, after leaving Hall, I decided that I must gird up my mental loins and get to work on the new complications which Camilla's story had brought to light. The problem now presented a very different aspect.

Whereas, in the first place, it had seemed as though the available facts were insufficient to make a complete picture, I now felt that there was not enough room in my jigsaw puzzle to fit in all the pieces that I had in my possession. And, at the same time, these facts were singularly lacking in balance or cohesion.

There were, for example, a surprising number of potential murderers—a fair sprinkling of opportunities for them to commit their crimes—but, as far as one could see with the naked eye, no earthly or unearthly motive why anyone should wish to kill three perfectly harmless human beings.

But Camilla had brought out two important points. Money and family relationships were involved—factors which, if properly juggled around and manipulated into place, might easily produce the missing motive. It was to the hunting of this elusive snark that I decided to dedicate myself that evening.

I would begin with William North. He, I felt certain, was the cornerstone of the whole miserable edifice. His crime, tragedy or moment of madness was the focal point about which all things revolved—the *fons et origo mali* from which had sprung these ramifications, past and present. And since I could not study William North in the flesh, I would read up about him in my father's book, which I could borrow from Stuart.

Like the answer to a maiden's prayer, Somerville accosted me just as I reached the foot of "A" staircase. He was magnificently dressed and bound, so he said, for a quiet game of poker in Jesus.

"Somerville," I said casually, "there is a little book which I seem to have heard you mention from time to time. I'd like to borrow it from you, if you don't mind. The name, I believe, is *Famous Second Trials*. I think it—"

"Sure thing—you bet—okay, gate," replied Stuart, giving a tolerable imitation of Jerry Colonna's talkie accent. "It's bully reading for a quiet Sunday evening at home. By a wise guy called Fenton. Come into my shack."

He produced a battered copy of my father's volume and turned over its pages with mock reverence.

"I may have to charge you extra for the illustrations," he said solemnly. "Here, for example, is the portrait of the artist as an old man—Fenton *ipse*, complete with wig and robes."

My father had been portrayed with enormous sidewhiskers, large spectacles and flowing garments which were reminiscent of the Winged Victory. His appearance had not been improved by the addition of a large wasp, wart or wen to the extreme tip of an extraordinarily aquiline nose.

"My father," I remarked drily, "is fifty-two years old. He is clean shaven and looks rather like the late Sir Gerald du Maurier. He never wears a wig and I know of no wasp in the world that would have the impertinence to sting the end of his nose. Otherwise your resemblance is excellent."

"Thank you, thank you, Fenton. And how is this for a portrait of Oscar—naughty Mr. Wilde in the act of bursting?" He turned to a picture so horrible that it defies description. "Or, this one of William North dragging his victim down 'A' staircase by her hair?"

"These are my jewels." He paused and lifted his eyes piously heavenward. "Oh, Fenton, Fenton, had I but served my God with half the zeal that I put into these illustrations during lecture hours, I would not have been ploughed in my Mays next month."

I took the book from his hand. "Thank you, Stuart. You are quite an artist. Now run along to Jesus. I will treat this master-

piece as it deserves."

He put a restraining arm on my sleeve.

"No, no, my Hilary. The drains are sensitive. They too have their little feelings. And, by the same token, how is the Old Pill?"

"Better, I believe. His attack was not so serious as it looked."

"Well, he gave you an opportunity to walk your baby back home like a perfect little American knight—without the K. And say, when you are through with that wench, you might—"

But I did not stop for more. With a hurried good night I ran up to my rooms, sported my oak and prepared to spend a profitable hour or two with the only one of my father's books that I had ever opened.

FOR some little time I waded through a morass of legal technicalities which were just so much Sanskrit to me. Finally, however, as I read on, a picture of William North began to emerge—a picture which in no way resembled the realistic sketch drawn by Somerville in the margin of the book.

I saw a man who had been tried and condemned to death for a crime which he undoubtedly had committed. I saw him fighting what looked like a losing battle after the case had been sent back for retrial, due to some technical misdirection to the jury.

I saw how his friends had stood by him—how they had sworn to his insanity, his unbalanced genius, his nervous temperament which, at the time of the crime, had been superimposed on a state of definite ill health. I saw the astuteness of his counsel in using the man's weakness to strengthen his defense.

I saw how it was possible to juggle slightly yet delicately with the impervious bulwark of the English legal system. I saw the shadow of the gallows gradually begin to fade—to be replaced by the walls of the insane asylum. Even the stiff, textbook phraseology could not altogether rob the case of its drama.

So much for North. But now it was not he alone in whom I was interested. My father had thrown into relief other aspects and other personalities. I was struck by the evidence of Dr. Reginald Warren, then a young man who had just received his fellowship at All Saints.

I was amazed at the coolness with which he had declared his own best friend to be temporarily insane and consequently not responsible for his actions. I was interested in the measured testimony of Dr. Martineau Hyslop, Master of All Saints, who, in his own conservative manner, did as much as anyone for his young colleague. I could see Cambridge presenting a united front against the invasion of its sacred precincts by a hideous chimera.

The figure of Mrs. North was hazy, but I

studied it with particular care. At the first trial, it seemed, she had been present with her two infants (Camilla's first public appearance, I reflected bitterly) obviously with a view to gaining for her husband the sympathies of the jury. At the second trial, which took place some months later, she had been absent, as my father put it, "for family reasons."

On the other side of the picture, however, there was the family of the girl whom North had killed. By a strange coincidence her name had happened to be the same as that of one of the greatest comediennes of her day—and perhaps of all days—Marie Lloyd. This was possibly one of the factors which had made the case of such wide popular appeal. The vindictiveness of the Lloyd family struck me particularly. "Blood for our blood" was written in every line of the testimony they gave. They were, as far as I could see, unbending and implacable.

Such, briefly, were the facts and figures most intimately connected with the North scandal. The rest is common knowledge and as well known, even to the layman, as the retribution which finally overtook such arch-criminals as Crippen, Landru and Smith. But with these three, their misdeeds had terminated more or less decently upon the gallows.

With North, it seemed, the evil he had done lived after him—to break out twenty years later like some malignant cancer in the lives of his children. Where in this tangled history of the past could I find a motive to account for these present tragedies?

The most obvious and immediate conclusion, of course, was that the dead girl's family might still be harboring against the North clan a spirit of revenge and hatred—an Old Testament vendetta reaching down to the second and third generation. But why?

North had suffered. He had paid for his crime in full. What was there to choose between death on the gallows and the death-in-life of the asylum? And Marie Lloyd had been in her grave for a long, long time. Her parents were probably in their graves, too. At any rate it was certain that they were not up at Cambridge.

Was it reasonable to suppose that they had bequeathed to their children or grandchildren the undying spirit of hatred towards the Norths? Had this fire smouldered for twenty years, to break out at last on "A" staircase? Revenge without profit in a so-called Christian era? Was that a motive to be taken seriously? Surely there is a limit to human vindictiveness.

**B**UT Mrs. North? That dim figure conjured up all sorts of sinister possibilities. She suggested innumerable motives. It was

a known fact that she had benefited through the death of her son Jules, alias Julius Bau-mann. Camilla, too, had money of her own. And—here a fantastic notion crossed my mind—Mrs. North had been a barmaid, so often a first step towards becoming a college bed-maker.

Mrs. Bigger had been a barmaid—Mrs. Fancher's husband owned a public house. Was it possible that Mrs. North had not gone to Canada at all—that she had stayed in Cambridge, nursing her secret schemes against her own flesh and blood? No, the idea was altogether too wild and far-fetched. She would have been recognized immediately by Dr. Warren, the Master—anyone who had happened to be present at North's first trial.

She would have been the first person suspected by those who knew. She was a marked character, a branded sheep. As the murderess of her son and the would-be murderess of her daughter she was out of the question. But as I sat there with the book on my knee, I began to play more and more with the idea of Mrs. North. I turned over the pages and read every reference that was made to her.

Suddenly my eye caught once again that phrase—"Mrs. North was absent from the second trial for family reasons." The words fascinated me. It was the only sentence in the whole chapter which seemed to be lacking in the frankness and lucidity which marked my father's textbook style. I read it over again and again.

Then all at once, there flashed into my mind an idea which was eventually to prove almost my only real contribution to the solution of the case. What were the family reasons which could keep Mrs. North from so important an event as the second trial of her husband?

I could see my father nervously shuffling his feet at the breakfast table when my mother asked him some question which involved either the seamy side of human nature or the biological functions of life. Into the phrasing of this one sentence I read paternal embarrassment and paternal delicacy. In short, Mrs. North must have stayed away because she was expecting another baby!

At last light seemed to be dawning on me in all directions. Immediately my interest shifted from Mrs. North to the problematic person whom I now began to call North junior in my mind. The son, presumably, of William North, born, as one might almost say, posthumously to his wife. This son, conceived in shame and despair, gestated during this frightful period of his mother's life, delivered into a world which rang with his father's notorious name.

The other North children, adopted as they were immediately after the tragedy, might well have escaped the taint. But North Junior had been born out of the very bowels of the

tragedy itself. Anything might reasonably be expected of such a son. The gall and wormwood that had been bred into the very bones must some day come out in the flesh. He, too, was a marked sheep—but branded secretly with the black mark of God rather than of man. He could run with the flock unnoticed.

And apart from his fearful heredity, there would have been other, more material reasons, why North junior might wish evil to his brother and sister. Supposing he had been adopted by someone less prosperous than the Lathrops or the Baumanns? Or supposing he had followed the devious fortunes of his mother.

Would not the comparative affluence of Jules and Corinne naturally rankle in his twisted mind? Would he not perhaps hope to inherit some share of the personal fortune which had come to them? Legal quirks aside, was he not one of the next of kin—the logical person to share with his mother any money that might be left by his brother or sister on their death?

"On their death"—and why not, therefore, hasten on that death? I could picture North junior scheming it all out in his brain—that brain which combined the inherited brilliance of a great scholar and the cunning of an ambitious barmaid. "Hasten on their death!"

First Jules, his older brother, then Hankin who had seen or heard something that he had not dared to tell. And then Camilla. After that—who knows?—perhaps his mother would fall a victim, unless she were conniving at his crimes and sharing the spoils. Nothing would have seemed impossible to North junior. I was beginning to visualize him more clearly now.

I could almost see him standing in the room beside me. He was taking corporeal shape before my mind's eye. He would, I reflected, be about twenty years old. He might be in his first or second year at Cambridge. He would be approximately the same age as, say, Lloyd Comstock, Stuart Somerville, Michael Grayling or either of the two freshmen who had been at the Master's tea party that day.

**Y**OUNG North was now beginning to obsess me and permeate me completely. I had—I must have met him, talked to him, possibly shaken him by the hand. He was in the college—he was an undergraduate at All Saints like myself. A serpent in the academic garden; a lunatic far more criminal and far more dangerous than his father.

I got up and started to pace the room. I must talk to someone about him, about his mother. I must talk to someone who knew. I should go mad if I didn't share my suspicions with someone. But who? Michael. No, he might be . . . Comstock? Oh God!

The Master? He was too old and had been sufficiently upset for one day.

Then suddenly I thought of Dr. Warren. I must see him. He knew more about the North family than I did—more about William North than my father—more, probably than any man living.

Breathless with excitement, I ran down to the senior tutor's rooms. I found him seated at his desk, working. He barely looked up when I entered.

"Dr. Warren, I must speak to you, I must—" I stammered out the purpose of my visit.

The eye without the monocle stared at me stonily. "Mr. Fenton, you are disturbing yourself unduly and you are disturbing me. I do not see any reason why you should take these tragedies to yourself exclusively. You have wasted a great deal of time lately in worrying over things that are being investigated by the proper authorities. And, incidentally, speaking of wasted time, I feel it my duty to remind you—as your tutor—that you will have examinations to pass next month."

"I wanted to talk to you, sir, as a human being, not as a tutor," I shouted, flinging respect to the winds. "I am taking things upon myself for a very good reason—because I happen to be in love with Camilla Lathrop—or, if you like it better, with Corinne North, the daughter of the man who was in your rooms, on this staircase, the night Jules North, or Julius Baumann, was murdered. I'm taking things upon myself because I am not prepared to stand idly by and see the girl I hope to marry killed in cold blood."

I knew that I was making myself ridiculous, that I was behaving like a second-rate boor, but I didn't care. Dr. Warren could send me down tomorrow if he wanted to, but tonight I was going to have my say.

Instead of saying it, however, I subsided into the nearest chair. Finally I recovered my breath and glared belligerently at the tutor. There was an expression of surprise rather than anger on his face. Suddenly he rose slowly from his seat and walked across the room towards me.

To my amazement he was holding out his hand. "Fenton," he said, and for the first time he dropped the ceremonious mister, "I apologize. You undoubtedly have the right to be interested. I did not know that you were even acquainted with Miss Lathrop. Perhaps you will allow me to congratulate you on your excellent taste."

I shook his proffered hand weakly.

"I apologize, too, sir," I said, "for bursting in this way. But I had to talk to you. I've just been reading my father's account of the North trial—" Here I explained as briefly as possible some of the results of my evening's

occupation. Dr. Warren listened attentively. Finally he spoke:

"Since you have been so frank with me about your suspicions, Fenton, I will tell you something about Monday night—something which I had hoped would remain a secret between Horrocks and myself. It will clear your mind on one point at least. When I returned to my rooms after Hall that evening I found William North here playing my piano.

"He was, as you doubtless know, one of my closest friends at college. My room was the logical place for him to come to in his emergency. We had a long talk, but I never left him alone the whole evening until—well, it would have been impossible for him to have killed Baumann even if the idea had entered his head. But you can take it from me that such a thought never occurred to him.

"Whatever his faults in the past, he is now as guileless as a child. He only wanted to get into a library. He could not bear being kept so long away from his beloved books. I promised to help him. For one moment I had the absurd idea of letting him see his children first—"

"Did Camilla come to your rooms that night?" I interrupted eagerly. "I thought I saw her on the staircase, but afterwards she disappeared. I followed her. She wasn't in the court, or the gyp's pantry or anywhere. So, unless she came in here—I must have been mistaken."

A SLIGHTLY puzzled look had come over Dr. Warren's face. "No," he said slowly, "she did not come into my rooms that night. My little scheme for having her meet her father never materialized because Grayling came down to say—but you know all that.

"After we had left the Master's lodge, I drove North up to the house of a friend of mine near Oakham. He has one of the finest sixteenth century libraries in the country. Immediately after the inquest I told Horrocks the whole truth."

"About his having been here that night and about Camilla?"

Dr. Warren nodded. "Everything," he said quietly.

This then, I reflected, was the reason for Horrocks' attendance at the cricket match—the explanation of his cryptic remark to me in the court on the day of Hankin's murder.

"But Mrs. North, sir? Don't you know anything about her? Doesn't she come into this?"

The tutor shook his head. "No, Fenton, but the inspector is looking for her. He's been working every night lately, poor fellow, and he's not leaving a single stone unturned. You can be sure of that."

"She couldn't be in the college—say, as a bedmaker?" I suggested nervously.

Dr. Warren smiled almost tolerantly. "Your

imagination is beginning to run away with you, Fenton," he said good-humoredly. "People like Mrs. North do not become—er—bedmakers. She was a beautiful woman—a born actress and, I am afraid, a born courtesan.

"We lost track of her completely after the trial, and we are not sure now whether she is in this country, though there is reason to believe that she is. Your discovery about her third child is—or may be—a valuable contribution. I had completely forgotten the circumstances. It is all so long ago."

I paused a moment, unwilling to voice the most terrible and, at the same time, the most concrete of my suspicions. "Dr. Warren," I said hesitatingly, "if young North is here at All Saints, and if he really did this thing—well, the field is very limited—there are only five or six undergraduates who—"

"That," interposed the tutor quickly, "is also being investigated. But—" he shook his head deprecatingly, "it all seems very unlikely. Somerville's father is so well-known, a baronet of impeccable standing; Grayling's is a rector in a small Gloucestershire village; Mr. Comstock, as you know, is a manufacturer of—er—garments.

"There is hardly likely to be anything in the family history of those boys which would not bear the closest scrutiny. But, as you say, it is conceivable that young North may be an undergraduate here. I shall speak to Horrocks tomorrow. I am very glad you came to me. And now—I'm rather busy. If you will excuse me. . . ."

As Dr. Warren accompanied me to the door, he stopped and looked at me for a moment with a curious gleam in his eyes.

"You've gone into this matter rather deeply, haven't you, Fenton?" he said quietly. "You've thought about it pretty hard and, if I may be allowed to say so, fairly sanely. You are not your father's son for nothing. The legal mind, I suppose. Well, it helps, but remember it won't get you through your examination for the English Tripos next month. Goodnight."

But the night was not destined to be a good one—at least not in the conventional sense of the word.

For, as I left Dr. Warren's rooms and began to climb the stairs, I almost collided with the college porter who was puffing his way downwards like a steam engine.

"Oh, Mr. Fenton," he panted, "there's a gent at the gates as wants to speak to you urgent. He sez 'e can't come up; 'e's in a hurry, sir—a norful 'urry."

"But it's almost ten o'clock. Who on earth can it be?" I asked in surprise.

"A stranger, sir. Clean-shaven, talks with a kinda furrin accent and not so young as 'e was."

A thousand strange possibilities flashed through my mind as I followed the porter out towards the college gates. Who on earth did I know who was clean shaven and talked with a foreign accent—a middle-aged man? Could it, perhaps, be my father? William North without a beard?

Or was it—as it was the unknown person who had spoken to Hankin in the court on the night he was murdered—the sinister figure who had lurked behind the lilac bush awaiting his opportunity to strike? Was some startling adventure—some strange new revelation—in store for me?

I was not kept long in doubt. Under the large lamp that lighted the main entrance to the college stood a tall, thin man, closely wrapped in a fur coat. Even when he turned and faced me, I could not immediately recall where I had seen those sallow features before. Then, suddenly, I remembered. He was the man who had given evidence at Julius Baumann's inquest—the lawyer who handled his father's estate. His name—if I recalled it rightly—was Johann Van der Walt.

### Chapter XVI



THE lawyer advanced fussily toward me with his hand outstretched. Instead of looking at my face, however, his eyes were fixed on my wrist watch. It was two minutes before ten o'clock.

"Mr. Fenton," he cried with a pompous, rather foreign gesture, "you must forgive me for this unseasonable call—on Sunday evening too—but my business in Cambridge was urgent. And now I have to catch the ten-twenty up to town. There is a taxi waiting. Would it be too much to ask you to come with me to the station? We could, perhaps, talk in the cab undisturbed."

I noticed that, in spite of the fur coat and the season of the year, Mr. Van der Walt looked cold and pinched. He was shivering slightly.

"I should explain," he added, "that I am leaving for South Africa this week. That is why I am so anxious," he lowered his voice, "to settle my—er—business as speedily as possible. Something has come up which—"

The clock was beginning to strike the hour. It was now or never, I decided, as the porter bustled out of his lodge preparatory to closing the heavy iron gates.

"All right; I'll come. Wait a minute though. I'll get a cap and gown." I hailed an unknown youth who was hurrying to get into the college before the gates closed.

"Have a heart, Jim, and save me six and eightpence."

The young man threw off his gown with a dramatic flourish. "My name," he announced, "is Percival. I object on principle to the name of Jim. But I will overlook your inaccuracy. Here is my cap and gown. Kindly return same to Percival Fitzmonckton—C two."

"Thanks hoggish. I'm A one—Fenton's the name."

The clanging of the gate cut his rejoinder short and I joined Mr. Van der Walt in the waiting taxi. We passed through several narrow alleys and finally emerged into the almost deserted Trinity Street. It was not until then that my companion cleared his throat, blew his nose and started to speak.

"Mr. Fenton," he said, talking hurriedly and rather jerkily in his strange, throaty accent, "you must think my behavior is very odd, but, as I have said before, it is imperative that I catch the ten-twenty express to town. I had already waited ten minutes for you."

"That's all right, sir, but I'm sorry to have kept you waiting. I like a nocturnal taxi ride. But—"

"Yes, you may well say 'but,' Mr. Fenton. My only excuse for my—er—lapse from convention is that a rather extraordinary thing has happened—something which indirectly involves yourself. I should explain that I belong to the firm that handles the Baumann estate."

"Yes, yes. I saw you at the inquest. I remember you distinctly."

"Well, then, you will doubtless recall that Julius Baumann's farm and property reverted automatically on his death to a cousin of his father's. The settlement of that part of the estate will be very simple. I shall take it up next month after my return to Africa."

"There were, however, almost two thousand pounds to the young man's credit in his banking account not to mention some large withdrawals which he made just before his death. This money he could dispose of in any way he wished. Yesterday, to my surprise, I received through the post a document purporting to be Julius Baumann's last will and testament."

"It is written on college notepaper and dated last Monday—the day on which Julius met with his unfortunate accident. The legatee was a woman. She gave an address near Cambridge and asked if I could come to see her. She added that her present state of health did not permit her to travel. I was rather skeptical about the document, so I came in person to investigate."

Here he produced from his pocket a piece of paper. In the half light of the taxi I distinguished my own scrawled signature—H.

A. Fenton, All Saints College, Cambridge, and also the name of our unfortunate gyp. Try as I would, I was unable to read what was written on the rest of the paper.

"Now, Mr. Fenton, I am naturally anxious to know if this signature is authentic. I have been given to understand that the other witness, Thomas Hankin, is recently deceased."

"That's right and my signature is perfectly okay. Baumann got Hankin and me to sign it the day he died, though whether or not he was sane and in his right mind—"

"Thank you, thank you a thousand times, Mr. Fenton. If that is so, I see no reason why the will should not be probated immediately. It is a perfectly valid legal document. The legatee can establish her identity. I have come from her house just now."

"You've seen her—the lady?" I cried excitedly. "What is her name? Where does she live?"

The taxi had now drawn up outside the dreary stretch of sheds and platform which constitutes Cambridge railway station. As the lawyer got out, I noticed a canny, almost furtive expression on his face. His eyes had narrowed into tiny slits.

"That, Mr. Fenton, I am not at liberty to tell you—at least, not until after the will has been proved. I do not wish to seem churlish, but—in the interest of my client—the less undesirable publicity—" he waved his hand airily as if to dismiss my impertinent curiosity and scatter it to the winds of heaven. "I may take it you are prepared to swear to your signature, if necessary?"

"Why yes, of course."

**H**E HANDED the driver several crisp notes. "Kindly take this young gentleman wherever he wishes to go. You may keep the change. Ah! there is the express. I must run along. Good night, Mr. Fenton, and, once more, my apologies for disturbing you at this hour."

The fur coat disappeared down the platform. I turned to the youthful taxi driver, who was tucking the notes into his trouser pockets, a cheerful grin on his freckled face.

"Nice fare," I commented pleasantly.

The young man spat on his hands and rubbed them together as if to engage in a playful boxing bout.

"Well, I dunno. Been wiv 'im since the three-thirty down train. Waited for 'im an hour out 'house, too. Now, sir, where d'you want to be took?"

A brilliant, a perfectly scintillating idea flashed, crashed and hurtled through my tired brain. Mr. Van der Walt had undoubtedly come from the house of Mrs. North. He had refused to give me her name or address. But a taxi driver is a beast of burden. He is there to do what he is told: he is the nearest

approach to a bond-slave that modern civilization has left us. He would take me where I wanted to go without question.

I produced a pound note from my wallet and brandished it in front of his pleasant snub nose. "I'll give you this if you take me to the same address you took that gentleman. You can get there, I suppose?"

The driver's eyes were gleaming with an unholy light. "Blimey, gov'nor, 'op in, 'op in!" he said, and before I had time to arrange my thoughts or my emotions, I was being whirled through a part of Cambridge that is not in the guide books; down gloomy streets, dark by-paths and past mean, squalid dwellings. Finally we emerged into something that, for want of a better word, one might call the country. We drew up in front of a small whitewashed cottage with a thatched roof.

"Ere we are, sir, as Bertie said to Bertie." The driver produced a packet of Wild Wood-bines from his pocket and gave me a sly wink.

"Right. I shan't be long."

I walked up a little garden path, fragrant with rambler roses and honeysuckle. There was a light burning in one of the upper windows of the cottage. I knocked loudly. No reply. I knocked again, and this time I caught the sound of shuffling footsteps coming down the stairs within. A flicker of light appeared under the door. There was a pause while a bolt was drawn back and then I heard the clanking of a heavy chain.

Another long pause followed. In the stillness of the night I could hear my heart pounding against my ribs like the beat of a bass drum. The small hairs at the back of my neck were beginning to stiffen. I had a wild desire to turn and plunge into the waiting taxi. Only the thought of Camilla made me hold my ground.

Then, suddenly, the door was thrown open and I was blinded for an instant by the light of a candle held close to my eyes. A thousand strange possibilities flashed through my brain. Then, like a farcical anti-climax in a mystery play, I heard a familiar voice say, "By hall that's 'oly, if it ain't Mr. Fenton. Well, well, Lord love a duck, and me in dishably and wivout me 'at on!"

I was staring into the well-known face of my bedmaker. A rosy blush had suffused her cheeks and there was an air of embarrassment about her that was almost girlish. I was completely nonplussed. The sudden apparition of Mrs. Bigger (without her hat) was too much for me. I goggled at her foolishly.

"Good—good evening, Mrs. Bigger," I stammered. "I didn't know you lived here."

"Oh, this ain't me 'ome, sir. I jes' drops in occasionally to 'elp her, pore soul." She gave an upward and backward jerk of her head. "She's not long for this world. Me—"

Fenton, that she ain't. It's nothing as you could put your finger on exactly, but she's that wasted 'n frail. An' it's the ammonia as'll carry 'er off, sir, one of these fine days, same as it carried off me pore brother 'Aroid a year ago come Michaelmas."

"Can I see her?" I asked eagerly. "I've just left the lawyer and—and—there was a message—something he forgot. It's rather important."

**A** LOOK of suspicion and distrust flickered for a moment over the bedmaker's face. "I don't know as she'll see you, sir," she remarked doubtfully. "She don't see nobody as a rule. . . ." I had now produced two half-crowns from my pocket and slipped them deftly into Mrs. Bigger's palm. "But," she added brightening, "I can but arst 'er."

She went into the house, leaving me standing on the doorstep. I waited an interminable quarter of an hour. When the good Mrs. Bigger reappeared she wore the well-known hat with the ostrich plumes, and her deshabelle was modestly hidden beneath a voluminous alpaca coat, which conformed to the University regulations in that it was of a "subfusc color."

"Madame Nordella," she announced grandiloquently, "says she can give you ten minutes, Mr. Fenton. Step this way, please, sir."

I followed Mrs. Bigger up a narrow flight of stairs into a small upper room. A fire was burning in an old-fashioned fireplace. There were two candles on the mantelpiece and an iron bed in one corner. A woman dressed in a loose green wrapper was reclining in a large arm chair.

My first thought on entering this dimly lit room, was that its occupant could not possibly be the ill-starred Mrs. North, mother of Julius Baumann and Camilla. This woman looked young and beautiful. Her cheeks were pink and her mouth a vivid red, while her hair was the color of burnished copper.

As my eyes became accustomed to the partial obscurity, however, I saw that the color in cheek and lips was artificial, that her over-burnished hair was white at the roots and that there were deep lines around her mouth and eyes. But nothing—not even age, ill health or grease paint—could mar the splendid regularity of her features or the proud carriage of her head. The words of Dr. Warren—"a born actress"—passed through my mind.

Madame Nordella made a vague gesture in the direction of the door. "Thank you, Louisa; you may leave us alone now."

Mrs. Bigger shuffled out of the room. "I'll be trottin' 'ome, I reckon," she murmured. "Good night, me dear. Good night, Mr. Fenton. Now don't overtax 'er, sir. She's frail, very frail, and remember there's ammonia in

these damp, misty days."

As the door closed behind her, Madame Nordella gave me a charming, but not altogether convincing smile. "Well, Mr. Fenton," she said in the well-modulated voice of the stage, "won't you sit down? Mrs. Bigger tells me you are an American. Perhaps you have seen me play? I have toured America in—" she mentioned one or two musical comedies which must have been popular when I was still in the nursery. I shook my head.

She then proceeded to waste at least five of our precious ten minutes discussing stage matters in general, deploring the decay of what she called the "legit" and inveighing against the popularity of the cinema. I listened as politely as I could, but my eyes were wandering toward the mantelpiece, where I could see the photograph of a smiling girl whose features, even in that dim light, looked familiar to me. I reflected that Camilla must still have a place in Mrs. North's heart.

Apparently the former actress noticed my inattention. "But there was something special you wanted to say to me, Mr. Fenton? Some matter of business—something about the—er—will?" She started to cough and took a sip from the glass at her side. As she put down the tumbler, I plunged into the subject which was nearest my heart.

"No, no," I cried, "it wasn't about the will. I lied to Mrs. Bigger because I wanted to see you and that seemed the only way. You must believe me when I say I'm awfully glad the money is coming to you. I'll do my best to help if there is anything I can do. But I wanted to speak to you about something more important—a matter of life and death. Mrs. North . . ."

At the sound of this name she drew herself up in her chair. The marvelous gray eyes stared at me coldly. "My name is Madame Nordella, if you please, Mr. Fenton," she said with dignity. "It is obvious that—" A wave of the hand completed the sentence.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry," I stammered, "but really you can trust me. I know all about everything and I'm in love with your daughter. I've asked her to marry me. She's in great danger—terrible danger. I want you to help me. Someone is trying to kill her—just as Julius Baumann and Thomas Hankin were killed. An attempt was made on her life this very afternoon. She is threatened on all sides. She isn't safe a minute."

**T**HROUGHOUT this speech Mrs. North had been listening to me with her eyes closed. At last she opened them and passed a weary hand across her brow.

"Mr. Fenton," she said, "there is no need to tell you that such subjects are very painful to me. I have had to give up a great many things in my life—and one of them is the

guidance of my children. You say my daughter is in danger. I can well believe it. Cambridge is a dangerous place for our family, Mr. Fenton. I myself feel neither safe nor happy here.

"If you really love her you must get her away. I have always thought that she would be happier on the other side. With my influence over there I could easily get her into a good company. But she would come to Cambridge. Well, she must take her chance."

"I'll do my best to take her back to America with me," I cried eagerly, "if only she'll come. But, in the meantime, can't you give me some help in solving this terrible, ghastly riddle? Can't you tell me more about your family—something that might throw some light on this whole miserable business?" I paused and looked at her imploringly.

"Mrs. North," I cried at last, "I want you to tell me about your third child. I want you to tell me whether he is an undergraduate at Cambridge now."

Mrs. North staggered to her feet. "Mr. Fenton," she said in a strained, husky voice, "my son is dead. All my children have been taken from me except my daughter—and you know more about her, apparently, than I do. If you wish to enter into what would undoubtedly be a very unsuitable match from your point of view, you are free to do so. I have forfeited the right to interfere in the lives of my children. There's nothing else to be said. Will you be so kind as to go now."

She had fallen back into her chair and was reaching out a feeble hand toward the tumbler by her side. I handed it to her. "Thank you," she murmured. "Good night. Yes, yes, I shall be all right. Please leave me now."

I turned toward the door too dazed to speak. As my fingers fumbled with the handle I heard a faint voice from behind me. It was a cry from the heart—this time the cry of a woman, not an actress. "If you marry her, be good to her. Remember, she hasn't ever had . . . a chance."

I groped my way down the narrow stairway and out into the garden. The cool night air was like a benediction after that stuffy room. My faithful taxi driver was waiting for me. As soon as I appeared, he stubbed his cigarette on the curbstone and put it behind his ear.

"All Saints," I grunted, "and make it snappy. I must get in before midnight."

He certainly made it snappy.

After I had returned his gown to Mr. Percival Fitzmonckton, and refused his offer of a little game of Bovril, I walked wearily back to my room. I was too tired to think any more about the events of that extraordinary day.

Tired as I was, however, I could not fail to realize that, as far as useful information

was concerned, I had got precisely nowhere. The case was no nearer solution than it had been the day before yesterday. Only one point stood out. Mrs. North had told me that her son was dead. Well "dead" is a word that may be used literally or figuratively.

In any case, I had by no means discarded North junior from my mind.

## Chapter XVII



WHEN I awoke next morning I was conscious of a curious sense of elation. It was Monday, the first anniversary of my meeting with Camilla. So much had happened in this one short week, and yesterday, I reflected, as I shaved myself at the spotted mirror, only yesterday I had kissed her and she hadn't seemed

to mind. Of course she had promised nothing definite, but it was obvious that she didn't altogether loathe the sight of me. She didn't even seem to object much to my face.

I made grimaces at its soapy image in the looking-glass. I started to whistle and promptly cut myself on the chin. But I didn't care. Life, I observed profoundly, is like that. A whistle and then a cut—a moment of pleasure followed by a moment of pain—love and death. So it goes. So had the past week gone by.

When I entered my sitting room, shaved, washed and with a rakish piece of cotton wool saucily perched on my chin, I realized at once that all was not entirely serene in my modest establishment. The breakfast things were not laid. I could write my name in the dust of the mantelpiece. The ash-trays still bore the mangled butts of the cigarettes which had helped to wrestle with the problem of North junior.

Everywhere was lacking the evidence of Mrs. Bigger's loving touch. Since Hankin's death the poor bedmaker had worked valiantly at her double duty, but now her arches must have fallen once and for all. I yelled her name on every landing, but the old oaken beams of the staircase merely echoed back my words in mockery. Mrs. Bigger was nowhere to be found.

I was hungry and annoyed. Of course I could get my breakfast elsewhere, but I wanted particularly to hold a conference this morning with my ex-Egeria. There were a thousand questions that I had to ask her; but, first and foremost, I needed her assurance that my nocturnal taxi-ride had not been some strange form of ambulatory nightmare.

She alone could tell me whether I had indeed talked with Madame Nordella—or Mrs. North—in that stuffy little upstairs room. And she alone could elucidate some of those extraordinary happenings of yesterday which, in the clear sunlight of a May morning, seemed utterly fantastic and remote.

And Mrs. Bigger's proudest boast had always been that, despite the demises, layings-out and funerals with which her private life must have been positively cluttered, she had never—not once during her twenty years of bedmaking—deserted the inmates of "A" staircase. But now she had failed me in the hour when I needed her most.

"Frailty, thy name is Bigger," I muttered gloomily, as I finally sallied forth down the unswept and untended stairs. I perked up considerably, however, when I saw an unstamped envelope waiting for me on the bottom step. One glimpse at the writing caused my heart to give a hop, skip and a jump.

I had seen it before on the attendance list at the Blake lecture, but on that inauspicious occasion I had not had sufficient sense to attach it to its proper owner. Some instinct now told me that I was opening the nearest approach to a love-letter I had ever received in my life. and though it was not exactly couched in passionate terms, it made me very happy. It read:

Hilary Fenton, my dear, I've been thinking over what you said to me and what I said to you yesterday. I'm going to cut all lectures (even Forbes' on Blake—alas!) and do a lot more heavy thinking today. So please don't try to see me until 4:30 at the Master's. I'm going there at four as I want half an hour alone with him first. And after that I want some time alone with you.  
C. L.

P. S. I looked up Philadelphia on the map yesterday.

As I raised my eyes from the thirteenth perusal of this precious letter, I suddenly found myself staring into the thick underbrush of Horrocks' moustache. He looked more like Old Bill than ever—but now he suggested Old Bill after a week of shell-shocked nights in a far, far "better 'ole" than the Cambridge Police Station. The normal plum and apple of his complexion had changed to—shall we say pears and green-gages? There was no doubt about it. The man appeared absolutely worn out.

"Hullo, Horrocks," I remarked jauntily, "you look rather green about the gills this morning."

"At any rate I can still shave without cutting myself, Mr. Fenton," he replied a trifle absently.

I removed the telltale piece of cotton-wool from my chin, smiling. "Well, how are things going?" I asked with ill-concealed eagerness.

THE inspector's face had now assumed the secretive, self-important expression of one who is delivering an urgent telegram, the contents of which he will not disclose to any but the right person.

"On the last lap, sir, and just coming up the straight as you might say. At least, I think I know who was the last person to speak to Hank in the court on Friday night."

"Is that so? Well, I can see from your face that you are not telling, but you might let me know about the teacup. Has your analyst examined it yet?"

"Yes, Mr. Fenton. We had his report this morning. There was enough prussic acid in it to poison a young elephant, let alone a pretty young lady!"

I shivered. "My God, man, aren't you going to do anything about it?"

A flash—the nearest approach to anger that I had ever seen—appeared for a moment in his heavy, placid face.

"Do anything about it, Mr. Fenton! What do you think I've been doing night and day this past week? Staying home and playing rummy with the missus? Work, Mr. Fenton, and work as I needn't have done at all if my pals had been a little more open with me—a little bit more confidential like you might say.

"There wasn't any reason as I can see, sir, why you shouldn't have told me about that letter you posted for Mr. Baumann on Monday night. You could have saved me a mint of trouble there, Mr. Fenton, and you didn't do no good by your secretiveness. Indeed you might have done a great deal of harm—and harm in a quarter where you'd have least liked to do mischief." Here his voice rose a trifle and the plumlike bloom began to return to his cheeks.

"I didn't press you to tell the things as concerned your own private feelings, Mr. Fenton, but I did tell you I wasn't going to stand for no hanky-panky when it was a case of murder. And now I feel I should remind you that there is such a thing as withholding material evidence and hindering an officer of the law in the performance of his duty."

This was terrible. "Horrocks," I cried, "I'm sorry, frightfully sorry you feel that way about me. But there were reasons—really there were. I gave Baumann a solemn promise that I would never tell about posting his letter and I felt in duty bound to keep my word. But now that Dr. Warren has told you the whole truth about—er—Miss Lathrop and her family, and now that she's cleared of all possible suspicion, I might just as well break down and tell you everything I know."

Here I launched forth into a full account of the various incidents which had connected me with Julius Baumann and his tragic

death. I omitted nothing, overemphasized nothing and slurred nothing over. Horrocks' brow cleared perceptibly as I talked, but it was not until I described the strange events of the previous evening that he interrupted me.

"What was the address of this cottage you went to, Mr. Fenton?" he asked surprisingly.

A sudden realization of my stupidity overwhelmed me. I hadn't the faintest idea.

"Good Lord!" I cried contritely, "I was so upset I didn't even notice. I know I came back along K. P.—but the taxi-driver! He'd be sure to know. Let's go and find him."

The inspector shook his head slowly. "No time for such trifles, sir. But it's too bad, too bad—and here was I thinking that we might be able to offer you a snug little billet on the Cambridge Police Force. Well, well—" here his face broke into a broad and bushy smile, and for the first time in the history of man I caught a glimpse of his large, yellow teeth, "—it can't be helped, sir. But was it by any chance a white thatched cottage with rambler roses in the garden, an oaken front door with two knobs and upper windows a good bit smaller than the lower ones?"

"Horrocks, you are a wiz—I mean, a wizard! The night was dark and I have only a vague recollection of roses, whitewash and honeysuckle. But, now you mention them, I believe you are right about the other points, too. How on earth did you know?"

**H**ORROCKS laid a large forefinger along the side of his nose and closed one of his heavy-lidded eyes.

"One has to inquire about these little things for one's self, Mr. Fenton, since one's friends won't."

"Talking of inquiring for one's friends," said a voice behind him, "Grayling and I have just been saying that we all ought to go and inquire about the Old Pill's state of health some time today. How about it, Fenton?"

The speaker was Lloyd Comstock who was now standing alongside with Michael. The inspector nodded them good morning.

"I'm going there at four-thirty," I replied rather irritably. "Miss Lathrop is going too."

"In that case," remarked Comstock imperceptibly, "we'll have no difficulty in persuading the Honorable Somerville to come along. I heard him say this morning that she looked like the sort of cold water that runs hot if only you leave it running long enough."

A stinging retort sprung to my lips but, like jesting Pilate, my friends had not waited for an answer.

The inspector looked speculatively after their retreating figures. "I think," he said slowly, "I'll join that little party at Dr. Hyssop's this afternoon—that is, if you've no objection, sir."

"No, Horrocks, of course not, but—" I looked at him imploringly "—but don't come too early. How about five o'clock?"

The detective smiled indulgently. "I'm a better pal than you are, Mr. Fenton. I know when young people want to be together. Now I must get to work. There's plenty to do!"

He moved away, but he had not gone more than three yards when he came back towards me.

"Just one little piece of advice, Mr. Fenton. A word to the wise, like you might say, sir. I wouldn't speak to this young lady about that little visit you made last night if I were you. It would only upset her and—she's going to have plenty more trouble before we've finished.

"Besides, the party you visited was taken into Addenbrooke's Hospital this morning. Mrs. Bigger went along to keep an eye on her. I'm afraid she's pretty bad, sir, and it won't do her nor the young lady any good—well, you understand I'm sure, sir, that having been separated so long, as you might say . . ."

He might have been speaking of his own mother or sister so sympathetic and kindly was his tone.

"You're dead right, Horrocks," I agreed, and he marched off through the college gateway with a brisk, military step.

He left me with a desire to go out and buy a hat so that I could take it off to the tact, industry and almost incredible acumen of Inspector Herbert Horrocks and all he stood for.

Every time I saw the inner workings of this man's mind, I was seized with a blind and almost overwhelming feeling of Anglophilia. I did not know who had murdered Baumann and Hankin—I did not know who had tried to poison Camilla—but I did know that, had I myself been the guilty party, I would rather have had Sherlock Holmes, Philo Vance and all the famous detectives of fiction on my trail, than this one stolid, solid, florid English policeman.

I repeat that I did not know who had committed these two murders, nor, when I presented myself at the Master's lodge at 4:30 that afternoon did I have any more idea than (I hope) the reader now has. My mind was still a farrago of half-formulated notions and my ideas were as foggy as yesterday's weather.

"It's all right, Mary," I said as the pretty housemaid was about to announce me. "I'll go right in. They are both expecting me."

I knocked softly at the library door and pushed it gently open. For a moment I stood on the threshold gazing at the scene in front of me.

The Master was seated in his favorite arm-

chair by the window with Camilla on a low stool at his side. A ray of afternoon sunshine had stolen through the thick velvet curtains, catching her hair and surrounding her face with an aureole.

The old man's head was bent over hers so that his flowing white beard was also within the circle of light, which accentuated his benevolent age just as it enhanced her youth and beauty. And the old leather volumes on the shelves seemed to hold the impression, to stamp it on the memory and make it eternal.

I felt as if I were looking at the original of a peaceful interior by one of the Old Dutch Masters—at two figures waiting for the brush of a Rembrandt or a Hals to immortalize them and send them down through future ages as a study in contrasts.

**W**ITHOUT intending to eavesdrop, I stood there a few minutes staring at these two. They seemed to be completely wrapped up in each other and quite unconscious of my presence. The Master was the first to break the silence and, as I listened to his words, I instinctively knew what they had been talking about and why I had been feeling so elated all that day.

"My dear, I am a grandfather—indeed, I am a great grandfather—and if one of my grandsons or my great-grandsons were to come and tell me that he had been lucky enough to win your love, it would be one of the happiest days of my life. You need have no fears about your own family, my child. And as for the young man, I know his people, too. They are splendid folk, and he—well, he's almost like one of my own."

At this point I realized that I was listening to something which I was not altogether intended to hear. As I stepped forward, Dr. Hyssop rose from his seat and made me flatteringly welcome.

"And now," he cried, after Camilla and I had exchanged stiff, self-conscious greetings, "I am going to give you children a little treat. We might perhaps call it a celebration. No, no, it's not tea this time. It's a sip, just a sip of my very best sherry." He glanced at his clock.

"Of course, it's a trifle early for sherry, but have you ever noticed how pleasant it sometimes is to do the right thing at the wrong time? I put this particular wine in the cellar myself ten years before your father came up to Cambridge, Hilary. No one but myself is allowed to touch it, so—if you will excuse me . . ."

He bustled from the room with the concentrated eagerness of a child who has gone to fetch his favorite toys.

I turned to Camilla, who was now standing by the window looking out at the roses in the fellows' gardens. For a moment we stood

there together, watching a kingfisher darting to and fro along the banks of the Cam like a flash of blue-green steel in the afternoon sunlight. I moved a step nearer and the next thing I knew was that she was in my arms, that her lips were warm against mine and a few erring strands of her lovely dark hair were brushing against my cheek.

"Darling," I whispered, "I love you. I love you so. You're beautiful—like that bird—our halcyon. . . ."

At this moment the Master reappeared bearing aloft, like a sacrificial offering, an old black bottle covered with the dust and cobwebs of past decades. He started to draw the cork with the care and precision of a surgeon performing a delicate operation.

Camilla, who had stayed by my side at the Master's entrance, now seated herself sedately on the sofa as Mary appeared with a tray and three glasses.

Dr. Hyssop made happy, satisfied little noises as he poured out the clear amber fluid into the crystal goblets. He watched their progress with zealous, almost maternal solicitude after he had handed them to the maid. She, seemingly entering into the spirit of these mystic rites, carried the tray to the sofa and bent reverentially over Camilla as she passed her a glass.

"A toast," cried our host pleasantly, when the three of us were left alone together. "Will you propose a toast, Hilary, my boy? Something worthy of the occasion and worthy of this vintage."

**A**N IDEA, indeed a whole series of ideas had flashed through my head within the last few minutes. Like the ray of light which had filtered through the curtains on to Camilla's hair earlier that afternoon, a sudden inspiration had come to me, clarifying and illuminating the dark places in my mind.

I rose to my feet.

"Let us drink," I said, "to a happy and speedy issue out of all our afflictions."

Then, as we raised our glasses, I added, "And I really believe that this issue will be a great deal speedier than anyone expects, because I've just had an idea, in fact, I believe I know—"

But I was interrupted at this point by the appearance of Mary Smith, who announced that Inspector Horrocks was at the front door. As we heard his heavy tread in the passage outside, the Master hurriedly refilled our glasses and whispered to me a trifle plaintively:

"Do you think, Hilary, that he would appreciate—that I ought to offer him some of this sherry? There's not much of it left and . . ."

"I'm perfectly certain he'd prefer stout," I replied. "Guinness is his brand, I believe."

The Master looked relieved and whispered an order to Mary. He then nodded hospitably towards the newcomer, who was immediately supplied with a large brown bottle of his favorite brew.

"Inspector Horrocks, we are just having a little celebration." Here he smiled toward Camilla and me. "I hope you will drink with us before we get down to other—perhaps less pleasant business."

"Thank you, thank you kindly, sir. My business is not what you might call pressing. It can wait, sir. Business can always wait for a glass of stout."

When all the glasses were empty, the Master resumed, "And just before you came in, Inspector, our young American friend here was saying something rather interesting. May I suggest that we give him the floor for a few moments."

Horrocks smiled broadly, refilled his glass and performed a remarkable swallowing trick—so remarkable, indeed, that for a moment I thought the tumbler would follow the stout down his gullet or get lost in the jungle of his moustache. He then wiped his mouth, smiled again and gave me a paternal nod.

"Mr. Fenton hasn't had the floor half enough for my liking, sir," he said meaningly.

I was so excited by the sudden flash of inspiration which had just come to me that I could not speak for a moment. I was conscious of three pairs of eyes staring at me expectantly, then I heard the tremulous voice, vaguely resembling my own, saying in thin, reedy tones:

"I don't know how much you know, Horrocks, but I'm pretty sure I know now who it was that killed Baumann and Hankin. And not only do I think I can prove my point, but I also believe that I'll be able to show you the actual person—for, unless I am much mistaken, the murderer is going to come into this very room . . . while we are here. . . ."

### Chapter XVIII



BUT my announcement, which was intended to be quite startling and dramatic, had very little visible effect on the imperturbable Horrocks. He raised his glass calmly to his lips and took a sip of stout before speaking:

"Well, you being the amateur, as you might

say, Mr. Fenton, I think an old professional like myself should stand aside for a moment and let you have the first ball. I might men-

tion, though, sir"—here he turned apologetically to Dr. Hyssop—"that I have just sworn out a warrant. It's here in my pocket and when I leave the college tonight, someone is going to leave with me.

"There's a plainclothes constable standing at the gates now with certain orders so we needn't be afraid that anyone will give us the slip." Here he turned toward me with a nod. "And you can take your time, Mr. Fenton, take your time. To be quite frank, sir, I'm not too sure of my own ground and your story may be a help—a great help. Only, just at the moment, I'd rather you didn't name no names, sir. There are reasons why . . . reasons which I'll explain later, when I have my innings."

Horrocks' calm attitude and his inability to get excited had restored, in a measure, my own composure.

"All right," I replied, "I won't mention any names until you give me the high sign, Inspector. But I would like"—I turned toward my host—"have I your permission, Master, to go over this whole business from the very beginning?"

Dr. Hyssop nodded his head and closed his eyes wearily.

"I've been a fool," I cried, "a blind, stupid fool. I've made every kind of mistake, but there is one thing I've been right about. From the very first I felt positive that the murderer was a member of this college. That must have been obvious to anyone who knew anything about college rules and regulations.

"But I couldn't see what on earth his motive was. Last night, as I told you, Inspector, I studied the history of the North family and discovered that Mrs. North had had another child who would now be about the age of the average undergraduate."

"Twenty and nine months, to be exact," murmured Horrocks.

Camilla started. "Well, I never heard of that," she exclaimed, "and I can hardly believe it. Are you quite sure, Hilary?"

"Quite sure," I replied gently. "Your—Mrs. North—had a baby a few weeks after the end of the second trial. I hate to distress you by dragging in your family this way—"

"Oh, go on, please go on!" she cried with nervous impatience. "This isn't a time to consider anyone's feelings."

"All right, then. Let's begin with William North's third child whom I've been calling North Junior in my mind since last evening. If no one objects, I'll go on that way. Then I needn't mention any definite names, Horrocks."

The inspector nodded.

"I think you're on the right track, Mr. Fenton, but take your time, sir, take your time."

**I** CONTINUED: "Well, as I said before, I was quite certain that North Junior was in residence here at All Saints. He must have known about his relationship to Julius Baumann and to yourself, Camilla. Also he must have known that you both had money of your own. Money which he thought, or hoped, might eventually come to his mother and thus, at her death, to himself.

"Or perhaps he just hated you both in a blind, unreasoning way. That would be motive enough in itself when one considers the—er—unfortunate circumstances of his birth. At any rate, he planned to kill Baumann, and we all know with what fiendish cunning and precision he waited for his opportunity. He chose the night of the thunderstorm for obvious reasons.

"I believe that it was the merest coincidence that this was the day on which his father, William North, escaped from the home. But we need not go into the complications caused by this coincidence. All that concerns us is that, somehow or other, North Junior got into Baumann's room that evening—exactly how or when does not matter, but it must have been in the neighborhood of ten o'clock.

"After this point we will simply have to draw on our imaginations. We can picture the scene when he announces his relationship; he talks with Baumann, but all the time he keeps an eye on the biscuit tin where he knows from Mrs. Bigger that the revolver is kept. He seizes his opportunity and shoots. The sound of the shot is drowned by thunder.

"Even I, and the other chaps on the staircase who were nearby at the time, could not be certain that we heard it. After his victim is dead, he plants the Brasso and the cleaning rags that he has brought with him. He arranges the revolver so that it will look like suicide or accident. Perhaps the lights are on. Perhaps he is using a flashlight, or perhaps the electricity has gone off in the middle of his gruesome operations.

"In any case, things are none too easy for North Junior. We can imagine how he looks fearfully around the room. Has he overlooked anything? Yes, he has missed one small, telltale blood stain—the one that I was foolish enough to remove later that night. He prepares to leave. The unexpected darkness, which may have complicated his carefully planned murder, will now be an asset in that it covers his retreat.

"He goes out of the room, sporting the oak behind him so as to delay discovery of the body as long as possible. He creeps down the stairs unnoticed—so he thinks and hopes. But Hankin must have seen or suspected something, exactly what we shall probably never know.

"Perhaps the gyp does not even realize the full importance of his suspicions until after the inquest. Perhaps he has been bribed or persuaded in some way to hold his tongue. But Hankin must go too. North Junior chooses a time when the college is very quiet. He waits until he is alone with Hankin in the court. Then he stabs. . . ."

If I had felt any embarrassment or self-consciousness at the beginning of my monologue, I had now lost it completely. I was no longer a rather immature undergraduate in the presence of the Master of his college and an experienced inspector of Police—I had projected myself completely into the personality of North Junior.

"And now he may well congratulate himself that he is safe. The coroner's verdict is on his side. Hankin is out of the way and his own identity has not yet been discovered. But there is a bitter disappointment in store for North Junior. The bulk of Baumann's property is tied up in trust funds and must go to a South African cousin.

"Only a few—a very few—hundred pounds are available—a beggarly sum in the eyes of our ambitious and unscrupulous murderer. He must look elsewhere for money. And so he turns his attention toward his sister. She has a little income of her own—an income which, he hopes, may, by some devious by-paths, eventually come to him or to his family.

"But how can he see his sister without arousing her suspicions? His chance comes sooner, perhaps, than he anticipates. He is to be present at a tea party here in this room. He conceives the idea of sending a forged invitation to Camilla for the same party. Somehow or other he gets into the Master's office, steals an invitation card and sends it to Newnham. He has also managed to extract some prussic acid from the science laboratory."

I broke off in my story, for, at this moment, the maid came into the room with a tray and began to collect up the glasses.

**T**HERE was a minute of uneasy silence. The only sounds in the Master's library were the ticking of the clock, the tinkle of glasses on the tray and the frantic buzzing of a bluebottle on the window pane.

It was Camilla who finally broke the spell. Throughout my recital she had been staring unseeingly at the bluebottle's frantic efforts to escape into the sunshine and apparently she had been listening to me with such absorption that she was not aware of the maid's presence in the room.

"Oh, go on, Hilary," she cried. "What does it matter how he did it? Why don't you tell us who it was? I want to know . . . a member of my own family . . . you said . . ."

you promised he would come into the room. . . ."

Her voice broke off with a snap. I turned questioning toward the inspector. Very slowly and deliberately he raised a finger to the side of his nose and nodded his head in a gesture of assent. Then he rose ponderously to his feet and took up his position with his back to the door. I noticed that one large hand had found its way into his coat pocket in which there was a suspicious-looking bulge.

"Camilla," I said slowly, with my eyes fixed on the inspector, "I did promise you that North Junior would come into this room while we were here. Well, my promise has been kept. The murderer of Julius Baumann and Thomas Hankin is . . . in . . . the . . . room . . . at this . . . very . . . moment."

There was a resounding crash of breaking glass. Mary Smith had dropped the tray and was standing behind the sofa with her hands hanging helplessly by her sides. Instead of looking down at the tray, however, she was staring at me with a strange expression of horror and bewilderment.

I jumped up from my seat and, pulling a large handkerchief from my pocket, threw it over the housemaid's glorious red hair. Then, taking her gently by the shoulders, I pushed her nearer to the couch until her head was within a few inches of Camilla's.

"Look, Master," I cried, as my grip on the girl's shoulders tightened. "Don't you see it now—the same profile? Hide the red hair and they might almost be twins. Now is there any doubt as to who it was I saw on 'A' staircase last Monday night? Now do you see why Hankin was unwilling to come forward and voice his suspicions?"

"Now do you see how easy it was for the murderer to get hold of the cleaning materials—the invitation card—the prussic acid from the laboratory to which Hankin had the key? Who had a better opportunity to poison Camilla's tea yesterday afternoon? Who but North Junior—the third child of William North? Only instead of being a boy she happened to be a girl."

I released my hold on Mary Smith's shoulders. She stood perfectly still, staring straight in front of her as if in a daze. At length she spoke, and I immediately noticed that her accent, which was usually that of an uneducated working girl, was now perfect in pitch and intonation.

"You . . . can't . . . prove . . . a . . . thing," she cried; and then, more shrilly, "I don't know what you mean. Oh, how dare you put your hands on me!"

At this moment the door behind Horrocks was pushed open and a powerful, thickset man entered the room. He handed the inspector a bottle which I immediately recog-

nized from its quaint shape as being one that had originally held that fatal perfume, Flowers of the Veld.

"We found this in her room, sir," he said, smiling grimly. "You've only got to smell it to tell that it ain't the sweet perfume it's supposed to be."

"All right, Brown." Horrocks jerked his head in the direction of Mary Smith. "You can stand by."

He then unstoppered the bottle, sniffed at it gingerly and handed it to me. For the second time in that room the odor of peaches and bitter almonds assailed my nostrils.

The inspector was now addressing the maid, whose eyes were darting venomous glances in all directions. Her cheeks were pale as death, but in spite of the fact that she had not yet removed my ridiculous handkerchief from her head, she looked a handsome and imposing figure for tragedy.

"You say we can't prove a thing, Miss," he said softly. "Well, it strikes me you are going to have a job proving why you kept prussic acid in your bedroom." He turned deferentially toward the Master. "We took the liberty, sir, of having this young woman's belongings searched while she was down here waiting on you. That was why I didn't want any names mentioned before I was ready."

HERE he cleared his throat and, when next he spoke, his voice had changed from that of a kindly middle-aged man to the stern, official tones of a police inspector. He drew a document from his pocket.

"Mary North, alias Mary Nordella, alias Mary Smith, I arrest you in the King's name for the murder of Julius Baumann on Monday last, May 9th. And it is my duty to warn you that anything you say may be used in evidence." There was a slight pause, then, "Take her out, Brown, and wait in the car. Don't make any more fuss than you can help. I'll join you in a few minutes."

"I'll go quietly," murmured the girl. "Just give me one moment." She moved a step toward me and looked up into my face with an expression that was at once arch and sinister. The phrase "a born courtesan" which Dr. Warren had applied to her mother flashed immediately through my mind.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid," she exclaimed scornfully, as Brown moved up behind her and touched her elbow. "I wouldn't hurt your poor little American. He's done his best with his theories and his North Juniors and his fine long speeches, which I'm sure"—she looked impudently around her—"we've all listened to with great interest."

"You sounded fine from the other side of the door, Mr. Fenton, especially when it came to a question of motive!" Here she gave a hoarse, unpleasant laugh and, as she

did so, I felt I could never apologize sufficiently to Camilla for having said that, even superficially, they resembled each other.

"But there are other things besides money, Hilary Fenton—things which perhaps you might understand better if you'd spent your young life traipsing around after a second-rate actress in cheap American and Canadian boarding houses—having fat, vulgar men smirk at you and pinch you and breathe garlic all over you—and often without enough to eat while your brother and sister, who are no better than you, are living a comfortable existence among ladies and gentlemen, with rich friends, good food and clothes, getting the benefit of education—getting the money that they had no more right to than I had. Was it my fault that my father—"

But here Inspector Horrocks stopped her. "Remember, I warned you, Miss," he said curtly. "Now, if you are ready. . ."

"All right, all right, but—please, don't touch me." Then with one last vindictive look of hatred toward Camilla and myself, she walked out of the room, closely followed by the hard-faced Brown.

After they had left, the Master stirred uneasily in his chair.

"I'd never have noticed it—never!" he remarked. "The resemblance, I mean—then when you mentioned it, Hilary, then, of course I saw at once that there is some similarity in the lines of the face."

"Well, sir," I rejoined, a trifle foolishly, "I'll admit I never would have noticed it either if it hadn't just happened that the first view I ever got of Miss Lathrop was her profile. It—er—made a great impression on me.

"When I saw that girl bending over the sofa just now with a glass of sherry, the likeness struck me at once in spite of the different coloring and expression. Then I thought of the person whom I had seen on the stairs last Monday and I suddenly realized that expression and coloring are two things that don't show in the dark."

There was a muffled sound from the sofa. As I turned toward Camilla, I noticed that the tears were streaming down her cheeks. "Poor thing!" I heard her murmur.

The Master had heard her, too, and hurried across the room to her side. I saw that he had taken her hand in his and was whispering in her ear. Obviously it was best to leave these two alone for a while. I joined Horrocks at the far end of the room.

"Well, Mr. Fenton," he remarked with a quiet chuckle, "you took the high road and I took what you might call the low road and we both got to Scotland about the same time, eh?"

"Scotland Yard is where you ought to get to, Horrocks," I cried admiringly. "I can't

think how you did it—especially with everyone working against you the way they did."

"But I don't want you to go off with the idea that I didn't make mistakes too, sir. I wasted two whole days on your friend, Mr. Lloyd Comstock—on account of his first name being the same as the girl who figured in the North case. I even went all the way to Leicester where his father makes those garments that you see advertised so much, and all I got out of it was"—he lowered his voice discreetly—"three pairs of them Comfy-Knicks, sir, and they're all too small for my missus!"

LAUGHED immoderately.

"Then, having started on names, sir, it struck me that the name Smith was a bit suspicious. In my business, Mr. Fenton, we always mistrust anyone called Smith or Jones, unless, of course, the party can't help it. And in this case it seemed odd that the girl's name should be Smith and the mother's Nordella.

"Then I didn't altogether like that cock and bull story of hers about someone speaking to Hankin in the court and her not even listening to a word they said! If she didn't listen, then she's the first housemaid in my experience as didn't—especially when she had the keyhole close to her ear, like you might say, Mr. Fenton.

"This morning I got the girl's record from the Canadian authorities. She's been on the stage since she was a kid, except when she was doing a two years' term in the penitentiary."

"Gosh!" I cried, "and I bet she was a corking good actress, too. With her nerve and brain she might have got anywhere. No wonder I thought North Junior was a man! Not that that was the only mistake I made. Take the perfume, for example.

"Why the girl in the shop told me that it was an older man who had bought *Flowers of the Veld* there—a man with a different kind of accent. What an ass I was to jump to the conclusion that it must have been Baumann! Of course it was Hankin who was buying his own native scent for that precious girl of his! The bottle you found in her room proves it. What a lovely use she put it to!

"Then I might have realized when I saw Mrs. Bigger out at the cottage last night that there would be some hook-up there. Mary Smith was a great pal of hers. She was always singing her praises and I'm perfectly certain that neither the bedmaker nor her own mother suspected her true nature.

"Lord, and how Mrs. North and I talked at cross purposes last night! I suppose she thought it was Mary I was keen on. And then that photograph on the mantelpiece!

(Continued on page 111)



# The Homestead Murders

By LEO MARR

*It looked like a double slaughter—but where were the bodies?*

**T**HE town of Hood River, Oregon, was not exactly a bustling metropolis in the year 1904. In February, with the winter somnolence upon everything, it was even less so. To put it baldly, Hood River slept peacefully amid the fog-wreathed slopes of the Cascade Mountains.

Bert Stranahan, major-domo of the Fashion Livery Stables, also slept in a chair, with his feet upon the woodbox close to the hot stove. Business was lax. The stock had been

watered and fed, carriages polished. There was little to do but sleep.

The door creaked, admitting a blast of cold air. Bert Stranahan raised weighty eyelids to find a stranger standing before him.

"Wake up," said the stranger. "I want to hire a rig."

He was a young man with the big-knuckled, calloused hands of a farmer and wearing a careworn and determined expression.

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**AN AMAZING TRUE STORY OF CRIME**

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"Yessir," said Bert, struggling to his feet and losing a battle with a huge yawn. "Where to?"

"Do you know anyone around here by the name of Williams?" the stranger countered.

"Williams?" Stranahan pondered. "Seems to me there's a feller by the name of Williams took up a homestead about twenty mile down the road. Ain't seen him for quite a spell though. You want to drive out there?"

"I want you to drive me out to show me where the place is."

Stranahan hitched a team of bays to a carriage and tossed in some robes against the bite of the winter air. The stranger stood by, watching him thoughtfully. As the livery man finished, the stranger made a curious request.

"I'd like to take a spade along, if you've got one handy," he said.

"A spade!" Bert was intrigued. "Goin' to dig for gold?" He guffawed at his own wit. "Mister, if you find any in this section Mt. Hood will blow up from surprise!"

The young man did not smile. He saw the spade stowed away in the carriage and clambered aboard. They set out down the road.

#### Four-year Quest

With the insatiable curiosity of the countryman, Bert Stranahan set out to pump his passenger on the long trip. Nor was the young man loath to talk, once his reserve had been punctured.

His name was George Nesbitt and he was from Iowa. Hood River was for him the endpoint in a four year search for his mother and sister. The answer, he thought, might be at the Williams homestead.

Four years ago, in 1900, they had all been living on the Iowa farm together. They had a neighbor, an older man by the name of Norman Williams. He had paid court to pretty Alma Nesbitt but had received scant attention because of the difference in their ages.

Disappointed, Williams had talked of going away. He collected literature on the rich, virgin Oregon territory and spouted facts and fancy about the wealth of timber, the deep fertile loam, the brooks and lakes crammed with trout, the abundant game and bird life, the bursting bounty of Nature in a land of milk and honey.

Surprisingly, Alma Nesbitt, who had paid

him so little attention before, found her imagination fired. She would like to see this fabulous Oregon country where the mountains were higher, the trees taller, the water purer and the soil richer than anywhere else.

"Let's go, too," she urged her family.

"Not me," said her brother. "I'm not giving up this good farm to take up a homestead in wilderness country and start from the bottom again."

But Alma did not give up. She convinced her mother and eventually both women went off and joined Norman Williams in Hood River. They filed adjoining claims.

Letters came from Oregon for awhile. Then came a letter from Portland announcing that Alma and her mother were on their way back to Iowa. They never arrived.

George Nesbitt wrote to Norman Williams who replied that he personally had put them on the train for home. Then Nesbitt wrote to railroad officials, to sheriffs, to postmasters, to everyone who might conceivably have seen the two women. They had vanished without trace. And so at last George had picked up and come out to Hood River to see for himself if there were not some hint or clue he could find.

#### Blood on the Sands

The story gave Bert Stranahan something to think about for the rest of the ride. He could contribute little information himself. Williams had been a quiet man and there was no talk about him. He seldom came to town and his last trip had been months before.

The reason for that became apparent as they reached the Williams homestead. It was abandoned, its fields grown up with brush, its fences collapsed, its buildings falling into ruin.

"Gone," George Nesbitt said, bitterly, staring at the depressing scene.

He got out of the buggy and pushed his way through weeds and brush, examining the yard and buildings with care. Stranahan watched him moodily from the buggy.

Nesbitt came back and got the spade and went off again. Distantly, the livery stable driver saw him begin to dig in the floor of what looked like a ruined chicken house.

A shout roused the driver from a half-doze. Nesbitt was waving and beckoning to him. He got down and trudged over to the chicken house. The young man had dug down several feet. Standing in the pit, he

was holding up a matted piece of burlap sack.

"Look," he said, and his voice held a chill. "Do you see anything on this sack?"

Stranahan gulped.

"It—it looks like dried blood," he whispered. "Pshaw—it's chicken blood."

"Is it?" Nesbitt said strangely.

He began to dig again and brought up more pieces of burlap similarly matted. Carefully, he put them into his battered suitcase and stowed it in the buggy.

"We can go back now," he said.

### *The Long, Long Trail*

The next morning George Nesbitt appeared at the District Attorney's office in The Dalles, county seat of Wasco County, a few miles from Hood River.

To District Attorney Menefee and his young assistant Fred Wilson, just out of college, the farmer told his story and exhibited the burlap. The lawman examined the rags with a magnifying glass.

"Looks like blood, all right," Wilson said. "And there are some hairs stuck to it. But what kind of blood—that's the question? Could be chicken, calf, pig, coyote—anything."

"Isn't there some way to tell?" Nesbitt asked desperately.

"Maybe," Wilson said thoughtfully. "There's a woman doctor in Portland claims she can tell by chemistry. It's a new-fangled idea, but it's worth trying."

Too much credit can hardly be given Fred Wilson for imagination and courage. In the first place he was proposing to depend upon a woman doctor, which was as unorthodox in itself as flying to the moon. In the second place he was proposing an equally new and fantastic idea—to pin a possible murder case upon a new and untried experiment in chemistry.

District Attorney Menefee was doubtful, but game.

Nesbitt was desperately anxious to try anything.

So Wilson and Nesbitt drove to Portland to see the young and beautiful Dr. Victoria Hampton.

To their pleased surprise, her youth and beauty did not hamper her efficiency. She made a series of swift tests and handed down her opinion.

"It is human blood," she said. "And the hairs are from the head of a human being."

### *Closing in*

They had, at last, something tangible to work on. The next step was to visit the boarding house in Portland from which Alma Nesbitt had written her last letter saying she was on her way back to Iowa. The proprietor remembered dimly two women who had stopped there and a man who had called on them.

"They were fighting like cats and dogs," he said. "About land, I think."

Nesbitt and Wilson next crossed the Columbia river into Vancouver, Washington, where people who wanted to get married quickly often went, and examined the marriage license books. They found that Norman Williams and Alma Nesbitt had been married approximately six months before her disappearance.

Meanwhile, back in The Dalles, District Attorney Menefee had kept the telegraph wires humming. He found that Williams had married in 1898 and had deserted his wife without the formality of divorce. He also found that Williams was now living in Bellingham, Washington, with a woman known as his "housekeeper."

Wilson got a warrant and went up and brought his man back to The Dalles. The ex-homesteader came willingly enough, and professed himself glad to help in any way he could. He met George Nesbitt with frank and open candor.

"I had no idea of all this," Williams said. "I put Alma and your mother on a train in Hood River the morning of March 9, 1900. I have never seen them since."

Bert Stranahan's boss, H. D. Langille, owner of the Fashion Livery Stables, had a good memory, however. He remembered that Williams had driven out to the homestead on March 8, accompanied by two women. He had come back March 9, but he had come alone. And he had come into town three hours after the only train pulled out!

Williams was next confronted with the blood-stained burlap. The blood, he explained, was from a mare that had foaled a colt on it. But District Attorney Menefee dug up a neighbor who remembered very clearly that the colt had been born four miles away near a saw mill where Williams had been working at the time.

### *Trial and Error*

With a reasonable case built up, the District Attorney took it to a trial on May 24,

1904. In addition to the major points, there were a few other little choice items, such as a document filed by Williams supposedly signed by Alma Nesbitt, relinquishing her homestead claim to him. U.S. Attorney John H. Hall testified that when offered the document by Williams he had objected to the "Alma Nesbitt" signature since it did not match the handwriting on her original homestead petition. Williams had offered to go and get written confirmation from Alma, but had gone and never reappeared. The Federal authorities had had him on the "wanted" list ever since.

Climax of the trial was the testimony by the stunning Dr. Victoria Hampton, who took the stand to give her medical testimony regarding the blood and hair upon the burlap—Exhibit A.

"These hairs," she stated, "were pulled from the head of a living human."

"How can you tell the person was alive at the time the hairs were pulled?" a juror wanted to know.

"The roots are still attached," she replied. "If they had been pulled after death the roots would not have come away with them."

Final witness for the prosecution was A. J. Reese, a farm laborer who had worked for Williams. He testified that Williams had hired him to clean up the yard of brush and rubbish and dump it into a hole over which the abandoned hen house now stood.

"It was the biggest pile of trash you ever see," Reese said. "It was brush and stumps and slash of all kinds. When I saw Williams again 'bout a month later the whole thing had been burned up and there was only ashes left."

### *Corpus Delicti*

The state offered the theory that this huge pile of brush and stumps and slash was the funeral pyre of Alma Nesbitt and her mother. And with that the state closed its case.

For his defense, Williams had managed to retain Henry E. McGinn, Oregon's most bril-

liant criminal lawyer. McGinn took no chances in putting his slippery client on the stand, for he knew that Menefee would rip him to shreds and tangle him inextricably in the web of his own lies. He called not a single witness. He based everything on one trump card.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, "the state must prove that murder has been done. *Corpus delicti* must be established. Where is the proof of murder done? Where are the bodies of the two women alleged to have been slain? Who in this room can say with absolute certainty that they may not be alive today, hundreds of miles from here? Can you hang this man, not knowing for sure? Can you take this dreadful chance that some day Alma Nesbitt and her mother may not appear, alive and well, and thus convict this jury of a murder as heinous as the crime here charged? Gentlemen, I beseech you, think well before you make your decision!"

No doubt this was a moot point. The evidence, while strong enough, was entirely circumstantial. No one had seen Norman Williams kill the two women, no one had been able to produce their bodies. And McGinn made the most of this point.

But the jury had scant respect for Attorney McGinn's hair-splitting. They brought in a verdict of guilty. Norman Williams was sentenced to be hanged.

McGinn appealed and the Oregon Supreme Court promptly slapped him down. No defendant, said the court, can hide behind the arbitrary immunity afforded by the *corpus delicti* principle, for this would shield him from the most atrocious crime if he were cunning enough to hide or destroy the body. "The body of the crime may be proved by the best evidence which is capable of being adduced, if it is sufficient for the purpose."

Williams was hanged on July 21, 1905—the last public hanging in Oregon. George Nesbitt went sadly back to Iowa. And Bert Stranahan, together with Hood River, settled back into the drowsy quiet which had been so briefly, if tragically, interrupted.

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# FACES IN THE FOG

By CHANDLER CHANNING

*A mysterious slayer stalks through the haze!*

**T**HE fog hung over Washington Square like a gray veil half hiding the buildings which lined the four sides of the park. It muffled the night sounds and made the shadows strange black blotches lurking in unexpected places. The last bus had gone and there was no traffic along lower Fifth Avenue or on the streets around the Square.

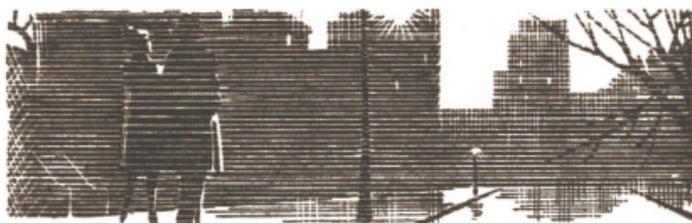
"He's still following us." There was a tense note in Sandra Dawson's husky voice. "I hear his cane tapping. If it weren't so silly, I'd be frightened, Lance!"

Lance Traver listened as they walked, the

hard face of the blind man and the words the deep voice had uttered.

"Give me fifty dollars or you and the girl die," the blind man had said. "Hurry!"

Lance Traver was big and husky. His first impulse had been to smash a fist into the man's face. But instead he had merely hastened away with Sandra beside him. He had no desire to get in a mess for punching a blind man, even though he doubted that the man in the shadows was actually unable to see. If he had been blind, how had he known there was a girl with the stranger he had ap-



They could still hear the blind man's stick tapping behind them

girl beside him clinging tightly to his left arm. The mist was dank and cold against his face and he felt that he and Sandra were alone in a sinister world of their own.

From somewhere in the fog—back in that gray mist behind them came the steady tapping of the blind man's cane. It was loud, as though the stick were being pounded on the sidewalk by an angry hand.

"Perhaps we should have stopped," Sandra said. "Given him some money when he appeared so suddenly out of the shadows back there, instead of hurrying on the way we did."

"Why let a blind beggar worry us?" Traver tried to make his tone light. "I was going to give him some change until I heard what he said."

"He did mumble something, but I didn't catch the words," Sandra said. "What did he say Lance?"

Traver hesitated. He was remembering the

proached. Traver wondered.

"What did he say, Lance?" Sandra demanded again, when Traver did not answer her question. "Tell me."

"He just asked for money," Traver said. His voice sharpened. "What's that?"

The tapping of the cane had stopped. From behind them came a hoarse masculine shout and then the sound of swiftly running feet. Traver swung around and waited tensely, and Sandra turned and stood motionless beside him.

They had halted beneath a street light. The mist was thinning as the wind drove it away. In a moment the noise of the pounding feet grew louder and a slender gray haired man loomed into view. He wore no hat and his unbuttoned topcoat was billowing out behind him.

**HE STOPPED** when he saw them. For an instant he swayed back and forth.

"I'm Adam Clark," he muttered, and then gave an address on Washington Square South. "Please take—me home. Timmy is waiting."

Just as abruptly he flung up his hands and fell, face downward on the sidewalk. Traver stood as if transfixed. He could see a knife handle sticking out of Clark's back. Sandra uttered a muffled scream.

"Somebody back there did it," Traver said. His words sounded strained in his own ears.

He listened for the tapping of the blind man's cane but there was no sound.

Lance Traver was a former newspaperman, now head of his own advertising agency and he soon recovered from his surprise. He leaned over and examined the man on the walk. A quick glance confirmed what he had expected. Adam Clark was dead. There was a folded paper sticking out of Clark's coat pocket. Traver drew it out and ran his eye over what was written on the oblong sheet.

Some one was coming along the street from the opposite direction whistling musically. The whistling was reassuring to Traver. He put the paper in his pocket and sighed with relief as the raincoated figure of a patrolman appeared from out of the fog. The officer at once caught sight of the still form lying on the sidewalk and hurried forward.

"What happened?" he demanded.

"This man's dead — somebody stabbed him," Traver said. "He came running up to us, said his name was Adam Clark, asked us to take him home and then keeled over."

"Who are you?" the officer asked.

"I'm Lance Traver, of the Traver Advertising Agency," Traver said. "And this is Miss Dawson, one of the agency models. We were on the way to her place. I was taking her home after we had been to a show." He looked at the patrolman. "What's your name?"

"Officer Duffy." The patrolman, who was young and husky, frowned. "How do I know you didn't kill this man?"

"We didn't," Sandra said. "Tell him about the blind man, Lance."

"Blind man?" asked Duffy in a puzzled tone. "What about him?"

Traver told how they had encountered the blind man back in the shadows and how the man had threatened to kill them both if he was not given fifty dollars. Sandra gasped when she heard that part of the story.

"You didn't tell me he demanded money, Lance," she said.

"Didn't want to frighten you," Traver said. "I suspect that the blind man stabbed Clark. We heard a shout just before Clark came running toward us and dropped dead. After that we no longer heard the tapping of the blind man's cane."

"This is a case for Homicide," Duffy declared. "And the body can't be moved until they send somebody from the Medical Examiner's office to check on it."

A police patrol car rolled by and then came back. It halted at the curb and the officers in it got out. Duffy told them what had happened and left them in charge while he went to call the Homicide Department.

"Do we have to stay here?" Traver asked. "We didn't even know the dead man."

"Sorry, Mr. Traver, but you had better stay," said one of the police from the patrol car. "Homicide may want to hold both of you as material witnesses."

"All right," Travers said resignedly. He glanced at the girl beside him. "You heard him. We'll have to stick around, Sandra."

They moved a little away from the body, out of earshot of the two officers. One of the policeman got a blanket out of the patrol car and placed it over the corpse. Even though it was nearly two in the morning people were gradually drifting to the spot to learn what was wrong.

"Why was he killed?" Sandra asked. "Do you think the blind man did it because Clark also refused to give him fifty dollars, Lance?"

"I don't know," Traver answered. "I'd like to know what Clark meant when he said that Timmy was waiting."

He looked over the people in the small crowd. He hoped that the blind man might be among them but was disappointed. There was no sign of the sightless man.

It dawned on Traver that unless the real murderer was found he and Sandra would be in a tough spot. They might even be accused of having committed the crime, or at least they might be held a material witnesses until the case was cleared up.

The Homicide squad arrived and an assistant medical examiner was with them. He quickly checked on the corpse and said the body could be taken away. Officer Duffy had returned.

"I checked up on Adam Clark by calling his home," Duffy reported. "He lived alone with only a housekeeper and a pet cat named

**Timmy.** He was crazy about the cat, but Timmy doesn't like strangers."

"Good work, Duffy," the lieutenant in charge of the Homicide Squad said. "You are new on the force, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir," said Duffy. "Just been in the Department six weeks."

**T**RAYER at once produced the paper he had taken from Clark's pocket and read it again. It was a note for five thousand dollars made out to Adam Clark and signed by John Duffy. It was payable on demand.

"So that's it," Traver exclaimed.

He stepped over to the patrolman, who was standing some distance away from everyone else.

"Good bluff, Duffy," Traver said. "You had me fooled all right."

Duffy glared at Traver, his eyes hard. "What do you mean?"

"You've got them all believing you really are a member of the Force," Traver said. "What did you do with the real policeman on this beat? Knock him out and take his uniform?"

"You're crazy," Duffy snapped. "I don't know what you are talking about."

"Oh, yes, you do," said Traver. "You owed Adam Clark five thousand dollars and gave him a personal note for the money. I suspect that Clark must have insisted that you pay him at once. You didn't have the money so you decided to kill him and get the note."

"Oh, sure," said Duffy. "And how did I do all that?"

He began tapping his night stick impatiently against a pole. Traver smiled as he heard the sound. It was just like the tapping of the blind man's cane.

"You pretended to be a blind man," Traver said. "You were waiting in the shadows for Clark to pass, since you knew he came home this way I guess. It would be easy enough for you to check on him and find that out. Anyway we came along and you decided

that you would use us as your alibi."

"How?" Duffy demanded. He failed to notice that the lieutenant had stepped quietly up behind him and was listening while he talked to Traver. "That's ridiculous!"

"You stepped out and demanded that I give you fifty dollars or you would kill both Miss Dawson and myself," Traver went on. "You knew that if we told the police that a blind man we'd never seen before made a wild assertion like that no one would believe us."

"And then?" asked Duffy.

"Then you tapped your stick so it would sound like you were following us," said Traver. "You tapped it softly and then louder so it sounded like you were coming closer—but you didn't move. Clark showed up and you stabbed him. But he got away and ran to us before you could recover the note you killed him for. You still wanted that note so you circled around the block, met the patrolman on the beat and knocked him out. All you needed to take was his raincoat, his cap and badge, and then hurry here."

"All right," Duffy growled. "You're smart, Traver. I did it all, but you'll never get a chance to tell anyone about it."

"Why not?" asked Traver calmly.

"Because I have you covered with my gun and you'd better start running," Duffy said grimly. "I may have to shoot in order to stop you."

"No, you don't!"

It was the Homicide lieutenant from behind Duffy, as he thrust his own gun into the slayer's back. "You're under arrest for murder, Duffy. I've been wondering about you ever since you told how you checked up on the dead man. A rookie patrolman isn't supposed to make an investigation like that without orders. That's a job for Homicide."

"Just what I thought," Traver said. "Duffy didn't act like a real policeman to me." He grinned. "Why he even believed the story about the blind man!"

COMING SOON!

## DEATH'S OLD SWEET SONG

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By JONATHAN STAGGE

The intruder's flash raised suddenly and Bates was almost caught in its beam



# THE MURDER OF LADYFINGERS

By NORMAN A. DANIELS

*The skill Detective Bates uses against a cunning killer would qualify him as a better than average pickpocket!*

**D**ETEKTIVE-SERGEANT Carl Bates of the Pickpocket Squad was not used to answering emergency calls. His job consisted mainly of haunting subways, racetracks and sports events where crowds—and pickpockets—gathered.

Therefore he was somewhat amazed and not a little nervous as the police car howled its way through traffic and had several nar-

row escapes. Sergeant Bates got a vague idea of what belonging to Homicide was like.

The police car dropped him at a call box on the east side of town where a patrolman waited somewhat impatiently. Bates got out of the car and the patrolman hurried up to him.

"Bates?" he asked, rather unnecessarily because he had demanded that Headquarters

send nobody but Sergeant Bates. "Something odd happened. I was on patrol and passing the Industrial Building where there's some kind of an exhibit going on. I was on the other side of the street. This little guy makes a dive through traffic, yelling for me. He was so scared I thought he'd pass out."

"Get to the point," Bates said. "He must have asked for me."

"He wouldn't have anybody except you, Sergeant. The little guy tells me to get you fast because if I took too long, he might be dead."

"Where is he?" Bates asked quickly. "Why in thunder did you leave him alone?"

"Because he insisted on it. Said if I stood around, I might attract attention to him. He's parked in a dark doorway across from the Industrial Building, just down the street. I think he's off the beam."

"Let's go," Bates said, and started walking fast.

He located the doorway easily, found the man who wanted to see him, too. Only the little man would never talk and he wasn't nice to look at. He had slumped to the doorway floor with his back against the door and assumed an awkward sitting position. He had been shot just above the bridge of his nose.

"Stand in the doorway so you block it," Bates told the gaping patrolman. "I don't want this seen right away. Did you hear a shot? Or no—it's silly to ask. There are so many cars rolling up and down this street and backfiring all the time that anything short of a machine-gun burst would never be noticed."

"Look, Sarge." The patrolman was badly worried. "I knew this guy had something on his mind but, gosh, I didn't really think his life was in danger."

"Don't worry about it," Bates said. "This man wouldn't have told a patrolman anything. He's a friend of mine. I've sent him to jail and prison exactly eleven times. His name is Ladyfingers and no better pickpocket ever lived. Hand me your flash."

**B**ATES snapped it on and sprayed the dead man briefly with the beam. There were no powder marks around the wound. He had been shot from some distance away.

The detective-sergeant straightened up. "Now be sure of this," he told the patrolman. "Did you see where he came from before he crossed the road?"

"No, sir. First I noticed, he was diving around the cars and being cussed right and left by drivers."

Bates stepped out of the doorway and surveyed the large skyscraper building across the street. There was a marquee, sporting lights that spelled out the fact that there was a hobbyist's exhibit going on inside.

"You're on this beat," Bates said. "Has that exhibit drawn much of a crowd?"

"Plenty," the patrolman answered. "Some big shots are showing off their hobbies. I looked in a couple of times. The thing has been going on for three days, and is scheduled to last another week."

"Just what sort of hobbies are being exhibited?" Bates wanted to know.

"Maybe a hundred different ones. Flowers, plants, suits of armor, coins, stamps and even doll houses. The guys who own 'em stand around looking important and pleased."

Bates went back to the corpse and deftly searched it. There was nothing of interest. A faint odor of peppermint came from the dead man's parted lips. Bates glanced up at the patrolman.

"Call Headquarters for the Homicide boys and the medical examiner. I'll stay here until you get back."

The patrolman wasn't gone more than six or seven minutes. By now, a crowd was beginning to collect. It grew larger when the Homicide Squad arrived. Bates made a report to Inspector Collins.

"Seems Ladyfingers—his real name was Dennis Ross, by the way—had something to tell me. I guess I pinched him so often he figured I was a friend of his. These pickpockets are strange people. But whatever he had to tell me was dangerous to someone else and so—Ladyfingers was shot to death."

"Must have picked somebody's pocket and found something, eh?" the Inspector queried.

"I think so," Bates replied. "Now this sort of thing is strictly in your line. Can you tell from the wound where that slug came from?"

The Inspector didn't answer. He squeezed into the doorway and held a brief consultation with the medical examiner. Then he returned.

"It will require an autopsy to prove this, but the M.E. says the wound slants downward, so it must have been fired from a height of, say, one or two stories above the ground. And from across the street, I should say. We'll take over, Sergeant."

"Yes, sir," Bates nodded. "But you see."

Ladyfingers was a friend of mine, in a way. I'd like to find the man who killed him. You don't mind if I mosey around? I'm off duty for the rest of the night."

"Help yourself," the Inspector said. "Don't gum things up though."

Bates promised he wouldn't, and walked across the street to the entrance of the Industrial Building. He had already studied the structure from the doorway where Ladyfingers had been shot. The bullet, fired from a height of one or two stories and hitting Ladyfingers squarely, meant that it had been fired from one of three or four certain windows. No others were in a direct line with the doorway except those too high up.

Bates memorized the location of those windows.

He was stopped at the entrance of the exhibit and got by on his badge. He asked an attendant for the man who was in charge, and Bates was led to a small office. It had one window, overlooking the doorway across the street and in a direct line with it.

The man behind the desk offered his hand. "I'm Peter King, he said. "I hope nothing is wrong."

Bates walked over to the window and looked out. Anyone standing in the doorway where Ladyfingers had been, was a perfect target. He turned around to face Peter King.

"Directly across the street, Mr. King, a man was murdered a few minutes ago. I think he was shot by someone in this building and from this building. Perhaps even this window of your office."

**K**ING gasped, but if he was worried, he didn't show it.

"Good heavens, man, that's terrible! But do you quite realize what you are saying? This exhibit now in progress happens to be a showing of the hobbies of some of the most important men in the country. All wealthy, responsible men."

"A gun doesn't care how much money the guy who shoots it has," Bates said drily. "I'm telling you facts. I'll give you some more. The dead man was a clever pickpocket. I think he came into this exhibit, picked someone's pocket, and found he'd drawn a hot potato. Ladyfingers knew what he'd stolen was highly dangerous and that the man he swiped it from would kill to get it back."

"Didn't you find this incriminating article on the pickpocket?" King asked.

"No, but that isn't surprising. You see, Mr. King, smart pickpockets have a system. They lift a wallet, but they don't hang onto it any longer than absolutely necessary. They hide it and return later on to recover it. That's just in case the victim discovers his loss, lets out a squawk and the pickpocket it cornered."

"I—see," King frowned. "What can I do to help?"

"First," Bates said, "there are three other windows in line with the spot where Ladyfingers was killed. The window to the left of the one in this office and the two on the third floor, which match this location. Do you know what is in those rooms?"

King nodded. "Naturally, because I'm in charge of the whole building. The one to the left of this office can't be reached. It's blocked off by solid partitions. The two on the third floor belong to the offices of Grant and Company, jewel setters. Nobody entered those offices because the door is sheet steel and as safe as a bank vault. They keep a lot of valuables up there."

Bates sat down. "Then, Mr. King, it's quite clear that whoever shot Ladyfingers was in this office where we are now. The shooting happened between nine-eight and nine-twenty. Were you in here then?"

"No," King said quickly. Almost too quickly, Bates thought. "I was wandering around the exhibit rooms. But I left a man named Gil Evans and his secretary, a chap he called Lloyd, in here. Evans was giving Lloyd some sort of instructions connected with his display of doll houses."

"Anyone else?" Bates asked.

"Ralph Hutton asked if he might use the phone in my office," King admitted. "There are plenty of booth phones on the floor. I thought it odd that he should make the request, but he is an exhibitor, too, and a prominent and important individual."

"Suppose," Bates said, "you look up these gentlemen and bring them here. Meantime, I'll look around the exhibit. I understand it's sort of a private affair and everything here is the hobby of wealthy men."

"That's correct. Take Gil Evans' display of doll houses. Why, they're worth fifty thousand dollars. And Ralph Hutton has two cases of rare postage stamps. Philately is his hobby."

"What's yours?" Bates asked bluntly.

King smiled. "Frankly, Sergeant, I can't afford the luxury of a hobby. I'm in charge

of this entire building and am called its manager, but the pay I get is proportionate to that of a building superintendent. I'm a hard-working man, just like you."

And maybe just as much in need of money, Bates thought. He walked out with King and parted from him, to wander around the exhibits.

He found Evans' doll houses and they were incredibly wonderful. Hand-made, with midget rooms filled with midget furniture. The work entailed must have been enormous. The kitchen of the largest doll house was covered with a battleship gray linoleum. The tiny sink had running water. There was a miniature electric range that worked, a washing machine that could wash clothes—if they weren't any bigger than a postage stamp.

Bates kept going. He found the stamp exhibit owned by Ralph Hutton. Backgrounded to this exhibit was a display of urns, from tiny ones to towering pieces of pottery taller than a man.

Bates walked over to this array of urns. He reached out and gently ran his hand over the top of each urn which he could reach easily. From time to time, he looked at his fingertips.

Then an attendant touched him on the shoulder. King was ready in his office.

**B**ATES hurried there. King introduced the three men who were now with him. Ralph Hutton, an important-looking man even when he was just slumped into a chair and chewing on a cold cigar. He was shrewd-eyed, gray-haired, and big enough to handle himself. He grunted when Bates offered his hand, but he didn't accept that hand.

Gil Evans did and shook it warmly. Evans was about sixty, dapper and slim. He had a broad grin and a friendly manner. Evans' secretary was an owl-eyed young man with horn-rimmed glasses. His name was Leonard Lloyd, and if his appearance was any indication, he was an excellent secretary. He looked as if he had made up for the job. Pencils stuck out of a breast pocket. His fingers were ink-stained and he carried shorthand books in his side coat pocket. His manner was half-servile.

"I'm sorry to break in on you like this, gentlemen," Bates said, "especially when you are busy getting the praise you deserve from people who see those exhibits. It seems that all of you were in this office between nine-

[Turn page]

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eight tonight and approximately ninety-two. During that time, a man was murdered across the street. Shot by someone who stood in the window of this office. Do any of you men carry a gun?"

Ralph Hutton stirred uneasily in his chair. "Wouldn't we be fools to admit it, Sergeant? No, I do not carry a gun. No reason to."

King, Lloyd and Evans shook their heads. Bates leaned against the edge of the desk.

"All right," the detective-sergeant said. "Now I want to know if anything has been stolen out there in the exhibit area. Some of the articles are of considerable value. Mr. King, will you check on this?"

King nodded and hurried out. Ralph Hutton arose.

"Am I under arrest, Sergeant?"

"Certainly not," Bates answered. "Just one more thing, and you may all leave. I want permission to search each of you."

Surprisingly, the sardonic Ralph Hutton agreed instantly, while Evans promptly rejected the idea and told his secretary to do the same thing. Bates searched Hutton, found he was equipped with a wallet and all the other essentials a man carries. He let Hutton go and finally talked Evans and Lloyd into emptying their pockets. Each had a wallet. Bates dismissed them, sat down and wondered if he shouldn't drop the whole thing. After all, Homicide knew more about these things than he did.

Then he thought of Ladyfingers. How the runt had called on him first when he found himself in trouble he couldn't cope with. Ladyfingers hadn't been a bad-hearted man. Just weak, whenever he saw a bulging wallet. That was why Bates was so disappointed. He had hoped that one of the suspects would be without his wallet. Evidence of that sort would point straight to the man as being Ladyfingers' victim.

Bates closed his eyes in serious thought for a few minutes. Soon the Homicide Squad would barge in and take over. He had found nothing. Oh, he knew four suspects, but finding that out was easy. He knew where the shot had been fired from. A simple matter of trajectory and elimination of possible windows.

Ladyfingers had lifted something of value. It was not on his body, so it must still be inside this exhibit. It was not a wallet. At least none of the suspects had missed one. Yet the article must have attracted Ladyfingers'

nimble digits.

Bates picked up the telephone and called Headquarters. He had Ladyfingers' entire record read to him. There was nothing in it he did not already know. He hung up, pondered a moment, then made a long distance call to the prison where Ladyfingers had been in residence last.

He ended his conversation just as King walked into the office. King sat down behind the desk.

"We've checked everything as well as possible under the circumstances," he informed. "Nothing appears to be missing, Sergeant."

"Get Mr. Hutton, Bates said, "and we'll go over his stamp collection. Just on a hunch."

The Homicide Squad was bustling in as Bates, King and Hutton stepped up to the glass cases housing the stamp exhibit. Bates knew he would have to work fast.

"Look 'em over, Mr. Hutton," he suggested. "Carefully this time. Maybe they all seem to be there, and maybe they aren't. What is the most expensive thing in the exhibit?"

**H**UTTON pointed to a block of four postage stamps. Strange ones, showing an ancient airplane flying upside down.

"That block is priceless," he said. "An engraver's error caused the plane to be printed upside down. Only one sheet was printed and escape inspection to be released for sale. There aren't a dozen stamps left, and none in a block of four. They are worth thousands."

"Take them out and have a good look at them," Bates suggested. "Make certain they are the originals."

Hutton gave a yelp of alarm, ran around to the back of the case and unlocked it with a key he carried in his pocket. His hands were shaking as he lifted out the mounted block of stamps. He brought them beneath a stronger light. Then he shouted for a magnifying glass, got one and his next cry was filled with as much horror as if he'd stumbled on a murder.

"Forgeries!" he screamed. "I've been robbed!"

Later, after the forgery was proved an accomplished fact, Bates walked slowly over to the Evans' display of doll houses. Inspector Collins joined him.

"That was a pretty good hunch," Collins said. "About the forged stamps, I mean. How

in the world did you ever guess it?"

Bates grinned. "Easy, sir. You see, a Pick-pocket Squad detective gets to know his criminals. The confirmed ones, that is. Once a pickpocket, those boys can't seem to resist the impulse to lift a leather again. So the crooks we deal with are regulars. We get to know all about them. Now Ladyfingers spent a great deal of time in prison. He wasn't exactly the type to be drawn to an exhibit like this unless there was something here to interest him."

"Wherever a crowd assembles there is interest enough for a pickpocket," Collins growled.

"True Inspector. But, as a rule, they don't like working inside a building like this. Not Ladyfingers. He wanted plenty of room to spread out if anything went wrong. So I wondered if he could have been drawn here because of one of the exhibits. I called the prison. Ladyfingers did a year and a half last time. During his sentence, he became interested in philately. Postage stamps. Read everything he could get on the subject and spent what little he could earn on stamps."

"Oh—like that," Collins said. "Well, it was good work anyhow. But I don't see how it helps us in finding out who killed Ladyfingers. We have a motive perhaps and then, again, what does it mean? He was killed because he lifted something. I'd say it was that block of stamps mounted on a bit of cardboard. Maybe he had a doublecrossing pal along who didn't want to split."

"Oh no," Bates interjected. "Ladyfingers was shot from Peter King's office. If he had a pal, that friend would have taken no chances like that. Anyway, the killer didn't approach Ladyfingers to search him for the stolen stamps. He was merely content with killing him, which meant that Ladyfingers didn't have the stamps on him and the killer knew it."

"All right, where are they then?" Collins asked testily.

"I wish I knew," Bates groaned.

King, Lloyd, Evans and Hutton joined them. Hutton was still pale from the shock of his loss.

"I'm offering a reward," he announced. "One thousand dollars. I want those stamps back."

"We want the man who killed Ladyfingers," Bates countered. "And we don't need a thousand-dollar offer to make us

[Turn page]

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keep trying to find out."

Bates idly picked a wad of chewing gum off the side of one doll house. Evans saw him do it, rushed away and returned with a rag and some cleaning fluid. He set about mopping the spot.

"Vandals," he said sourly. "Strictly vandals. To lodge a wad of chewing gum against my doll house! I wish I had seen who did it."

"Chewing gum," Hutton sighed. "I lose something worth thousands and he worries about chewing gum. Inspector, I demand action on this. I don't know what connection the murder had with the theft of my stamps. I don't even care so long as the stamps are returned. And look for a man who knows a great deal about philately, because the forgery job was excellent."

Collins groaned. "The only man connected with this case—except ourselves—who knew anything about stamps, was Ladyfingers, and he's dead. Bates, did you search that office from which you claim the shot was fired?"

"Top to bottom," Bates said. "No sign of a gun, and no prints. Take my word for that."

**COLLINS** stalked away, followed by all the others except Peter King who was staring at Bates.

"You searched my office? Sergeant, I don't believe it. Frankly, I wondered if you had, and I checked somewhat. Nothing had been disturbed."

Bates grinned. "You never saw a man more expert in searching a place than I am. Well, I'm going home. This thing is out of my line and out of my hands. Good night, Mr. King."

Bates walked briskly toward the exit. On his way, he met Gil Evans and Leonard Lloyd. They were hunched forward, eyes on the floor like bird dogs scenting a trail. Evans bumped into Bates.

"Oh," Evans said. "Sorry. Did you see my cane anywhere? It's a malacca. My wife gave it to me before she died. I've got to have it back."

"I didn't even know you carried a cane," Bates said. "Good luck in finding it."

Bates passed through the exit, walked down the street and dived into the next alley. He crawled over a fence, returned to the back of the Industrial Building and checked around for some means of entering it unseen. There was a loading platform and a door. He found a bell beside the door and rang it.

A porter came to find out what he wanted. "I'm to pick up a parcel," Bates said. "Didn't know if I should use the main entrance."

"At this time of night," the porter growled, "you come to the back. What do I know about a parcel? See somebody in front."

"Thanks."

Bates stepped back and his left hand slipped from the grasp he had maintained on the edge of the door. His fingers had already pushed the lock release. He faded into the darkness, stopped and smoked a cigarette, cupping his hand to shade the glow. Finally, he tramped on the butt, walked back to the door and let himself in.

The great building had grown silent. Bates glanced at his watch. It was after eleven, and he was certain the exhibit was closed down and that even Inspector Collins and his staff were gone. Bates made his way, by trial and error, through the vast floor space of the building and finally reached the portion allotted to the exhibit.

He found it dark, and was gratified. He had already selected a good place to hide and be comfortable at the same time. He sat down behind one of the great urns and pondered the foolishness of all this if he were wrong. Collins, for one, wouldn't like it, because he thought Bates had stepped too far out of his rôle already. Bates was supposed to be a Pickpocket Squad detective and leave murders to Homicide.

He wanted to smoke, but didn't dare. Someone was coming back here tonight. He knew that. It would be Peter King, who managed the building, or Leonard Lloyd, secretary to Gil Evans who owned the doll house exhibit. Or Ralph Hutton, whose precious block of stamps had been stolen. Or Gil Evans himself.

In the intense darkness and the sepulchral quiet that filled the vast room, Bates found thinking easy. There was nothing to distract him. He tried to puzzle out just what had happened. Ladyfingers, knowing of the stamp exhibit, had come for a look. He hadn't intended to do any business tonight.

Perhaps Ladyfingers had seen someone exchange the forged stamps for the real ones. Perhaps Ladyfingers had changed his mind and determined to make his visit not only interesting, but profitable, and had lifted some sort of a pocket case in which the real stamps had been thrust. With the stamps in

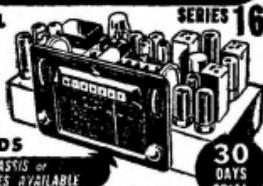
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his possession, Ladyfingers had then quickly guessed what must have happened. He knew the man who had stolen them and substituted the forgeries.

Furthermore, this man was aware that Ladyfingers knew it, but the wily little pick-pocket had been too speedy. He had gone out, stopped the first policeman he met and asked that Bates be sent for. That was reasonable. Once, when Ladyfingers had been arrested by another detective, he had shown considerable pique and expressed himself in no uncertain terms that Sergeant Bates, alone, was supposed to arrest him. Ladyfingers had known that Bates would give him a fair shake.

The thief had tried to follow Ladyfingers, but had been prevented from doing so. Yet he had seen the little crook approach the policeman, watched the cop hurry away, and sensed that detectives would be on it next. The thief had hurried to King's office, obtained a gun somewhere if he wasn't carrying one, and changed from a thief into a murderer.

Yet killing Ladyfingers had not returned the stamps. Bates was certain of that. Ladyfingers had stashed the loot, as he always did. The thief-murderer knew it, because he had made no attempt to reach Ladyfingers' body to search it. Therefore, the killer would be back to get those stamps. Anyway, Bates found himself praying he would.

IT WAS after two o'clock in the morning when Bates heard the snick of a door-knob. He arose quietly and peered around the side of the great urn. There was a light in the lobby of the place and it backgrounded the man who stepped inside. It was Leonard Lloyd, the studious-looking secretary to Gil Evans.

Lloyd had a flashlight and snapped it on. He sprayed the large room with it and walked rapidly in the direction of the urns. Bates got set. As Lloyd came around one of the urns, Bates circled his own vase. Lloyd didn't see or hear him.

The secretary proceeded toward a supply room, his flashlight bobbing impatiently ahead of him. It centered on the door. Lloyd muttered something and unhooked the cane which hung on the doorknob. He put it over his arm and began walking rapidly back to the exit. Bates let him go. There was a smile on his face now.

Lloyd disappeared and again silence settled

down over the place. But not for long. That door opened again, only this time the lobby light wasn't lit and Bates couldn't see anything more than a shadowy blur.

The intruder also had a flashlight, but its beam never reflected against anything to bring him into visibility. All Bates could see was the stream of light. The man appeared to be uncertain where to begin. He started over near a row of Fifteenth Century armor, trying to be quiet about it, but clanking the metal plates against one another loudly.

Every time a plate clanked, Bates took a couple of steps. He was getting closer and closer to the man. Then the intruder's flash raised suddenly and Bates was almost caught in its beam. He broke into a cold sweat until the ray darted to the left and centered on the row of urns.

The man hurried up to them with the impatient speed of someone who felt sure of himself and wanted to get an unpleasant and perhaps dangerous task over with. He began with the smaller jars, thrusting his flash into each, and muttering imprecations when he found nothing. He reached the urns that were taller than himself, tipped one of them over and its weight surprised him, for he almost dropped the thing.

Quite suddenly, and much to his amazement, the urn righted itself and was pushed erect. A voice came out of the darkness.

"You almost ruined that one, Mr. Hutton. Shall we try the next one now?"

Hutton's flashlight wavered and came to rest on Sergeant Bates.

"So," he said wearily, "you are as clever as I figured you might be. I won't make any trouble, Sergeant."

"I hoped you would," Bates said. "You killed a friend of mine. Turn around while I give you the once-over."

Hutton was not armed. He lowered his hands. Bates had the flash now.

"Why didn't you seize Lloyd when he came in here?" Hutton asked.

Bates laughed. "Because I had an idea you hid Evans' cane, hung it on the supply doorknob after he left, then phoned him a little while ago to say you just remembered seeing the cane. Evans thought enough of it to take instant action. He sent Lloyd. You figured if there were any police hiding in here, they'd grab Lloyd. When he came out with the cane, unmolested and unexcited,

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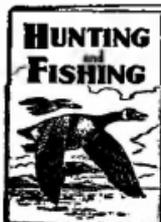
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you thought everything was clear."

Hutton mopped his forehead.

"I'm glad it's over, Sergeant. Yes, I stole my own stamps, and substituted the forgeries. The real stamps were insured. I thought I could collect and still have my stamps. That pickpocket saw me fooling around the case, perhaps saw me put the real stamps into a leather case I carried in my pocket.

"At any rate, he hustled up, collided with me and I no longer had the leather case. A little while later, I saw the case on the floor. It was empty. I saw the pickpocket hurrying out, but it was too late to stop him. I thought I was finished. My only hope lay in the fact that I'd been robbed by a crook and he might be satisfied to hold the stamps for ransom."

**B**ATES shook his head. "Not Ladyfingers. He respected what those stamps represented and he was sore enough to see that you were arrested. You killed him so he'd never talk. If the stamps were found on him—well, he was a known crook and you'd hardly come under any suspicion. Let's go, Hutton."

"Sergeant—the stamps. Do you know where they are?"

"Maybe," Bates answered. "Walk ahead of me, Hutton. Straight to King's office. There's a phone there. I don't trust you enough to use one of the public booths. You might powder out in the darkness."

Hutton said nothing, but hiked toward King's office. The door wasn't locked. He stepped in and Bates turned on the lights. Hutton sank into a low leather chair beside the desk. He cocked both feet against the edge of the waste-basket.

"Before you phone, Sergeant, can't we make some sort of a deal? I've lost most of my money, but if the insurance company pays off on those stamps, I'll have enough to split a considerable sum."

"And have Ladyfingers haunt me?" Bates grimaced. "No, thanks. Besides I'm honest, even if you don't exactly understand the term. Sit tight, Hutton. I'm going to phone."

"But you do know where that pickpocket hid the stamps?" Hutton demanded in a strident voice.

"Oh, yes. Sure, I know. Pickpockets develop habits, Mr. Hutton, and they never break them. I knew where Ladyfingers had hidden the stamps soon after I looked the exhibition hall over. But I didn't say any-

thing or try to get them because I wanted Ladyfingers' murderer to come back."

Hutton gave himself a hunching rise in the chair. As he did, his feet slipped off the side of the waste-basket, upsetting it. He murmured an apology and reached down to straighten the basket. His right hand suddenly darted beneath the crumpled paper and the rubbish. It came free, holding a long-barreled pistol. The gun centered on Sergeant Bates.

Bates didn't move. His right hand rested on the desk top, just behind a large metal lamp which was unlit. His left hand dangled at his side.

Hutton smiled. "It really gives me a laugh, Sergeant. In my day, I made nearly a million dollars. True, I lost it, but it takes brains to get that much money. With the insurance claim paid, I'll have enough to start over again. And have my stamps too. I'll make another million because I've got brains. That's the difference between you and me. Cops are essentially dumb because they wouldn't be mere cops working for a week's pay if they weren't unintelligent and unimagineative. See what I mean?"

Bates inclined his head a trifle.

"Yes, I do. You made a million because you're smart. I work for sixty-eight dollars a week and I'm dumb. Okay, so I am dumb. I suppose that's the gun you used on Ladyfingers?"

"Of course it is. I had it because I was afraid my plans might go wrong. It's difficult stealing anything, even your own property, in an exhibition hall where there are scores of people milling about. If anyone saw me, I was prepared to, well—"

"I know," Bates grunted. "What happened to Ladyfingers, you mean. What's the next move?"

"You'll find those stamps for me. After they are in my possession, who knows?"

"You'll kill me and let Lloyd take the rap. Or Evans. You can't afford to let me live, Hutton. I'm death to you."

Hutton shrugged and arose. "Your brain isn't clouded by fear, at any rate, Sergeant. Yes, I shall be forced to kill you. Get up!"

Bates didn't move, except to push the heavy metal lamp out of the way. He used his left hand to do this. His right, until now well-hidden behind the lamp, held a service pistol.

"The question is," Bates said quietly, "can

[Turn page]



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you kill me so fast that I won't have time to pull the trigger? I'm willing to gamble that you can't. Are you?"

Hutton backed up a step. "How did you get that gun?"

Bates' eyes were somber and narrowed. "I brought you to this office for a specific reason, Mr. Hutton. To make you go for the gun I knew you'd concealed here. When you did, I drew my own weapon. Up to then the evidence was weak. You could have discredited my story of why you came here by saying you wanted to hunt for your own stamps again when nobody was around. Your word is as good as mine—or was. But when you went for the gun, you revealed yourself as a killer and that's what I wanted. I told Inspector Collins I'd searched the office. He did, too, but I had your gun in my pocket all the time. You thought we missed the waste-basket. Later, I put the gun back."

**H**UTTON'S gun was wavering just the slightest.

"What's all this going to get you except swift death?" he demanded. "You won't shoot first. Cops never shoot first."

Bates nodded. "That in the rule book, but on the same page it says we can shoot back. When do we start, Hutton?"

The murderer's lips were drawn back in a snarl. His eyes were bulging and he breathed with great upheavals of his chest. The gun wavered a little more. Then more and more, until it tumbled out of his hand.

"I—I can't do it!" he half sobbed. "I can't kill you."

Bates walked over, picked up the gun and shoved Hutton into a chair. He put handcuffs on the man's wrists.

"Not much you couldn't," he derided. "If I had no gun and your own life wasn't in danger, I'd have been dead long ago."

Bates went over to the phone and called Headquarters. Half an hour later, he was doing some fancy explaining to Inspector Collins.

"—so I knew the man who killed Lady-fingers would be back," he finished. "I wanted to wait for him alone because if I happened to be wrong about this whole thing, I'd be the only fool."

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"Do you really know where those stamps are hidden?" Collins demanded, some of the heat fading from his voice.

"Bring Hutton along." Bates smiled. "He'll be interested."

They walked to the exhibition hall and Bates stopped near the row of doll houses. He patted one of them.

"Hutton, you were standing right here when I picked a wad of chewing gum off the side of this house. You even derided Evans when he cleaned up the spot the gum made. The whole thing meant nothing to you, but to me it meant everything. All pickpockets hide their loot if there is any danger of being trapped with it. Being on the run, sometimes they can't find the place again so they leave little trademarks easily visible which they can locate afterwards. Ladyfingers used chewing gum. Nice, fresh chewing gum with the flavor of mint. He popped a stick into his mouth the moment he knew he was in trouble.

"I smelled the mint aroma from his lips after he was dead. Take a good look at the floor covering of that miniature kitchen in the doll house. It's gray and resembles lino-

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leum. Only it's a piece of glazed cardboard. See?"

Bates pulled the cardboard free, turned it over and the block of stamps was exposed. Hutton began to curse in a low, steady monotone.

"All his stamps were mounted on backgrounds like this," Bates said. "Ladyfingers, looking for a place to hide the stamps, noticed that the floor covering of this doll house kitchen was also gray, like the card. Furthermore, the card fitted the floor almost exactly. Or close enough so the discrepancy wouldn't be noticed. He put it there, then tried to get away to tell the police what had happened."

Inspector Collins took the card of stamps and put them into his pocket.

"Tomorrow," he said, "I wish you'd stop by my office, Sergeant. I could use a man like you on Homicide."

"Oh no." Bates grinned widely. "I like my own job. I deal with nice people, like pickpockets. Trading blows with killers would make me go sour on life. But I'm glad I nailed this one. You know, I'll miss Ladyfingers. He was a pretty darned good pickpocket."

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(Continued from page 88)

What a fool I was! And yet the solution was lying right under my nose the whole time!"

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"And there's one point that still stumps me," I interrupted. "Where on earth did she get that night after she passed me? I chased down after her hell for leather but she'd vanished into thin air. She wasn't in the court or the gyp's pantry or—anywhere. And what's more, she didn't leave the college until Mrs. Fancher and Mrs. Bigger did about ten minutes later on."

"Well, I dare say there's a good deal more to be cleared up before we can get a conviction, Mr. Fenton. I'll be coming round to see you tomorrow, sir, and then I'll tell you where we stand. Now I must be getting along. Good day, everyone."

With a solemn nod in the direction of the Master and Camilla, the inspector let himself out by the door. He returned almost immediately.

"There are three young gentlemen asking for you at the front door, Dr. Hyssop," he said diffidently. "Mr. Somerville, Mr. Grayling and Mr. Comstock. Shall I let them in, sir?"

The Master looked piteously toward me. "Please, Hilary, my boy, give them my compliments and tell them that I am a trifle indisposed. I think I'd like to be alone to read *Rabbi Ben Ezra* through before dinner. This sad business has rather made me feel the liabilities of my age, and perhaps Browning will help me to realize some of its compensations. Thank you—it's that red book on the third shelf. Good-by, my children. Good-by and God bless you both."

WHEN Camilla and I stepped out into the late afternoon sunshine, we found Comstock, Grayling and Somerville on the front doorstep in a state of prodigious excitement. They had seen Mary Smith go off with the plainclothes man and they naturally pressed us with questions.

As I looked at their eager ingenuous countenances, I found it almost impossible to believe that I had ever entertained such terrible suspicions of these clear-eyed English youths. They listened with absorbed interest as I told them as much of the story as I could without implicating Camilla or disclosing

[Turn page]

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her family history.

When I came to the end of my recital I noticed that Somerville's usual expression of jaunty self-assurance had changed to one of incredulous horror and bewilderment. He was biting his finger nails nervously. As the others broke forth into a stream of chatter and comment, he beckoned me aside with an urgent gesture.

"So you thought it was a ghost you saw on 'A' staircase last Monday night?" he whispered.

I nodded cautiously.

"Oh, my Lord," he groaned, "and I could have explained it so easily if I'd known—that is, if I'd known there was any suspicion of foul play about Baumann's death. I never said anything because, well, because—" he was hanging his head and looked thoroughly ashamed of himself "—I didn't see any possible connection."

"What on earth are you driving at, Stuart?" I asked impatiently.

He paused a moment before replying and then drew me a few paces further away.

"Well, on Monday night," he said in a low, mysterious voice, "after the lights went out, I ran downstairs to my room to get a flashlight. I was just coming up again to finish my ghost story—and the whisky—when I ran bang smack into a sweet-smelling female right outside my own door.

"Having almost knocked her down, I naturally had to put my arms round her to—well—to steady her. I could feel at once that she was young and tender. And she didn't seem to object particularly. Then I heard you coming down the stairs, so I quickly pulled her into my room. I kissed her once or twice and then—all of a sudden—the lights went on again.

"I had an awful shock when I saw who it was. She was upset too. She declared she thought I was Hank; she begged me not to tell; she said she'd lose her position and, well—I never saw any reason why I should tell, anyhow . . . at least, not until now. It would have been rather caddish."

"Gosh, man, you were lucky you didn't get a knife in your ribs," I cried. "She must have had one with her. She probably took the

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Kaffir dagger from Baumann's room that night and afterwards used it to kill Hank. You'd better be careful how you kiss strange females in the dark in the future, Stuart."

He ran a hand through his hair, half smiling, half abashed.

"I'm not altogether sure it wouldn't have been worth it," he muttered. "What a perfectly ripping death! In the middle of a long ling-g-gering kiss. Um-ah!"

"Stuart, you really are rather repulsive," I said smiling, "but you have at least cleared up what, for me, was the most baffling part of the whole business. The way she seemed to disappear that night was positively spooky. And coming on top of that creepy yarn about your Marlborough friend! Incidentally, now that you've solved my little mystery, I wish you would tell me the end of that one. It was a darn good story."

Somerville grinned. "I'm afraid the actual dénouement is a bit of a flop. The wretched lad ought to have died on his eighteenth birthday by rights—but he didn't do anything so sweet and simple. What he actually did was to lose all his hair and he woke up next morning as bald as the jolly old curate's egg."

"And incidentally, he's up at Oxford now, poor devil—going to be a parson, too! He might just as well have pipped it at the proper time and given the story a decent ending. However, as far as I know, there's been no return of that particular nightmare."

I looked at my watch. "Well, and let's hope our little nightmare is over, too. And now I've got to run along. I want to—see a jeweller about a ring."

"Before the hot water runs cold, eh?" There was a momentary return to the mocking, moviesque accent. "Well, bub, I dig you on a very slick chick."

"Quit calling my babe a chick," I parried in that bit of Cambridge still passed for jive talk. "Hit the road, frog."

And with this utterly British slang mala-propism, we turned to rejoin the others.

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