

CHAPTER II

THE STRANGE PHOTOGRAPH

At the dread word the crowd drew back instinctively. Until the official spoke, no one had thought of murder, yet of a certainty this was the only explanation. And not only murder, but robbery—watch, chain, purse, pocket-book, all were gone. The pockets were turned inside out.

And the murderer?

No answer could be returned to this vital question. Directly the station master discovered the nature of the tragedy he ordered all the exits to be closed. Messages were dispatched to the adjoining stations, announcing the detention of the train and the reason, and search was made for the possible assassin.

If it could be decided where the crime had been committed a clue might be at hand. This point was not easy to determine. Both at Basingstoke and Micheldever the guard had glanced at the carriage as he passed, and apparently it was empty. It was not until the train reached Winchester that he looked inside. All the time the murdered man must have been lying at the bottom of the compartment, and this would go to show that the murder had been perpetrated before the train arrived at Basingstoke.

The carriage contained three compartments; the middle one was the scene of the mysterious tragedy. The next where the passenger, with his travelling-cap pulled down over his eyes, was