

at the head of the stairs, smoking his pipe as usual after his day's work."

The great pathologist knit his brows and cast down his head thoughtfully. He was a man of great influence, the head of his profession—for, being the expert of the Home Office, his work, clever, ingenious, and yet cool and incisive, was to lay the accusing finger upon the criminal.

Hardly a session passed at the Old Bailey but Sir Houston Bird appeared in the witness box, spruce in his morning coat, and presenting somewhat the appearance of a bank-clerk; yet, in his cold, unemotional words, he explained to the jury the truth as written plainly by scientific investigation. Many murderers had been hanged upon his words, always given with that strange, deliberate hesitation, and yet words that could never, for a moment, be shaken by counsel for the defence.

Indeed, long ago defending counsel had given up cross-examination on any evidence presented by Sir Houston Bird, who had at his service the most expert chemists and analysts which our time could produce.

"This is a mystery," exclaimed the great expert, gazing upon the body of his friend with his big grey eyes. "Do you tell me that he was actually locked in here?"

"Yes, Sir Houston," replied Thomasson.

"Curious—most curious," exclaimed the great pathologist, as though speaking to himself. Then, addressing Sainsbury, after the latter had been speaking, he said: "The poor fellow declared that he'd been shot. Is that so?"

"Yes. He said that he felt a sudden and very sharp pain, and the words he used were, 'I've been shot! I know I have!'"

"And yet there appears no trace of any wound, or injury," Sir Houston remarked, much puzzled.

"Both windows and door were secured from the inside, therefore no assassin could possibly escape, sir," declared Thomasson. "I suppose there's no one concealed here in the room?" he added, glancing apprehensively around.

IN a few moments the three men had examined every nook and corner of the apartment—the two long cupboards, beneath the table, behind the heavy plush curtains and the chenille portiere. But nobody was in concealment.

The whole affair was a profound mystery.

Sir Houston, dark-eyed and thoughtful, gazed down upon the body of his friend.

Sainsbury and Thomasson had already removed Jerrold's coat, and were searching for any bullet-wound. But there was none. Again Sir Houston inquired what the dying man had actually said, and again Sainsbury repeated the disjointed words which the prostrate man had gasped with his dying breath.

To the pathologist it was quite clear first that Jerome Jerrold believed he had been shot; secondly, that no second person could have entered the room, and thirdly, that the theory of assassination might be at once dismissed.

"I think that poor Jerrold has died a natural death—sudden and painful, for if he had been shot some wound

would most certainly show," Sir Houston remarked.

"There will have to be an inquest, won't there?" asked Sainsbury.

"Of course. And, Thomasson, you had better ring up the police at once and inform them of the facts," urged Sir Houston, who, turning again to Sainsbury, added: "At the post-mortem we shall, of course, quickly establish the cause of death."

Again he bent, and with his forefinger drew down the dead man's nether lip.

"Curious," he remarked, as though speaking to himself, as he gazed into the white, distorted face. "By the symptoms I would certainly have suspected poisoning. Surely he can't have committed suicide!"

And he glanced eagerly around the room, seeking to discover any bottle, glass, or cup that could have held a fatal draught.

"I don't see anything which might lead us to such a conclusion, Sir Houston," answered Sainsbury.

"But he may have swallowed it in tablet form," the other suggested.

"Ah! yes. I never thought of that!"

"His dying words were hardly the gasping remarks of a suicide."

"Unless he wished to conceal the fact that he had taken his own life?" remarked Sainsbury.

"If he committed suicide, then he will probably have left some message behind him. They generally to," Sir Houston said; whereupon both men crossed to the writing-table, which, neat and tidy, betrayed the well-ordered life its owner had led.

An electric lamp with a shade of pale green silk was burning, and showed that the big padded writing-chair had recently been occupied. Though nothing lay upon the blotting pad, there were, in the rack, three letters the man now dead had written and stamped for post. Sainsbury took them and glanced at the addresses.

"Had we not better examine them?" he suggested; and, Sir Houston consenting, he tore them open one after the other and quickly read their contents. All three, however, were professional letters to patients.

Next they turned their attention to the waste-paper basket. In it were a number of letters which Jerrold had torn up and cast away. Thomasson having gone to the telephone to inform the police of the tragic affair, the pair busied themselves in piecing together the various missives and reading them.

All were without interest—letters such as a busy doctor would receive every day. Suddenly, however, Sainsbury spread out before him some crumpled pieces of cartridge-paper which proved to be the fragments of a large, strong envelope, which had been torn up hurriedly and discarded.

There were words on the envelope in Jerrold's neat handwriting, and in ink which was still blue in its freshness. As Sainsbury put them together he read, to his astonishment:

"Private. For my friend, Mr. John Sainsbury, of Heath Street, Hampstead. Not to be opened until one year after my death."

Sir Houston, attracted by the cry of surprise which escaped Sainsbury's lips, looked over his shoulder and read the words.

"Ah!" he sighed. "Suicide! I thought he would leave something!"



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CHAPTER V.

Certain Curious Facts.

BOTH men searched eagerly through the drawers of the writing-table to see if the dead man had left another envelope addressed to his friend. Two of the drawers were locked, but these they opened with the key which they found upon poor Jerrold's watch-chain which he was wearing.

Some private papers, accounts and ledgers, were in the drawers, but the envelope of which they were in search they failed to discover.

It seemed evident that Jerome Jerrold had written the envelope in which he had enclosed a letter, but, on reflection, he had torn it up. Though the crumpled fragments of the envelope were there, yet the letter—whatever it might have been—was missing. And their careful examination of the waste-paper basket revealed nothing, whereupon Sir Houston Bird remarked:

"He may, of course, have changed his mind, and burned it, after all!"

"Perhaps he did," Jack agreed. "But I wonder what could have been the message he wished to give me a year after his death? Why not now?"

"People who take their own lives sometimes have curious hallucinations. I have known many. Suicide is a fascinating, if very grim study."

"Then you really think this is a case of suicide?"

"I can, I fear, give no opinion until after the post-mortem, Mr. Sainsbury," was Sir Houston's guarded reply, his face grave and thoughtful.

"BUT it is all so strange, so remarkable," exclaimed the younger man. "Why did he tell me that he'd been shot, if he hadn't?"

"Because to you, his most intimate friend, he perhaps, as you suggested,

wished to conceal the fact that he had been guilty of the cowardly action of taking his own life," was the reply.

"It is a mystery—a profound mystery," declared Jack Sainsbury. "Jerome dined with Mr. Trustram, and the latter came back here with him. Meanwhile, Mr. Lewin Rodwell was very anxious concerning him. Why? Was Rodwell a friend of Jerome's? Do you happen to know that?"

"I happen to know to the contrary," declared the great pathologist. "Only a week ago we met at Charing Cross Hospital, and some chance remark brought up Rodwell's name, when Jerrold burst forth angrily, and declared most emphatically that the man who posed as such a patriotic Englishman would, one day, be unmasked and exposed in his true colours. In confidence, he made an allegation that Lewin Rodwell's real name was Ludwig Heitzman, and that he was born in Hanover. He had become a naturalized Englishman ten years ago in Glasgow, and had, by deed-poll, changed his name to Lewin Rodwell."

Jack Sainsbury stared the speaker full in the face.

Lewin Rodwell, the great patriot who, since the outbreak of war, had been in the forefront of every charitable movement, who had been lauded by the Press, and to whom the Prime Minister had referred in the most eulogistic terms in the House of Commons, was a German!

"That's utterly impossible," exclaimed Jack. "He is one of the directors of the Ochrida Copper Corporation, in whose office I am. I know Mr. Rodwell well. There's no trace whatever of German birth about him."

"Jerrold assured me that his real name was Heitzman, that he had been

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