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"My dear fellow, is it possible you do not see how strongly it bears upon the case?"

"I cannot say that I do, unless it were that he wished to be able to do this signature if an action for breach of promise were instituted."

"No, that was not the point. However, I shall write two letters, which should settle the matter. One is to a firm in the city, the other is to the young lady's stepfather. Mr. Windbank, asking him whether he could meet us here at 6 o'clock tomorrow evening. It is just as well that we should do business with the male relatives. And now, doctor, let me hear nothing until the answers to those letters come, so we may put our little problem upon the shelf for the interim."

"I had had so many reasons to believe in my friend's subtle powers of reasoning, and extraordinary energy in action, that I felt that he held in his hands all the keys which would lead up to the identity of the disappearing bridegroom of Miss Mary Sutherland."

A professional case of great gravity was engaging my own attention at the time, and the whole of next day I was busy at the bedside of the sufferer. I found myself free, and was able to spring into a hansom and drive to Baker street, half afraid that I might be too late to assist at the denouement of the little mystery. I found Sherlock Holmes alone, however, sitting at his desk, with his long, thin form curled up in the recesses of his arm chair. A formidable array of bottles and test tubes, with the pungent smell of hydrochloric acid, told me that he had spent his day in the chemical work which was so dear to him.

"Well, have you solved it?" I asked, as I entered.

"Yes. It was the bisulphate of baryta."

"No, no, the mystery!" I cried.

"Oh, that! I thought of the salt that I have been working upon. There was never any mystery in the matter, though, as I said yesterday, some of the details are of interest. The only drawback is that there is no law, I fear, that can touch the scoundrel."

"Who was he, then, and what was his object in deserting Miss Sutherland?"

"The question was hardly out of my mouth, and Holmes had not yet opened his lips to reply, when we heard a heavy footfall in the passage, and a tap at the door.

"This is the girl's stepfather, Mr. James Windbank," said Holmes. "He has written to me to say that he would be here at 6. Come in!"

"The man who entered was a sturdy, middle-aged fellow, some 30 years of age, clean shaven and sallow-skinned, with a bland, insinuating manner, and a pair of wonderfully sharp and penetrating gray eyes. He shot a questioning glance at each of us, placed his

shiny top hat upon the sideboard, and with a slight bow sidled down into the nearest chair.

"Good evening, Mr. James Windbank," said Holmes. "I think that this type-written letter is from you, in which you made an appointment with me for 6 o'clock."

"Yes, sir, I am afraid I am a little late, but I am not quite my own master, you know. I am sorry that Miss Sutherland has troubled you about this matter, for I think it is far better for her to wash linen of the sort in public. It was quite against my wishes that she came, but she is a very excitable, impulsive girl, as you may have noticed. She is not easily controlled when she had made up her mind on a point. Of course, I did not see you so much, as you are not connected with the official police, but it is not pleasant to have a family misfortune like this noised abroad. Besides, it is a useless expense, for how could you possibly find Hosmer Angel?"

"On the contrary," said Holmes, quietly. "I have every reason to believe that I will succeed in discovering Hosmer Angel."

Mr. Windbank gave a violent start, and dropped his gloves. "I'm delighted to hear it," he said.

"It is a curious thing," remarked Holmes, "that a typewriter has really quite as much individuality as a man's handwriting. Unless they are quite new, no two of them write exactly alike. Some letters get more worn than others, and some wear only on one side. Now, you remark in this note of yours, Mr. Windbank, that the 'e' in the word 'the' is slightly slurred over the tail of the 'r'. There are fourteen other peculiarities, but those are the more obvious."

"We do all our correspondence with this machine at the office, and no doubt it is a little worn," Mr. Holmes answered, glancing keenly at Windbank with his little eyes.

"And now I will show you what is really a very interesting study," Mr. Windbank continued. "I have a photograph of some of these days on the typewriter, and its relation to crime. It is a subject to which I have devoted some little attention. I have here four letters which purport to come from the missing man. They are all type written. Each case, not only are the 'e's' slurred, and the 'r's' tailless; but you will observe, if you care to use