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the lady was and that she was dead. I believe the constable would have arrested me at once had it not been that he knew me by name from my articles in 'The Day!'"

"Oh, he's an intelligent man, but all the same you could have scarcely been surprised if he had arrested you."

"As it is, I suppose I am 'detained.'"

"Only until I hear from Miss Willoughby—and I intend to motor to St. Anton's Avenue to-night to see her."

"What, to-night! Everybody will be in bed!"

"I shall have to wake them up; it's too important a matter to stand on any ceremony." The superintendent thought for a few seconds. "I have no doubt that what you have told me is the truth, but it must be confirmed else you will remain 'detained' much longer. Still, to show my confidence in you, I'll take you with me to Colonel Willoughby's house."

Max made no further protest, as he saw Johnson's mind was made up, but he thought the line of action extraordinary.

After some conversation with the constable, Johnson stated that he was going to Earl's Court station at once to look at the compartment, and that in the meantime the surgeon must make a report on the nature of the wound which had killed Miss Chase, and on the time when she had died.

"I wish you would let me come with you, Mr. Johnson," said Max eagerly. "Yes, come along," said Johnson. "It may not be exactly regular, but in the circumstances I see no objection."

BEFORE starting for the railway station, however, Johnson, with the surgeon and Dr. Wagstaff, went into the room in which the body had been placed; when he came back, his face wore a harassed expression.

"Whatever the motive for the murder may have been," he said to Max, "it certainly was not robbery; there are three or four rings on her fingers that are very valuable, and there is a string of pearls round her neck which are real, unless I am greatly mistaken. This is no sordid crime. I believe we must be prepared for something very unusual, something altogether out of the course of ordinary crimes."

"Yes; that is what I have been thinking," said Max. "There must be some strange, perhaps some great story behind it, but I confess I have not a glimmer of a notion what it can be, unless—" Max paused, and looked at the superintendent.

"Unless what, Mr. Hamilton?"

"I hardly like to say it, but the great stories of the world have always behind them the elemental things—love, passion, jealousy, hatred, revenge," Max replied thoughtfully, and paused.

"And you would say that Miss Chase's story, which has ended so disastrously for her, belongs to this class?"

"So it seems to me."

Johnson nodded.

"There is just a chance that she was murdered by some madman," he said; "such things have happened, you know." He mentioned a series of murders, all committed by one man, evidently a lunatic, who had never been caught. "But if the criminal was not insane, which is not a likely supposition, then I agree with you. Now, let us go and see if the compartment in which the body was found—your compartment—can tell us anything."

Johnson, accompanied by Max and the constable, went to Earl's Court station without further delay; the station-master was awaiting them, and immediately asked the constable, "Is there any news?" He seemed to expect to hear some.

"None yet," said Johnson laconically.

Traffic had now ceased on the line for the night, and the whole train, which had brought Max and the murdered woman from St. Anton's Park, was brought up to the platform. The compartment was unsealed, and Johnson made a systematic investigation, but with the exception of the lady's handbag already referred to he found nothing that bore in any way upon the case.

But the bag itself contained more than enough to reward him. For in it was a telegram, that appeared of the

most vital importance; it had been dispatched from the telegraph office at Charing Cross about five o'clock on the previous afternoon; that is, on the Saturday afternoon, for it was now between two and three o'clock on Sunday morning.

The message was "Hamstead Heath station eleven."

The superintendent showed the despatch to Max, observing, "I should not wonder if that was her death-warrant."

Max turned to the station-master.

"What was it you said about the train being about Hamstead Heath station or Finchley Road at the time of Miss Chase's death?" he asked.

"Dr. Wagstaff told us," replied the official, "that she died shortly after eleven o'clock, and I remarked that the train would be near one or other of these stations then."

"Yes," said Johnson in a deep voice, "that telegram brought her to her death."

CHAPTER IV.

The Birth of Love.

"LURED her to her death, poor thing!" cried the station-master, with feeling.

"I don't know about that—quite," dryly said Superintendent Johnson, who was engaged in going over the few other things which the handbag contained—a gold chain-purse, holding both gold and silver money, a small bunch of keys, and a notebook.

Johnson counted the money carefully.

"Nearly six pounds," he said to Max. "Here is another proof that the motive for the crime was not robbery."

Max agreed with a nod.

Johnson glanced at the note-book; then handed the bag and its other contents, except the telegram and the keys, to the constable to take to the police station. He spoke a few words to the station-master, and he and Max got into the taxi for St. Anton's Park. He was taciturn during the journey which occupied perhaps a quarter of an hour.

Max, too, was silent. For the time being his mind was full of this mysterious tragedy, the murder of this young and handsome woman, with whom blind chance, as some fools term it, had associated him. He had seen the telegram, and noted it was unsigned, a fact which at once suggested that Sylvia must have known who had sent it, for otherwise would she have gone late, on a bitter winter night, to Hampstead Heath Station? The telegram implied a considerable degree of intimacy between her and the person who had dispatched it—so much was clear. Who was this person? A man or a woman? He had no doubt it was the former, would a woman have made such an appointment at such a place and hour? It was not at all likely. Who then was this man?

He pictured to himself her meeting this man at this station, and thought of their going into that first-class compartment, of the terrible deed that had been done in the next few minutes, of the murderer arranging her furs and perhaps her veil, so that no one could see who she was, of his stepping out quietly, and as if nothing had happened, at the station before St. Anton's Park that suited him best—probably Willesden. He recalled that the windows of the carriages were white with frost, and how improbable it was that the dreadful act had been witnessed by anyone; he remembered how empty the train was. Everything pointed to a deliberate, premeditated crime. Again he came back to the man who had done it; who could he be that had such knowledge, such power over Sylvia Chase, as to induce her to meet him, as had been the case, and what in the world could have been his motive for killing her?

Lost in these speculations, Max thought that the taxi reached Colonel Willoughby's house in St. Anton's Avenue in an amazingly short time. He felt very uncomfortable about having to arouse his friends, but there was no help for it. The bell was rung several times; at length the Colonel's head was dimly seen thrust out from a window of the second floor.

"Who are you? What's the matter?" asked Colonel Willoughby in a