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jewel she fancied," said Villiers. And the subject dropped.

Nothing was discovered in the bedroom in the nature of a clue, and the same was true of the rest of the flat. Johnson felt as if he had come up against a dead wall, and said so to Max.

"There's nothing left now," he added, "but to go to Hampstead Heath station."

"Will you come here again?" asked Bertha Schmidt.

"Yes, or, if I do not, another officer will come to-day," was the answer. He cautioned her to let everything stand in the flat as he had left it until she heard from him again.

"Will you come with me to Hampstead Heath station?" Johnson asked Max and Villiers, and both assented.

At Hampstead Heath station Johnson heard that two first-class tickets had been bought about eleven o'clock on the previous evening for Earl's Court by a man who wore a fur coat—but there the news came to an abrupt end, for the ticket-clerk could not remember anything more about the man.

"The clues, so far, have all failed me," said Johnson, with deep regret.

"What will you do next?" asked Villiers earnestly.

"I cannot say," answered Johnson. "For the moment I am completely baffled. All is mystery."

CHAPTER VII.

The Rivals.

ABOUT four o'clock on the afternoon of that Sunday Peggy Willoughby was sitting in the drawing room of her father's house in St. Anton's Avenue. Her mother was with her, but her father had withdrawn to his own particular den for his Sunday afternoon nap. For the sake of their servants, the Willoughbys, like a good many other people, dined in the middle of the day on Sundays, with the result, according to the colonel, that a certain amount of slumber—"the slumber of digestion," he called it—was absolutely necessary for his welfare.

Before Max Hamilton and the superintendent had left the house Peggy had told Max that she would like to hear everything there was to be heard and said about the murder of Sylvia, and to hear it as soon as possible. Max had replied that he would call in the afternoon before going to the office of "The Day," where he was due, in the usual course, at six o'clock. So she was expecting to see him walk in any minute. She did not acknowledge to herself that she was anxious to see him for any other reason—though she was; but the prospect of seeing him was distinctly an agreeable one. Hearing the door bell ring, she smiled happily.

She was therefore more than a little disappointed when, instead of Max, Captain Hollander was shown in, though she smiled on him graciously enough. She knew that he was acquainted with Sylvia Chase, and she wondered if he had heard of the tragedy; he was on terms of considerable intimacy with Villiers Chase—and the terrible news might have reached him through that channel, for no doubt Villiers must have heard of the murder early.

Nothing, however, in Hollander's appearance or manner could suggest to anyone that there was such a thing as tragedy in the world. There are some faces that seem to have tragedy written upon them, but most faces wear either a gay or a grave expression, as the circumstances of the moment dictate.

Hollander, a tall, fair man, with broad but not disproportionately broad shoulders considering his height, was good-looking and decidedly handsome, but there was about him that afternoon an atmosphere, as it were, of radiant good-spirits and of buoyant gaiety, combined at the same time with an air of perfect aplomb, which seemed to say that all was very well with him, and that nothing much could be the matter with anybody else.

There was no trace of exaggeration, of vulgarity about him, and any picture of him which failed to convey that he was a person of distinction

would convey a false impression. He was strong, virile, dominant and debonaire.

Peggy had always liked him, and had sometimes preferred him to Max, as has been said, but on this afternoon she had but a small place in her mind for him; it was Max whom she wanted to see, and the presence of Hollander, attractive as he was, emphasized the absence of the other man. Why didn't Max come? Had something occurred to detain him? She was asking these questions as Hollander bowed before her mother and herself, and exchanged the usual greetings.

"I rather thought that you would be here last evening," said Peggy to him. "We were a hand short at bridge, and I telephoned to your rooms, but got no reply."

"Unfortunately," said Hollander, "most unfortunately for me, I had some business last night which kept me out very late." The way in which he spoke implied how much he had lost by not being able to be with her and her friends. "I always enjoy these little informal parties of yours so very much," he went on, turning to Mrs. Willoughby.

That lady smiled. Hollander was a favourite of hers, and she often tried to guess what her daughter thought of him.

"Nothing very exciting happened while we were bridging—that came afterwards," said Mrs. Willoughby, in a voice that suddenly had grown very grave.

"Something very exciting happened afterwards," observed Hollander. "I'm afraid I don't quite understand." He saw that she had become serious, and his tone was sympathetic.

"Then you haven't heard?" asked Peggy.

"Heard! About what?"

"It's the strangest, saddest thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby. "I think you knew Sylvia Chase?"

"Yes, of course, and her brother too," responded Hollander, with a show of interest.

"Villiers Chase was here last night," said Mrs. Willoughby, and paused; tears had come into her eyes. Hollander stirred slightly in his chair, and looked a little distressed. Mrs. Willoughby glanced at Peggy, as if to suggest that she should tell Captain Hollander what had occurred.

"Is it something about the Chases?" inquired Hollander of Peggy.

"ABOUT Sylvia Chase," rejoined Peggy, in troubled accents.

"Some accident?" he hinted, as Peggy hesitated to continue.

"She was murdered last night in the train—the last train that runs from Broad Street to Earl's Court," said Peggy, somewhat abruptly, as she scarcely trusted herself to speak.

"What!" exclaimed Hollander incredulously. "Sylvia Chase murdered—in a train!"

"It is the truth," Mrs. Willoughby joined in, as Hollander gazed at them blankly.

"How did you hear of this frightful thing?" asked Hollander, addressing Peggy.

"That is as strange a part of the sad affair as any," said the girl. "Our friends left us shortly after midnight, and we had all gone to bed—we had been in bed for some time and were asleep—when Max Hamilton roused us all up."

"Max Hamilton!" cried Hollander, and a shadow came upon his face expressive both of surprise and annoyance. He was a keen observer, and something in the way in which Peggy pronounced his rival's name struck him as new and not wholly agreeable to himself.

"Yes, Max," said Peggy, and she lingered on the "Max" for an appreciable instant, a fact which did not escape Hollander's notice. The shadow on his face deepened, and then quickly passed away—for this man had himself well in hand.

"How extraordinary!" he said, but very quietly.

Then Peggy launched upon the story of the finding of the body of Sylvia Chase by Max Hamilton in the first-class compartment of the train, and of what had happened afterwards, adding, "It was lucky for Max that he was



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