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H. H. POWELL, President

**By Some Person or Persons Unknown**

Of course, the detective assented mechanically. This was almost better luck than he had hoped for—the introduction of the Wiltons' name—but it behooved him to walk warily now; he hesitated a moment. “They—the De Lavelles—were very intimate with the Wiltons, were they not?”

“Oh, I shouldn't say that,” Miss Merivale responded carelessly. Basil Wilton was mad on Cecile for a bit, but I think his cousin Paul only came to look after him, to see he didn't get into mischief. Well, in a way, Paul got friendly with Marie—Queenie, as we used to call her then—but there was never any love-making between them, bless you. Paul is Lord Warchester now, you know. I am sure whether he remembers, and what he thinks about this affair when he sees it in the papers.

So did Mr. Hewlett wonder, but there was little to be gained by speculation in that quarter.

“I thought it was Marie that Mr. Basil Wilton admired?”

Miss Merivale shook her head.

“No, it was Cecile. Basil Wilton was just crazy about Cecile for a while and then—with a laugh—“there was Caliban.”

Mr. Hewlett picked up his ears. “Caliban?”

Miss Merivale laid her head back on the pillows with an air of luxurious abandonment.

“Ah, he was a great lot of a fellow that was a sweetheart of Marie's before she ever came on the stage. How she ever stood him I can't think. But she would have had a tremendous bother to have got rid of him when she found her bearings and saw what other men were if he hadn't been like the rest and fallen in love with Cecile. Let me think now, what was his name?”

She wrinkled up her artificially-darkened eyebrows.

“Gregory—that was it of course—Jim Gregory.”

Gregory, the detective drew a long breath. Was there ever a case like this? He asked himself despairingly. It seemed that Miss Rose Merivale was about to prove another blank wall.

“Yes, Jim Gregory,” Miss Merivale repeated, throwing a thin, blue cloud of smoke into the air. “I remember once I asked Queenie—we used to call her Queenie sometimes because of her funny little airs, you know—why she didn't shake him off—why on earth she had ever let him know what she was doing. And she told me that he gave her news of her little sister, who was left under her step-mother's care at home. Queenie, herself, had run away, and she was afraid that the child might be treated so badly that she too might not be able to stand it. Gregory had promised to keep a watch on the diet her knew.”

“Ah, yes, he could do that,” Mr. Hewlett said slowly. “I have heard they were sweethearts once, Gregory and Miss De Lavelle—he has told us as much.”

Miss Merivale looked surprised.

“Oh, has he? But that was all over before I knew Queenie. Then he was head over ears in love with Cecile—used to follow her about and glow with her all over the place.”

Mr. Hewlett laughed a little, although his eyes had a faraway expression.

“And what did Miss Cecile think of him?”

“Not much, as you can guess if you have seen Gregory,” Miss Merivale responded. “She used to throw him a word now and then as you might a bone to a dog. I have told her many a time she ought to be careful, for I have seen a look in his eyes sometimes when she has been teasing him as if he would like to make an end of her there and then. If it had been said that she was murdered I should have said, ‘Look up Jim Gregory,’ but as it is poor Queenie I don't know what to think.”

Mr. Hewlett did not know what to think either; various wild theories and suspicions chased one another in a nebulous state through his brain.

“I suppose the Sisters De Lavelle were not sufficiently alike to be mistaken for each other?” he hazarded at last.

“Off the stage, do you mean?” Miss Merivale questioned. “Bless your life no. Their faces were the same shape, but Cecile's fair hair was a transformation, if you know what that means. Mr. Detective—her own was brown. And the rest of the likeness was mostly make-up. Cecile was stouter and bigger in every way but she used to dress up to Marie well.”

“I was thinking,” the detective said slowly—“I was wondering whether it was in any way possible that Marie was murdered by mistake for Cecile by some jealous lover.”

“No indeed it wasn't,” Miss Merivale said emphatically. “You may take my word for that. No, discovery doesn't

lie in that way, Mr. Detective, I can assure you. And now”—she looked at the tiny jewelled watch pinned in front of her gown—you said a few minutes' conversation, and I believe you have had half an hour. I have to go to a rehearsal directly. If there is anything else that I can tell you—”

Hewlett rose. He was still puzzled, his monocle hung by its cord.

“I am much obliged to you for sparing me so much of your time,” Miss Merivale said before she turned to him. “There is nothing else that I can think of this afternoon, but if anything should occur later—”

“You will come again—that is understood,” Miss Merivale finished. “And I wish you good luck, Mr. Detective. I would like to see you myself to see poor Queenie's murderer punished. I would indeed.”

Mr. Hewlett shook hands and went out. As he walked slowly back to Swiss Cottage and boarded a motor bus to Charing Cross he was thinking harder than he had ever thought about a case before. It seemed to him that never had he been engaged on one at once so absorbing and so provoking. It reminded him of a game he had played as a child, where an object is hidden and when the searcher is near it he is told that he is “warm.”

Mr. Detective Hewlett continually held the feeling that he was quite near the solution of his problem, that he was “warm” in fact only to find the next minute that he was as far as ever from it.

As the bus tore on its way down the Finchley Road he pondered once more the facts, as he knew them. For the past month, ever since the discovery that it was Basil Wilton that Evelyn Spencer had married, he had been strongly of opinion that her death must be laid at the door of one of these three men—either one of the two cousins, Lord Warchester and Basil Wilton, or James Gregory. To some extent of late he had been compelled to exonerate Basil Wilton. Inquiries had shown that his accident had occurred at least half an hour before the time at which the doctors' testimony showed that Evelyn Spencer met her death, and his long illness fully accounted for Mr. Gregory's silence, which had appeared at first to be so suspicious.

At the same time Mr. Hewlett was not inclined to be entirely satisfied; there might be a mistake in the time at either end, he told himself—an alibi is always the most unsatisfactory of defences. He at least might have had some sort of motive—the desire to rid himself of a wife of whom possibly he was tired, and who was obviously desirous of a recognition which would offend his mother and endanger his inheritance.

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If you have the slightest doubt that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound will help you, write to Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co. (Confidential) Lynn, Mass., for advice. Your letter will be opened, read and answered by a woman, and held in strict confidence.

The question was—which? And this question his interview with Miss Merivale had not, so far as he could see, in the least answered.

He got off the bus at Charing Cross, and turning up Bedford Street made his way down Maiden Lane to his offices. At the door he almost collided with some one coming out.

“Why, Hewlett, the very man that I was looking for,” Septimus Lockyer exclaimed. “But I have not a moment to spare now. Walk back with me as far as the post office.”

“Any news sir?” Hewlett asked as he complied.

Septimus Lockyer looked at him. “The best time to call on Mr. Edw. Wallace is between five and six P.M.”

“So we have found, sir. But the door fits like wax; it isn't possible to hear much.”

“It was not,” Septimus Lockyer said significantly, “but Mr. Wallace's younger brother has a taste for carpentering; he has used the door at the bottom too much. Mrs. Perks says, ‘But there—boys will be boys, and there's no harm done,’—with a mimicry of Mrs. Perks's manner that made the detective smile.

“Have you any engagement for to-night, Hewlett?” Mr. Lockyer cut in, with a sudden change of tone.

“No sir, nothing I can't put off until another time if there is work to be done,” the detective said hopefully.

“I want you to come to a music hall with me.”

“A music hall, sir?” Hewlett stared. “I don't understand.”

“Down Kingston way,” Septimus Lockyer went on. “Not a swagger sort of a place at all, Hewlett. We need not put on our evening clothes, and I know that moustache of yours comes off on occasion. Suppose you leave it at home to-night.”

“Of course, sir,” Hewlett looked more mystified than ever.

“That is all then,” Septimus Lockyer concluded as he hailed a passing taxi cab, “except that it won't be necessary to be there too early. I will call round for you a little before nine. Ta-ta, Hewlett,”—as he called out to the driver.

It was with difficulty that Hewlett possessed his mind in patience until nine o'clock arrived and with it Septimus Lockyer.

(To be continued)

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