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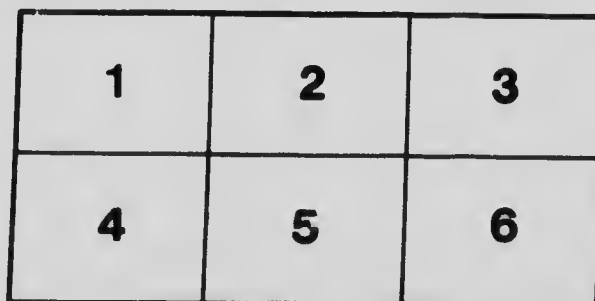
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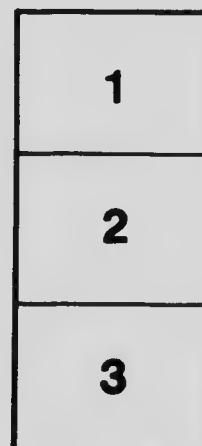
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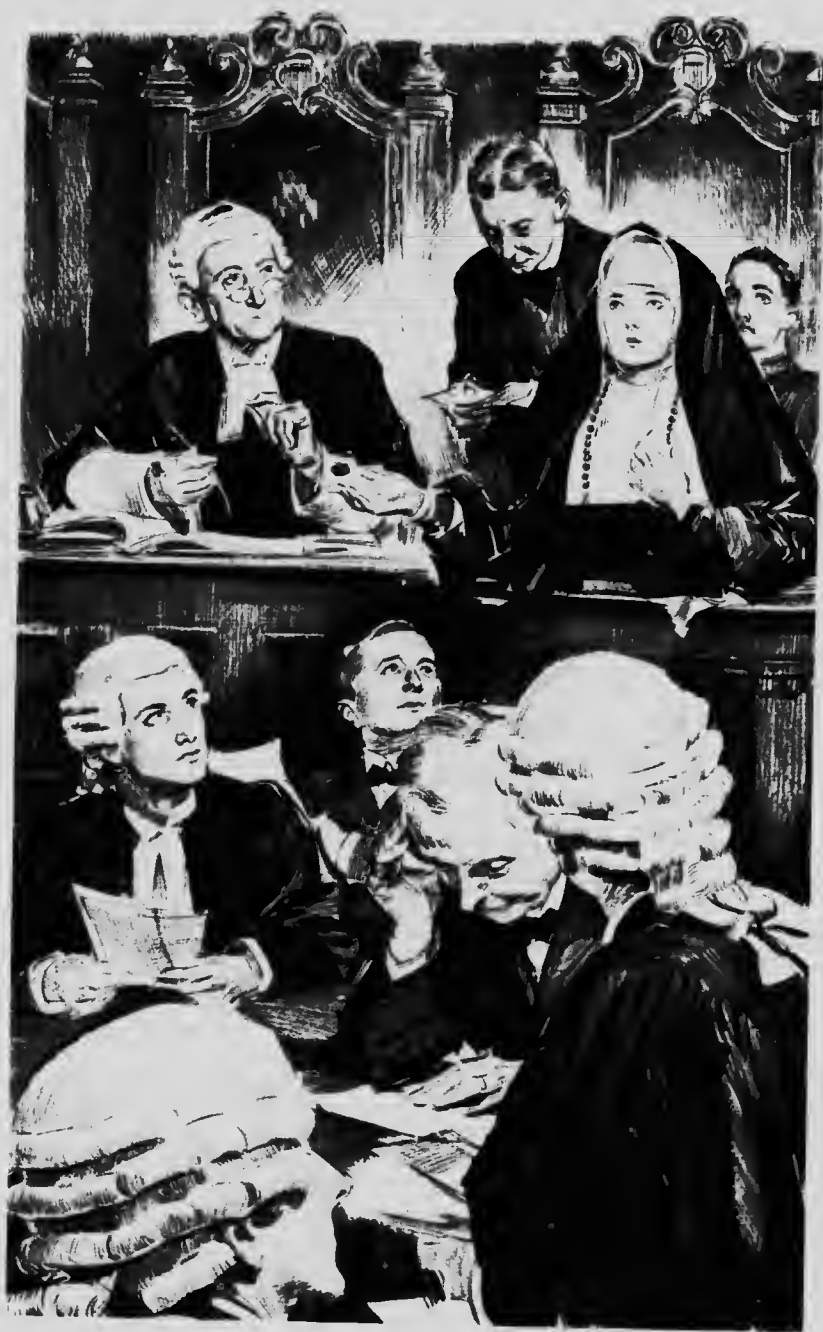




THE KING *versus* WARGRAVE







"Tell your story in your own way." (Page 318.)

*The King versus Wargrave*]

[Frontispiece

# THE KING AND WARGRAVE

BY  
J. H. B. JONES

LONDON  
W. B. EERDMANS  
1911



11. The Khatun and her family. (From the album of the Khatun family, No. 318.)

# THE KING

*versus*

# WARGRAVE

BY  
J. S. FLETCHER

*Author of*  
"When Charies I. was King," "The Secret Cargo,"  
*etc., etc.*

WARD, LOCK & CO., LIMITED  
LONDON, MELBOURNE AND TORONTO

1915





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# The King *versus* Wargrave

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## PART THE FIRST.

### THE AFFAIR OF THE GREAT FOG.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE CORONER'S COURT.

**I**N the western half of London, in the angle made by the meeting of the Edgware and the Harrow Roads, there lies a small oasis of trees and lawns set in the midst of a collection of dull and uninteresting houses and buildings, and having in its own midst a church which, in the eyes of some not undiscerning folk, is the very ugliest of the many ugly churches of the Metropolis. Strangers who know nothing of the district probably pass through, and by, this small lung of London without so much as a second glance at it and its surroundings, considering it no more than they would consider similar small lungs—old churchyards converted into playgrounds, what were formerly suburban greens transformed into recreation grounds—which are scattered in out-of-the-way corners on each side of the Thames. Yet this tiny slice out of the great

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Metropolitan wilderness has its associations. It is Paddington Green, and half an eye can see that for a long, long time most of it has been given up to the purposes of a burial-ground, and again given back to the living, as a place for children to play in, and for folk who have no work to do, or are past all work, to lounge and rest in. But those who know, those who can see ghosts in the brightest sunshine as well as in the gloom of a winter's night, are well aware that many ghosts walk abroad in Paddington Green. For many famous folk lived about the Green or sleep beneath its turf. There was a certain—or, one should say, a reputed—pretty Polly Perkins, who is associated with it in a popular and pleasing ballad, now almost forgotten save by old fogies who prefer the ditties of Old England to the new numbers of the modern music-hall. Pretty Polly Perkins may have been—probably was—a creature of the imagination. But Emma, Lady Hamilton, who figured so largely in Nelson's life-story—and, incidentally, in the life stories of several other people—was no creature of anybody's imagination, but a very real and substantial personage, and here, at a corner of the Green, she dwelt. Here too, with her, dwelt Greville, that Clerk of the Privy Council who turned his knowledge of many great and illustrious folk to such good account in that famous journal of his, which owed half its success to its stock of scandal. And here the immortal Sarah Siddons, greatest of all English actresses, had her link with Mother Earth and still keeps a tight grip upon it. In a reserved strip of lawn she sits, there, her marble counterfeited presentment looking with . . . glances upon the shabby shops of the Harrow Road. And further back, away in a corner of the old graveyard, now turned into a playground for children, whosoever will seek may easily find an old-fashioned tomb, set about with iron railings,

wherein the great tragedienne was laid to rest. There are, one sees, few corners of London which do not possess some history, some association of their own.

In these days, there runs alongside this ancient Paddington burying-ground, wherein children from the adjacent mean streets swarm in their hundreds from morning to night, a row of thoroughly modern houses of red brick, provided with all the proper adjuncts of bow-windows and the right number of steps leading up to the front door. They are just the sort of houses in which peaceable and law-abiding citizens of what may be termed the middle middle-class rejoice to dwell. They form a quiet backwater off the two neighbouring busy and crowded streams of life and turmoil. Past them at no time can any body of traffic proceed, because the road which separates them from the children's playground leads to nowhere—save to one place. Now and then the folk who live in these little red-brick houses perhaps see a curiously-shaped vehicle driven by gloomy-faced men go past their front doors; now and then they see men lounge up the little road, looking very much bored and dissatisfied, and as if they would uncommonly like to be somewhere else and engaged on any other business—which means their own; now and then they see a hearse, with its proper complement of undertaker's men lumber up the road and presently lumber back, bringing something within it. And if you were to ask one of the residents in these houses what these things meant, you would be answered—probably with great indifference—that the men who walked along to the head of the street were honest Englishmen, summoned to sit as jurors on what the common people—not without some reason and justification—will still, even in the twentieth century, persist in calling the "Crowner's 'Quest,'" and that if you

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follow any of them you will find the coroner's court, and the mortuary, and all the rest of the sordid and sombre surroundings and trappings which attend murders, and suicides, and sudden death, at the end of the gay little villas, with their bow-windows, and their smart blinds, and their pots of many-coloured flowers on the window ledges. So does palpitating and vigorous Life look with scornful indifference upon Death.

But this particular coroner's court, seen from without and within, is not by any means a gloomy and forbidding building—save for one particular chamber into which men pass unwillingly and leave thankfully, with such thoughts within them as may have been prompted by what they saw there. We have changed many things in our times, and the "crowner" no longer holds his 'quest under such circumstances as those in which he found himself when he summoned Poor Jo to tell what he knew of the Unknown who had been "werry kind" to him. The coroner and his twelve good men and true no longer—in London, at any rate—sit round a table deeply marked with beerstains, rub the soles of their boots on sawdust or sand, or breathe an atmosphere in which the fumes of bad tobacco are mingled with those of worse spirits. Here, for instance, looking down on the grave of the immortal Sarah Siddons, is quite a pleasant building—it is even pleasant, architecturally, which is something to be thankful for. It does not seem to be particularly associated with Death; it might be a small library, or an institute, or a reading-room: its outer appearance is quite friendly and smiling. But there is not one of the little group of men waiting outside it on this sharp-aired autumn morning who is not very well aware that somewhere inside it there lies Something which he

will presently have to view in accordance with his duty—Something at which he will be bound to look, with however perfunctory a glance, but which cannot return his glance; will, indeed, never look or glance at anybody or anything again in this world.

They are a curious collection of persons, these good men and true, who will presently be duly sworn to enquire into the death of somebody of whom so far they know nothing and have never heard. Some of them are obviously tradesmen of the small sort; they make, amongst themselves, a mild grumble at being drawn away from business, and express a hope that the affair will quickly be over—they will, at any rate, get half a crown for their trouble, which is better than getting nothing at all.

There are two or three young men who write themselves down clerks and shop-assistants as plainly as if they wrote it with pen. There are a few non-descripts, who may be lodging-house keepers; may be canvassers, little travellers; may, in short, be anything. And there is one man, who, from his dress and air, evidently belongs to the professional classes, and looks critically at his companions, seeming to speculate on what precise degree of intelligence is needed to qualify men for a serious enquiry.

There is a murmured conversation going on amongst this little group; snatches of it are overheard by one section and another; desultory and unimportant they all are, but they all get to the same point eventually.

"If it hadn't been for this, I should have been up at Cricklewood now. I'd an important bit of business there this morning. However——"

"What is it this time? A murder or what? I haven't heard of ——"



"Last time I was kept here four hours. And what I say is ——"

"Well, I hope there's going to be no horrors. They turn me over and over. And in my opinion, such oughtn't to be talked about in public. Now, why couldn't they ——"

"I wonder if it is a murder? There was a reporter came up before me—I've seen him at a football match, so I expect ——"

"Suicide cases are often as bad and worse than murders. I remember ——"

There is suddenly a general looking at watches—on the part of those who carry such things—and an official, who is obviously the coroner's officer, comes bustling out, papers in his hands. He consults a list.

"Now, gentlemen, if you'll answer to your names."

The gentlemen answer to their names—they might all be at school again, at roll-call time, they answer so obediently. The official appears to be satisfied.

"Might save some time, gentlemen, by choosing your foreman," he suggests. "Time's up, by a minute or two, but we shall start directly."

The gentlemen regard each other as gentlemen do under such circumstances, doubtfully, timidly, furtively. Not more than three are known to each other: a great shyness falls upon them. Then, suddenly, and as with one consent, eleven pairs of eyes fix themselves upon the man who is presumably of a superior class. The eldest man in the group nods at him.

"I daresay this gentleman ——" he suggests.

A murmur of distinct approval runs over the group.

"If he'll be so kind," says another. "I daresay

the gentleman's had more experience than most of us."

The man appealed to bows his consent.

"Certainly, if you wish it, gentlemen," he says.

And, evidently knowing what is next to be done, and with a brief exchange of words with the burly official, he removes his hat and leads the way into the building, his fellow-jurymen following behind in procession. One, young and irreverent, whispers that this reminds him of going to church.

So this is the place where the holder of one of the most ancient of English legal offices sits to make inquest, on behalf of His Majesty, into the manner and cause of death of some particular one of His Majesty's lieges. Quite a comfortable, even cosy, well-appointed little court this—the foreman, who, after all, is really a professional man, compares it with certain other places of a similar nature which he has seen. There is actually panelling and stained glass about it. There is a desk, on a dais, for the coroner; there are two quite ecclesiastical-looking pews on his right hand for the jury. There is a witness-box which resembles a small pulpit. In the well of the court there is a table at which legal gentlemen, Press gentlemen, and other folk who have proper business may sit. And for the accommodation of such as come, having concern in the matter, there are more pew-like seats at the end of the court, and a bench running along the wall at the back of the witness-box, and in these seats, and on this bench, there are quite a number of persons seated.

Having nothing to do until the coroner takes his seat, the jurymen occupy themselves by looking at these persons; some of the persons look at the jurymen. The foreman, speculating on matters in

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his own way, perceives that just beneath him is a well-known legal personage whom he knows to have come from the Treasury, and he argues from that, that whatever it is they are going to enquire into, it is something of a serious nature, or a Treasury solicitor would not be there. He perceives that there are other legal gentlemen there, too. He also sees two medical men. He sees a policeman. He regards with interest a couple of young men who are whispering together in the floor-space between the public seats and the table. One is a big, broad-shouldered, fair-haired, blue-eyed young fellow, attired in a rough Norfolk jacket and carrying a tweed cap in his hand; the other is a medium-sized, dark-eyed, smoothed-hair young man, very correctly dressed. The foreman, who has had some experience of the world, sets them both down as medical students. And in two quietly-dressed men who move here and there and exchange whispers with many people, he recognises two well-known detectives from Scotland Yard. Clearly, this case is going to be out of the ordinary. Have those two or three dark-eyed, olive-skinned men and women, sitting in a group and staring around them with uneasy faces, anything to do with it?

"Silence!"

The coroner comes bustling into his desk between the two standard lights, amidst the reverence with which we still have the manners to treat our legal officials of high rank. He shuffles his papers; he tells the twelve *probes et legales nomines* that their first duty is to choose a foreman from one of their number; the coroner's officer informs the coroner that this is already done; the foreman indicates himself by a bow, though everybody knows that he is foreman because he sits next to the coroner. He and his eleven compeers dedicate themselves to their duty by taking the oath in batches; the spectators

sit open-mouthed ; hungrily expectant. The coroner regards the jury benignantly.

"Your first duty, gentlemen, is to view the body !"

The twelve jurymen rise. They file out slowly and solemnly. They walk quietly. Some of them walk on the tips of their toes. What are they going to see ?

## CHAPTER 11.

### THE DEAD MAN.

**M**ARSHALLED by officials, the jurymen cross the hall; they turn corners; they are, somehow, conscious that they are entering upon a scene, an atmosphere, which is totally different to that they have just left. No one speaks; each man seems to have suddenly developed an inclination to bow his head. But the foreman, walking alongside the coroner's officer, whispers to him:

"What is this case?"

The coroner's officer glances out of his eye-corners. He, too, whispers:

"That Austerlitz Mansions affair the other night. Murder."

The foreman comprehends then, and he starts a little, and his eyebrows go up. The affair of the Austerlitz Mansions—why, of course! But he cannot make any remark then, nor can anybody, for he and his company are arrived before what is in reality a wall of glass. They lift their heads and look, some peering over the shoulders of the others.

Behind the glass lies, slightly tilted up at the head, the shrouded body of a dead man.

There is, probably, more than probably, amongst these twelve men, no man who has not already looked upon death. Some have, perhaps, seen it in sad form, some in horrible form. One man of the twelve looks as if he had been a soldier; he may have seen death in the terrifying forms of the battlefield. But every man now gazing through the somewhat dull glass at the dead man lying within seems impressed. Yet why? The dead man into whose death they are presently to enquire is nothing to them; he is neither relation nor friend, acquaintance nor neighbour. But they linger longer than is usual, staring. One of them whispers, very softly, under his breath, but the silence is so profound in that sombre place that everybody hears what he says. "Uncommon handsome old gentleman!"

This jurymen, whoever he may be, has a conception of beauty. The dead man is handsome. It is easy to see, in spite of the shroud and the wrappings, that in life he was a tall man of fine figure. A snow-white beard hangs over his breast, the statuesque features above it, now the colour of fine ivory, are beautifully cut. Some hand has carefully drawn a black velvet skull-cap over the quiet head, but it does not hide it, only accentuates the high, broad forehead. And the foreman, watching keenly, notices the length and the slenderness of the pallid fingers folded below the patriarchal beard.

There is another whisper heard somewhere amid the watching group.

"Them Austerlitz Mansion's affair this ere is. Stabbed through the 'art, he was! And no sign of it now, of course. But that's it—stabbed through the 'art!"

The coroner's officer stirs impatiently, the foreman signs to his obedient satellites and moves quietly away. They have only been in the presence

of the dead man for a poor moment, but they all know that if they could spend hours, days, months with him he could tell them nothing. There is never going to be any testimony from him—on earth. Let us hear, then, what witness can be given by those who can still bear witness—if there are such.

The jurymen file slowly into their two pews. They bestow their headgear somewhere, and after the fashion of all jurymen, lean their elbows on the ledges before them, and turn to the coroner. And the coroner, who has been conversing with some of the legal gentlemen at the table, waits a moment and glances at his papers before he, too, turns—to take them, his duly-appointed helpers, into his confidence.

And now, or at any rate, in a few minutes, the jurymen know what they are there for. The coroner tells them in crisp, concise sentences. He—they—are there to make enquiry into the death of the unfortunate gentleman whose body they have just seen. That gentleman was one Signor Marco Graffi, understood to have been about sixty-five to seventy years of age. He was an Italian by birth, but had been resident for many years in this country; for seven years at least he had resided in a self-contained flat of some size at Austerlitz Mansions, Paddington. He was a professor of languages, receiving most of his pupils at his flat, attending some at their residences. For some years he had lived alone; of late, however—for a period of some six months, to be exact—there had lived with him his granddaughter, a girl of apparently seventeen years of age, whom he had brought back from Italy on his going to that country in the previous spring. According to the evidence which would be put before them, the grand-daughter's name was Gemma Graffi. Signor Graffi and his granddaughter appeared to have led a very quiet and retired life, receiving few visitors beyond the

pupils who came to him. Such visitors as there were appeared, from the evidence about to be heard, to have been compatriots of theirs. This quiet and orderly life seemed to have progressed as usual until the fourth day of November just past. It would be in their recollection that in the evening of that day, about nine o'clock, a fog of the most remarkable density visited the metropolis, suddenly enveloping everything within the four-mile radius in an atmosphere so thick and impenetrable that all traffic was obliged to cease and that pedestrians found it impossible to move about the streets. Many people, in fact, were never able to reach their homes, and had to take refuge in hotels or wherever they could get shelter. But before that fog came on, Signor Graffi, in company with his granddaughter, had gone out of Austerlitz Mansions; had gone out, the hall-porter would tell them, at half-past eight, arm-in-arm, as was their wont. The hall-porter would tell them, also, that at midnight—twelve o'clock—when, according to rule, he quitted his post and closed the front door, they had not returned; he would tell them that he remembered saying to his wife that he hoped the old Italian gentleman and his granddaughter were with their friends, for he was sure they would never find their way home otherwise. However, as they would hear, Signor Graffi and his granddaughter did return that night. And they would hear, too, that at eight o'clock next morning Signor Graffi was found lying in his bed, dead—stabbed to the heart.

There is a murmur all over the court which nothing can repress as the coroner tells the jurymen this last item of information. It is a murmur which is inside the lips rather than on them; everybody understands it. And the coroner pauses before he proceeds, and when he proceeds he looks alternately at the jurymen



and at the legal gentlemen who sit at the table busied with their documents.

"Now, gentlemen, the remarkable feature of this case is that Signor Graffi was found dead, and that his granddaughter had disappeared. She had utterly vanished, and during the two full days which have elapsed, all the efforts of the police have failed to come across any trace whatever of her. And the authorities consider this case of so much importance that they have taken it into their hands and are here represented. Now, having outlined the case up to a certain point, I think it well to let all the evidence—one part of which is certainly of the most astounding and remarkable nature—be unfolded before you in due order. Mr. Chrisenbury, I think you appear on behalf of the Treasury?"

Mr. Chrisenbury, a tall, keen-faced barrister, rises and bows; the people in court who know him by reputation, but have never seen him before, regard him with awe. A man in the public seats whispers to his neighbour that that chap has hanged more than one of 'em in his time.

The coroner peers through his glasses at the other figures seated around the big table.

"And I understood one of the witnesses—the most important witness, Mr. Adrian Graye—is legally represented?"

Another eminently legal-looking gentleman rises, ducks his head to the seat of authority and announces himself as Mr. Chichele—he represents Mr. Adrian Graye. The coroner would like to know then if there is any one representing the family or relations of the dead man; but, as no one answers, it is to be presumed that the dead man has no such appurtenances save the girl Gemma—who has vanished. So the coroner sits back and puts the tips of his fingers together, and glances at his officer and the witness-book, and the jurymen lean still

further forward in their pew-like enclosures, and all the people in court become suddenly very keenly alive, and the curtain goes up on the opening scene of this very real drama.

"Samuel Quarendon!"

Mr. Samuel Quarendon rises from a seat which he has occupied on the long bench beneath the panelled wall at the back of the witness-box, and advances slowly and heavily to prominence. He is a solidly and comfortably-built gentleman of middle age, and presumably of Hebraic descent; he is well and fashionably attired in very dark garments, which have a suggestion of mourning about them; he wears obviously expensive jewellery and carries a gold-mounted umbrella and a shining silk hat: everything about Mr. Quarendon suggests property. And when the usual preliminaries are over, he faces Mr. Chisenbury calmly, imperturbably, and confidently.

"Mr. Quarendon, you are the owner of the building known as Austerlitz Mansions, Austerlitz Road, Paddington?"

"I am."

"Do you reside there?"

"No. I reside in St. John's Wood."

"But you no doubt often visit Austerlitz Mansions?"

"Every day—I have an office there."

"One of your tenants was an Italian gentleman, Signor Marco Graffi?"

"That is so."

"Did you know Signor Graffi well?"

"Very well indeed—I had constantly met him ever since he became a tenant of mine seven years ago."

"Have you seen the body which is now lying in the mortuary outside?"

"I have."

"Can you identify it?"

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"I can. It is the body of Signor Graffi."

"When did you last see Signor Graffi alive?"

"I think three or four days ago: certainly within the past week."

"Was he quite well then?"

"Oh, quite! Quite well, vigorous and cheerful. I met him walking along St. John's Wood Road with his granddaughter. I offered him a cigar from my case. He accepted and lighted it."

"Can you tell us anything about Signor Graffi's granddaughter?"

"Oh, yes! The Signor went over to Italy rather hurriedly last spring. He wrote to me from Naples, saying that his only son was dead, and had left one child, a daughter, and that as she had now no relations left in Italy, he was bringing her to London with him."

"So, of course, you often saw her?"

"Often. I sometimes spent an evening with Signor Graffi."

"What sort of young lady was she, this granddaughter?"

Mr. Quarendon rubs his chin; he looks at the ceiling. It is evident he is thinking. But presently he again regards Mr. Chrisenbury.

"Well, it is hard to say. She has a glorious voice—a superb voice. Her grandfather bought a very good piano for her—I often heard her sing. She sang, too, at my house. But—well, I formed the impression that she hated to be in England; disliked London and her quiet life, you understand. Unless she was singing, she was sulking. She seemed to me sullen, uncertain of temper. Her grandfather was kind and indulgent to her, but I never saw her repay any of his kindness but with a scowl. As far as I could judge, and I had good opportunities for judging, I came to the conclusion that she was very angry with him for bringing her to England."

"Did you ever hear any quarrelling between them?"

"No—but I once entered Signor Graffi's flat to find him apparently much distressed, and Miss Gemma leaving his room in tears, and he then said to me that he was afraid she was pining for Italy."

"Now, about this flat which Signor Graffi occupied? It is a rather large one, is it not?"

"It is the largest flat in the building. There is an entrance hall, three reception-rooms, three bedrooms, a kitchen, a bathroom."

"Did Signor Graffi use them all?"

"Oh, yes! He had many pupils. One reception-room he used as his own study and library; another as a class-room or lecture-room; the other was private."

Mr. Chrisenbury produces a large sheet of cartridge paper. With somebody's help it is unrolled; Mr. Quarendon is invited to look upon it.

"This, I think, is an accurate plan of the flat? Yes?—now do you see the red cross which marks a small bedroom that opens out of the room marked Signor Graffi's study? Very well—who occupied that room?"

Mr. Quarendon assumes a sad expression. His voice becomes tense.

"The Signor himself. It was his bedroom. It was in there that, when I was telephoned for two mornings ago, I found him lying—murdered!"

## CHAPTER III.

### THE DISCOVERY.

THERE is another of those curious murmurs in the court. Everybody stares from the counsel to the witness; from the witness to the counsel; from both to the large sheet of white paper. And with the large sheet of white paper Mr. Chrisenbury has not yet done.

"There is another bedroom opening out of the room marked Signor Graffi's study. Who occupied that?"

"Miss Gemma. The old man arranged it for her, so that she should not feel that she was lonely at night—that he would be near."

"Now the third bedroom. Is this it, marked with a single red line, and situate at the end of the third reception-room—the room, I think, which Signor Graffi used as a class-room?"

"Yes, that is it."

"So that it is removed from the two other bedrooms by the private reception and the one used as a study?"

"Yes, that is so."

Mr. Chrisenbury transfers his large sheet of stout paper to the coroner and with a gesture invites his attention.

"I wish you, sir, and the gentlemen of the jury to look at this plan of the flat and to notice the position of the bedrooms for a reason which will presently appear. You will observe that there is a distance—two large rooms, in fact—between the first two bedrooms and the third one."

The coroner inspects the plan; the jurymen inspect it; the jurymen from vague notions as to why they are asked to inspect it; in their minds and in the minds of the folk in the public seats the large sheet of white paper suddenly assumes a vast and mysterious importance. Being of very stout material, it has a constant tendency to roll itself up; Mr. Chrisenbury, recovering it from the last of the jurymen, rolls it up himself and hands it to the clerk who sits by him. Evidently it has performed its functions for the time being. Mr. Chrisenbury turns to the witness.

"I gather that your relations with Signor Graffi, Mr. Quarendon, were rather more than those of mere landlord and tenant—you were, in fact, on somewhat friendly terms?"

"Oh, yes, we were very friendly. Sometimes I spent an evening with him—sometimes he spent an evening with me."

"Did you ever hear him say anything about his relations, his family?"

"Yes. After he returned from Italy last spring he told me that the granddaughter he had brought back with him was the only relation he had left in the world."

"The only relation he had left in the world?"

"The only relation he had left in the world."

Mr. Chrisenbury intimates that he has no more questions to ask this witness; it appears then that the coroner has none to ask him. Has Mr. Chichele anything to ask—have any of the jurymen anything to ask? Mr. Chichele shakes his head; the

jurymen remain silent and stolid. Mr. Quarendon steps down from the box and resumes his seat at its rear. The coroner's officer bustles into activity again and raises a loud voice :

"Charles Acock !"

Another man rises from the bench beneath the panelling—a sturdy, substantial man, who, from his bearing and his moustache, has certainly, at some time or other, been in the army. He takes the oath in a fashion which shows that he means every word he says and regards the whole proceeding as a very serious matter, and he faces Mr. Chrisenbury as if the two of them were in an orderly-room with grave regimental business to discuss.

"Acock, you are hall-porter and caretaker, and your wife is housekeeper, at Austerlitz Mansions ?"

"Yes, sir."

"Just tell us briefly what the rules are as to the opening and closing of the street door."

"I open the door, sir, at eight o'clock in the morning, and close it at twelve midnight."

"I suppose all the tenants have keys to that door ?"

"Oh, yes, sir, all of them."

"Any tenant could get out before eight o'clock in the morning and get in after twelve o'clock at night by means of a latch-key, I suppose ?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you live in the building ?"

"Yes, sir. We have the basement."

"I want to ask you about the evening of the fourth of November—that is, three days ago. From what hour to what hour were you in the hall of the building on that evening ?"

"I was in the hall, sir, from a quarter past eight to twelve o'clock that night—my regular time, sir."

"You never left it during that time ?"

"No, sir."

"Did you see Signor Graffi and his granddaughter go out that evening?"

"Yes, sir—they went out at half-past eight."

"Had the fog come on then?"

"No, sir. The fog came on about nine o'clock."

"As you never left the hall until midnight, you would see any one—every one—who went out and came in?"

"Yes, sir. As a matter of fact, sir, as soon as the fog came on I closed the outer door to keep as much of it out as possible. There is an outer door, sir, and swinging-glass doors within it."

"I see. After you closed that door, then, at about nine o'clock, residents would have to admit themselves by their keys, and callers who were not resident—how would they get in?"

"Ring the bell, sir."

"So that it was impossible for anybody to enter the building that evening between a quarter past eight and midnight without your knowledge?"

"Quite impossible, sir."

"Did Signor Graffi and his granddaughter enter before midnight?"

"No, sir, they did not."

Acock is emphatic on this point; he throws emphasis into his answer; he throws up his head; he squares his chest.

"What did you do after midnight?"

"What I always do, sir, went downstairs, had a bit of supper, and went to bed."

"Did you sleep well—soundly?"

"I always sleep well—and soundly, sir!"

"You heard nothing in the night?"

"Nothing at all, sir."

"Now, let us come to next morning. Did anything unusual occur then?"

"Yes, sir—something very unusual."

"What was it?"



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"At five minutes to eight, sir, just as I was going upstairs to open the front door, the bell began ringing violently, then the door was beaten loudly. I ran up, and opened it. There was a policeman there that I know—Webber. I said, 'What's up, Jim?' He said, 'There's a young fellow looking out of one of your first-floor windows, shouting to me to come up—he says there's murder!'"

"You went up with the policeman?"

"We ran up at once, sir. The whole of the first floor was Mr. Graffi's. Before we got to his door we saw a young gentleman, a stranger, standing at it, fully dressed. He said ——"

"We will leave what the young gentleman said at present, Acock. What did you see?"

"I saw Mr. Graffi lying in his bed, sir. He was dead. We saw he'd been stabbed—through the heart, it was."

"What happened then?"

"Webber—the policeman, sir—ran for help and the police-surgeon, and I remained there."

"When you entered the flat did the young gentleman who was a stranger give you an explanation of his presence there?"

"Yes, sir, at once, in a few words. He said ——"

"Never mind what he said. Leave that alone. Was he a stranger to you?"

"A perfect stranger, sir."

"You had never seen him before?"

"Never, sir."

"What was the first thought that crossed your mind when you found him there?"

"Well, sir, I thought he might be one of Mr. Graffi's pupils that had come home with him and Miss Graffi. Of course, I recognised that they must have come home after midnight."

"What did you do while Webber went for help?"

"I rang for my wife, sir—there's a bell in every

flat that communicates with the basement. As soon as she came I sent her to Miss Graffi's bedroom. She came back at once and said Miss Graffi wasn't there. Then I went in myself. The room was empty, and the bed hadn't been slept in."

"How soon after that did Webber return?"

"In a few minutes, sir, with an inspector and another officer. The doctor came a few minutes later."

"After they came did you and your wife search the flat to see if you could find Miss Graffi?"

"Yes, sir. We couldn't find her anywhere."

"So that when you and Webber went up to Signor Graffi's flat there was nobody alive in it but the young gentleman you have referred to?"

"Nobody, sir."

"Do you see the young gentleman in court?"

Acock turns promptly and points with military precision to the tall young man in the Norfolk jacket. Every eye is also promptly turned upon him; everybody is wondering who this young man is, what he can tell; more than all, what he saw—if he saw anything. He blushes a little under the scrutiny, but his eyes are steady and he holds his head high.

Mr. Chrisenbury seems to hesitate a moment; then he intimates that he has no more to ask Acock. Mr. Chichele has, however, and he rises, and Acock regards him doubtfully as an unknown quantity. But Mr. Chichele's question is a very simple one.

"When you and Webber met the gentleman you have just pointed out he gave you, you said just now, a brief explanation of his presence there in Signor Graffi's flat? Did that explanation seem quite satisfactory to you?"

"Quite, sir. He seemed quite straightforward about the matter."

Mr. Chichele asks no more. Nor does the coroner ask anything. But one of the jurymen, who for the

past five minutes had been showing signs of nervousness or anxiety, pops up from the rear bench.

"I want to know what it was that that young man said to the hall-porter and the policeman."

There is a murmur amongst the other jurymen ; they look at the coroner ; the coroner looks at the inquisitive one—indulgently.

"That will come out in due course. At present —"

The jurymen are pulled down by their coat-tails ; Charles Acock steps out of the witness-box. Follows him into it Police-Constable James Webber, who gives his evidence in true police-constable fashion, as if he were repeating a lesson learnt by heart. Was walking up Austerlitz Road about five minutes to eight o'clock on the morning of November 4th. Heard a window thrown up and a man's voice call "Officer !" Looked up and saw the young gentleman whom he now sees in court, looking out. Young gentleman called down to him in quiet tone of voice. Exact words were, "Will you come up here ? I'm afraid there's murder ! Gained admission and went up with last witness, Charles Acock. Young gentleman told them how he came to be there, and led them into a bedroom. There saw body of deceased, and that he had been stabbed. Went off at once for help to police-station, which is close by. Returned within six minutes with help. Police-surgeon followed almost immediately after.

There is no great interest taken in this witness : everybody already knows all he has told. Nobody wants to ask him anything. But interest re-awakens when the police-surgeon steps into the witness-box. He tells, in quiet, professional tones, how he was called to the dead man ; what he saw ; he tells of the autopsy which he afterwards conducted ; how that the deceased man, for his age, a strong, thoroughly healthy man, who might have been

expected to live quite fifteen years longer. He had been stabbed through the heart, and death had been instantaneous. And—when he was called to examine the body—the deceased had, in his opinion, been dead just about five hours.

There is a whispered consultation between the coroner and the legal gentlemen when the police-surgeon has stepped down, and the court suddenly gains an idea, in that subtle fashion in which courts do gain ideas, that it is now going to hear something much more exciting, far more sensational, than anything it has heard hitherto. And in another second every eye, as with a common consent, is turned upon the young gentleman in the Norfolk jacket.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PRINCIPAL WITNESS.

“**A**DRIAN GRAYE!”

The young gentleman in the Norfolk jacket strides forward from the corner in which he has been standing in company with the other young gentleman of the immaculate attire. Once again he flushes a little under the healthy tan of his cheeks; once again, with obvious unconsciousness that he does so, he lifts his head and squares his chest as he steps into the witness-box and takes the New Testament which is offered to him. The men in court regard him with interest and speculation; the few women who are there watch him with admiration. As for Mr. Chrisenbury, who picks up what looks very much like a brief of some dimensions, he regards him as an interesting witness who can tell of this mysterious affair what no other witness can tell, and he proceeds to extract his evidence quietly and leisurely, so that it may have due effect. And he begins in a silence which is intense and deep, for the people who are listening—officials, those concerned, and mere spectators—know already that this young man, little more than a boy, was in that flat at Austerlitz Mansions when Death came to it in horrid shape.

"Your name is Adrian Graye?"

"Adrian Lister Graye."

The voice is calm, quiet, strong; the manner self-possessed, sure.

"Adrian Lister Graye. How old are you, Mr. Graye?"

"I am twenty-three."

"It will be to your advantage that the court should know all about you. So you won't mind telling the court who your father is?"

"My father's name is William Chisholm Graye. He is a medical man, practising at Ravensholme, a village in the North Riding of Yorkshire."

"Where do you yourself reside?"

"I have rooms at number twenty-three Shakespeare Avenue, Kilburn."

"What are you—professionally or otherwise?"

"I am a medical student."

"Of what college?"

"University."

"Have you a clear recollection of the evening and night of November fourth?"

"Very clear indeed."

"Tell the court, in your own way, what you did on that evening—say from seven o'clock onward."

"I dined with my friend, Mr. John Herbert, at his rooms in Gower Street, at seven o'clock. Afterwards we spent some time in reading together. A little before ten o'clock one of us—I forget which—noticed that a yellowish fog was stealing into the room. I said that I had better go if a fog was coming on. Mr. Herbert went down to the street door with me. When we got there we found that the fog was very bad indeed. Mr. Herbert pressed me to stay the night with him, but I was very anxious to get home that night, because I was

expecting a particularly important letter from my father, relating to some family affairs. I thought I should be able to make my way home, because I had then no idea that traffic was being stopped, and I thought that the fog would not be so bad as one got on higher ground. So I said good-night to Mr. Herbert, and set off."

"To be precise, what exact time was that?"

"I cannot tell you the exact time, but it would be within ten minutes after ten."

"I asked the question in your own interests for a reason which may—or may not—appear. Pray proceed."

"I made my way along Gower Street easily enough, because I knew it. But when I came to the Euston Road I found out that it was not going to be so easy to get home as I had hoped. There was no traffic going at all; everything was at a standstill. I made my way to the corner of Hampstead Road; it seemed to me that things looked a little better there. However, it was evident that I should not be able to get a 'bus, so I considered what was best to be done. It seemed to me that the best thing to do was to stick to main roads, and I thought that if I got into Albany Street, went up it, along the north side of Regent's Park, and then along St. John's Wood Road until I struck Maida Vale, I should be all right. Besides, I hoped that the further north I got the better things would be. Unfortunately, I then did a very foolish thing—I tried to make a short cut between the Hampstead Road and Albany Street, as I had often done, in going from Gower Street to see friends who live in Regent's Park near St. Katherine's College. And so I got hopelessly lost in some of the small streets near Munster Square. Exactly whereabouts it was, I can't say, for the fog, instead of getting better, got much worse. And ———"

Mr. Chrisenbury raises a hand : he has a question to interpolate.

"You have not been able to satisfy yourself as to those exact streets ?

"No, I have not. There are so many small streets about there which are so almost exactly alike that though I spent some time amongst them yesterday, I couldn't tell just where I was."

"Were there very few people about ? "

"Very few indeed. During the time I was wandering about I met scarcely anybody, and not a single policeman."

The court laughs. It is in the tense state of nerves when laughter is welcome—when, alas ! laughter can easily become hysterical. But Mr. Chrisenbury is very grave.

"It was at any rate somewhere in the neighbourhood of Munster Square that you lost your bearings ? You are sure of that ? "

"Yes, I am quite sure of that. The difficulty was, of course, to cross from one street to another, but I did keep finding small clues. I am quite sure that it was all about Munster Square."

Mr. Chrisenbury signs to the witness to proceed : the court forgets its little excursion into laughter and becomes hushed and solemn and expectant again.

"I came to a halt at what I found to be a street-corner, wondering which way to turn and what to do. It was very quiet about there—more than usually deserted—there wasn't even a light in the houses where I stood, though I couldn't have seen one at more than two or three yards distance. Then, as I stood hesitating, I heard footsteps coming towards me and voices. The footsteps were halting and uncertain, and the voices were speaking in some foreign language, which, as they came nearer,



I knew to be Italian. I had halted under a lamp-post to look at my watch. There was just a mere circle of light around it, and into that there presently came a tall, white-bearded old man, dressed in a big, black cloak and a wide-brimmed hat, who had a girl, a young girl, clinging to his arm. They——”

Again Mr. Chrisenbury lifts a finger.

“It will perhaps make everything clearer to the gentlemen of the jury, Mr. Graye, if you just tell us plainly that you now know who the old man and the young girl were.”

“Certainly. They were Signor Graffi, and his granddaughter Gemma.”

The court in its corporate capacity heaves a deep sigh. Even its imagination can picture the dramatic meeting in the fog. Most of its individual units widen their eyes and open their lips: the silence grows deeper.

“You had never seen those two before?”

“Never in my life.”

“Well, what happened?”

“They halted. We all stared at each other. The old gentleman ——”

“Call him Signor Graffi—it will make matters plainer.”

“Signor Graffi looked very wearied; the girl looked frightened. Signor Graffi said, in English: ‘Young gentleman, we are lost.’ I replied: ‘So am I, sir.’ Then I added: ‘Where do you want to get to?’ He replied that they wanted to get to Paddington—to Austerlitz Road. I said that was a long way off. Then I began to think of how I could possibly help them, and ——”

“Did Signor Graffi or his granddaughter, then or afterwards, mention where they had set out from? Think! This is a most important question.”

"No ; neither of them, then or afterwards, said anything about that. I haven't the least idea where they had come from. The difficulty was how to get them to where they wanted to go !"

"Well, you decided to help them ?"

"Of course. I thought that if I could only get them into the Marylebone Road and along to Paddington and home, I myself would make my way to the Great Western Hotel and put up there. So I took them in tow and tried the dodge of harking back, and after an awful lot of bother we struck Hampstead Road again. That time I made up my mind to coast along by the shops and houses when once we got into a straight line, and I stuck to that. Of course, it took a long time, but I got them into Edgware Road at last, and finally up to Austerlitz Road. It was just half-past twelve when I got them to the door of the mansions."

Mr. Chrisenbury once again stops the witness. He wants to ask the other witness, Acock, a question. Does Acock remember, can he be sure, whether he was in bed by half-past twelve that particular midnight ? Yes. Acock does remember, and is very sure. He was in bed at twenty minutes past twelve—and fast asleep into the bargain. Mr. Chrisenbury gives a nod of satisfaction, and another nod which admonishes Adrian Graye to proceed.

"Go on, Mr. Graye. By the by, did you by that time know who your companions were ?"

"Oh, yes, long before that ! We introduced ourselves as we made our way along. I knew who Signor Graffi was when he told me his name—some of our men took lessons from him."

"Well, you got them to the door of Austerlitz Mansions. What then ?"

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"He insisted that I should go in and have—well, a drink. I went in."

Again the court is pleased to laugh; it is a relief to laugh—it does everybody good to laugh, even though everybody knows that this is a matter of murder. But one's nerves must not be for ever kept at this strict tension.

"Signor Graffi opened the door with a latchkey, and we all went up to his flat, and into his study. He insisted that I must have some supper; he himself wanted some; we must all three have some. He bade his granddaughter get it ready—an Italian supper, he said—and we would have a big flask of rare Chianti. I was about dead-beat by that time, so I accepted his invitation. I helped the granddaughter to lay out the supper-table."

"In which of the rooms?"

"In the study. It was a very light, Italian supper—some slices of sausage, olives, cheese, fruit—fresh and preserved—that sort of thing. Signor Graffi fetched the wine from what he called his cellar. He was very hospitable. In fact, it would have been very pleasant, and jolly, and an experience and all that, but—but for one thing which rather spoilt it."

"I see some hesitancy on your part, Mr. Graye. Better tell us straight out what it was."

The witness, who had so far been ready enough, even to glibness, frowns and stares at the ceiling. He let some seconds go by: finally he brings his eyes down to Mr. Chisenbury again.

"Oh, well, I thought the—the girl seemed unhappy and—sort of restless, you know! She had scarcely spoken a word on the way, and after I got into the flat I got a notion that she hadn't wanted visitors. She seemed—something like sullen, you

know. She didn't eat or drink—at least, scarcely anything."

"Did you try to engage her in conversation?"

"Yes, I did."

"With what effect?"

"Very little. I made some joking reference to the English climate, and she returned me a look that spoke volumes."

"Did the grandfather say anything as to that?"

"Yes. He remarked, laughingly, that his granddaughter pined for her native country."

"Did she make any reply?"

"None, beyond a shrug of her shoulders."

"Anything follow after that?"

"Yes. Signor Graffi said: 'Never mind, my Gemma, we will have a holiday when the spring comes, and go to Italy for a month perhaps for two.'"

"What did she say in answer?"

"She said, with a good deal of passion: 'For always! For always!'"

"Now, what impression did you form of these two? Did they seem on good terms? Were they affectionate?"

"I thought that Signor Graffi was very kindly and indulgent to his granddaughter, and, in a way, affectionate. I—well, I could not make her out. She appeared to have a decided grievance. No, I should say she was certainly not affectionate to him. She did anything that he asked her to do readily enough, but her manner was certainly not affectionate in the sense in which the word is generally used."

"She is, I think, a very beautiful girl?"

"Very."

"Well, what happened after you had supped?"

"Signor Graffi pressed me to smoke a cigar. I said, I ought to go. He said, Why should I go? he

had a spare room, which was at my service : now and then, he said, one or other of his pupils occupied it. I was considering whether I should accept his offer or not, when I heard a very gentle tap at the door of the study, and the next instant the door opened, and a tall, dark man, obviously an Italian, walked in."

## CHAPTER V.

GONE !

ONCE more the murmur of excitement, the murmur that is more within than upon the lips runs round and through the crowded court. Its imagination has been already aroused ; now it is growing. And like all growing things it demands food—food, more food, fresh food. Collectively and severally it sees the tiny supper party of three—the old, white-bearded man, the beautiful Italian girl, the handsome, young medical student ; it hears the low tap at the door ; it sees the door open, the tall, dark man, who is obviously an Italian, enter—stealthily, no doubt. Excellent ! the crowd is upon this occasion being treated to exciting episodes which are worthy of the local theatres ; every member of it holds his or her breath, expectant, eager, arid of more good things to come. And the witness goes on coolly :

“ He came quietly in —— ”

Mr. Chrisenbury's fingers again.

“ A moment, if you please, Mr. Graye. Of course, when you entered the building—Austerlitz Mansions—the outer door was closed again ; I presume by Signor Graffi ? Can you be sure that it was ? ”

“ I am perfectly sure. I closed it myself, for I entered last.”

"Very good. Now, what about the entrance to Signor Graffi's flat? There is, of course, an entrance door to that?"

"Oh, yes! It looked to me like a strong one, too."

"So that this man who came in just after you finished supper must have had keys which admitted him, first to the building, and then to the flat?"

"I suppose he must—of course, at the time I never bothered myself or even thought as to how he had got in. All I thought about was that he was there—and I didn't think much about that, since it was no affair of mine."

"You merely took him for one of your host's friends?"

"Just so."

"I think it might be just as well if you gave us a description of this man at this juncture. Did you observe him closely?"

"No, because I'd no reason to. But I remember what he was like in a general way. He was a tall, well-built man, neither slim nor stout, good figure. His hair and eyes were dark; his complexion olive. He was good-looking. He had a black moustache, and I noticed that his teeth were very white. He wore a blue or a black overcoat—I think there was fur on the collar—that curly black stuff. Perhaps it isn't fur, but you know what I mean. That's about all I remember. In fact, it is all. Stop! I remember he wore dark tan gloves, because he began drawing them off as he came in. And—yes—he was smoking a cigarette. That's really all."

Mr. Chisenbury smiles in an indulgent, and yet in a superior fashion.

"Thank you, Mr. Graye. An excellent and a graphic description—but one which would apply, I think, to several hundred Italian gentlemen who might be met in the neighbourhood of Soho or

Hatton Garden. Didn't you notice anything distinctive about this visitor ? "

"No, I didn't. Why should I ? I was not there to stare at him."

"Didn't notice if he had a scar on his face ? "

"No."

"Nor the colour of his necktie, nor what sort of pin he wore in it ? "

"No."

"Very well. Now tell us, please, what followed his entrance."

"Oh—well, I thought that Signor Graffi seemed surprised, and perhaps a bit disconcerted to see him, and I also had an idea that the man was a good deal surprised to see me. Signor Graffi rose and shook hands with him ; Miss Graffi shook hands with him, too, but she did not speak to him. Then Signor Graffi turned to me, and begged me to excuse him for a few minutes, as he had some business to talk over with his friend. I offered to go, and picked up my cap and stick, but Signor Graffi would not hear of it. He bade his granddaughter show me some of the pictures which were in his study, and then he and the stranger went into the next room and closed the door."

"Had Signor Graffi previously introduced you to this stranger ? "

"Oh, no."

"Did you by any chance hear his name ? "

"No."

"Not even a Christian name ? "

"No—I didn't hear him addressed by any name."

"So you were then left alone with Miss Graffi. You talked to her, of course ? "

"Yes, as much as I could. I said I was sorry she didn't like England. She answered that she hated it. And then ——"

The witness suddenly paused. He frowns ; he



looks angry and uncomfortable. Then, while everybody waits, he turns sharply to the coroner :

"Am I obliged, sir, to tell what this young lady said to me? It seems beastly caddish to do it, you know!"

The coroner smiles indulgently: he glances shrewdly at the legal gentlemen.

"I think that it will be best, in the interests of justice, that we should know all we can," he says. "Perhaps there may not be so much of importance in what the young lady said as you think."

The witness seems to be debating matters. Suddenly he plunges ahead, more rapidly than before.

"Oh, well, perhaps it was because she was a foreigner! I have never met foreigners much. Well, she suddenly held out her hands to me, and said that she had seen that her grandfather had taken a great fancy to me, and would I intercede with him to send her back to Italy at once, for she should die if she lived any longer in this sad and miserable London, and if I would, she would never forget me, and say prayers for me, and all that sort of stuff, you know, and she had tears in her eyes, and it was all—well, it made me think of the theatre, and I didn't know what to say, and fortunately just then Signor Graffi and the other man came back. That's all, really, except that as they came in, Miss Grati vanished into another room and shut the door."

The court hears of this episode with considerable delight; it indulges again in laughter; it is only recalled to a sense of gravity and decorum by the loud remonstrances of the officials and the clear-cut tones of Mr. Chrisenbury.

"And the stranger—did he remain long?"

"No; he went at once—there and then."

"Did Signor Graffi go down with him?"

"No. He didn't even go to the door of the flat. The man just went."

"Did you notice anything about Signor Graffi ? "

"Yes. I thought he looked grave, anxious. Looked, you know, like a man who has heard some disturbing news. He was silent for a moment. Then I said I would go. He jumped up from his chair and said I mustn't think of it. I had told him I lived at Kilburn. He said I should never get home in that fog, and reminded me that the spare bedroom was quite at my disposal. So I accepted his offer. We drank another glass or two of the wine, and then he showed me to my room."

"Now, did you see Miss Graffi again that night ? "

"No, I did not. I never saw her after she vanished into what I now know was her own room. In fact, I have never seen her since."

That last answer—or, rather, the final part of it—comes out with a curious abruptness. It is as though the witness, without premeditation, was suddenly minded to take Mr. Chrisenbury and everybody, anybody, into his confidence. He has not been asked if he had ever seen Miss Graffi since. Of his own will, prompted by some thought at which nobody can guess, he volunteers the statement that he has not. And Mr. Chrisenbury smiles a little as he puts his next question :

"You never saw Miss Graffi again. Well, Signor Graffi took you to the room he had offered you. Did you not think it rather—shall we say an unusual thing to accept the hospitality of a man who was a stranger to you ? "

The witness flushes and looks a little indignant.

"No, I did not think so ! The circumstances were unusual—I had gone out of my way to help him. And I have already told you that as soon as Signor Graffi gave me his name I knew who he was—he had given—was giving, rather—lessons to some of our fellows. He gave lessons at one time to my friend there—Mr. Herbert."

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Everybody regards Mr. Herbert. So he, too, has known the man around whose death all this mystery hangs! This makes him a personage. But the eyes quickly turn to the witness-box again.

"Well, Signor Graffi took you to your room. Was it comfortable?"

"It was such a room as one would expect to find in a gentleman's house or flat. Of course it was comfortable!"

"Did you go to bed at once?"

"I went to bed at once, and I went to sleep at once—as I always do."

"Sleep all through the night?"

"Yes, I slept all through the night—I was unusually tired."

"So, of course, you never heard anything during the night?"

"I never heard or knew anything until I woke at my regular hour—seven o'clock."

"Tell us briefly, in your own way, what happened after that."

"Well, I presently got up and dressed, after having a bath—Signor Graffi had shown me the bathroom, which was next to my bedroom. It was about ten or twelve minutes to eight when I had finished dressing, so I set off to the study, passing through the intervening rooms—the class-room and the private room. That was the way Signor Graffi had brought me to my bedroom. I went into the study. The blinds were not drawn up then, so I drew them up. Then I saw that the door of Signor Graffi's room was half-open—I knew it was his room, because he had taken me into it to show me a rare print. And I saw him lying in his bed, the bed-clothes partly disarranged about his chest, and I saw—well, I saw blood."

The people in the public benches heave a concerted sigh—a sigh curiously suggestive of a com-

bination of great horror and infinite satisfaction. Blood ! That is what they wanted to hear about—blood, of course. In them still runs the primordial instinct which made fair ladies flock to the Roman amphitheatres, which attracted crowds to beheadings, which, in another, more subtle fashion, brought mobs to Newgate in the old days. In the Colosseum, at Tyburn, at a thousand dark places of the world in the evil times, one could see blood, smell blood ; now one can only hear of it in the public courts. But it tickles, delights, gives infinite satisfaction to something in the baser planes of human nature to hear of it—let us hear more. The young gentleman in the witness-box says he saw Blood on poor old Signor Graffi's linen as he looked through the half-open bedroom door in the grey morning light—let us hear more of this, by all means let us hear much more !

Nobody has any wish to interrupt this narrative : Mr. Chisenbury's lips look as if they were never going to open again. And the witness goes on, quietly, coolly :

" When I saw that, I went straight into the room. I saw at once that Signor Graffi had been stabbed through the heart, and I was sure that the blow had been dealt while he was asleep. His limbs were slightly contracted as if by a sudden spasm of pain ; but I came to the conclusion that he had died instantaneously. I gave a quick glance around the room, but I saw nothing out of place, and no weapon. Then I thought what was best to be done. I was afraid of Miss Graffi's coming out of her room and receiving a shock. After a moment I went to her door and knocked. There was no answer. I repeated the knock—there was still no answer. So I opened the door and looked in—there was no one there. Then, scarcely knowing what I did, I walked across to the window. I caught sight of

policeman on the other side of the road. I threw up the window, beckoned to him, and called softly down to him. In a minute or two he and the caretaker—Acock—came hurrying up. I told them in a few words how I came to be there. Acock called up his wife, while the policeman went for help. And—well, that is all I can tell.”

So there is the end of the testimony of the principal witness—the man who slept calmly and soundly within a few feet of a terrible murder. And as if his last words were more final, more impressive, than their mere sound, no one—coroner, legal gentlemen, jurymen—wants to ask him anything more at that moment—the recollection of all he has said in the last few minutes is too strong, too fresh.

But since this young man made his awful discovery in the yellow light of that dull November morning, the Law has been at work. Its sleuth-hounds have had their muzzles to the ground on such trail as there was. One of them is here, ready to tell what he can, be it much or little. So the medical student steps down with a sigh of relief, and where he stood now stands a man from New Scotland Yard.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE DETECTIVE.

**S**TRANGE as it may seem, there are people in this court who have never seen a real, live detective. They have heard much of detectives: are they not for ever reading about them in those cheap, Sunday newspapers, the columns of which are filled with little else than police-court news, inquest news, murder, divorce, and the like? Some have read a little on higher lines—they have dim notions of persons named Sherlock Holmes, Inspector Javert, Hawkshaw, though, if they were severely taxed on the matter, they could not be quite positive if these gentlemen were real flesh and blood individuals or men written about—imagined—in books and plays. But the man now in the box is a real, proper detective; a great many of those who stare at him are familiar with his name. An individual who has managed to squeeze himself inside the door by dint of crushing his proportions into a space many sizes too small for him, whispers chokingly to his nearest neighbour (whose ear is only the fraction of an inch from his own) that this was 'im as foun' aht that there blinkin' Befnal Green affair; another remarks, under a voice thickly impregnated with bad gin, that this 'ere war 'im

as run dahn the Shifter, and adds that 'ee's a 'ot 'un, 'ee is, an' no error. Wherefore, they all regard the man from New Scotland Yard as country cousins and suburban inhabitants regard the lions in Trafalgar Square, wondering greatly that they should not suddenly arise and open their mouths and roar.

The lion in the witness-box, however, manifests no disposition to roar. To the people in the back benches, indeed, he does not seem much of a lion. He is not at all their idea of a detective. He does not wear a slouch hat ; his moustache is obviously natural. One lady observes to her friend that he might be anything, he might. The friend says he reminds her of Mr. Sparks, the butcher down the road when Mr. Sparks has his Sunday clothes on and takes the missus and kids to the Park. And in point of fact, the new witness does indeed look like a highly-respectable, well-dressed, well-fed tradesman, who can sport a silk hat, and a pearl cravat-pin, and a gold chain across his comfortably-filled waistcoat, and he further heightens the impression by the fact that he has a merry, blue eye, and a naturally cheery expression, and a healthy glow on his cheek. There are those in court who feel that it would be quite pleasant to be suddenly held up by such a pleasant-looking gentleman, even if the final interview with him led to an eventual interview with the hangman.

Formality reveals this gentleman as John Wirlescombe, of the Criminal Investigation Department, New Scotland Yard—rank : detective-sergeant.

"In answer to a telephone message, you were sent up from the Yard, early in the morning of November fourth, to the flat number five in Austerlitz Mansions, Paddington ?"

"I was."

"About what time was that ?"

"I arrived at the flat at a quarter to nine."

"What and whom did you find there?"

"I found there an inspector and two constables from the local police-station, the police-surgeon, the caretaker and his wife, and the last witness, Mr. Adrian Graye. A few minutes after my arrival, the landlord, Mr. Quarendon, came in. As soon as I got there I was shown the body of the dead man."

"What were your first proceedings?"

"Having heard a general statement from some of those present, notably Mr. Graye, I, in company with the inspector, made a thorough examination of the room in which the body lay—that is to say, a thorough superficial examination. I did not at that time examine any trunks, boxes, chests of drawers, or anything of that sort for papers or documents."

"You took a general observation?"

"Just so."

"Did you notice anything of moment?"

"Nothing whatever. There were no signs of any struggle. Everything in the room appeared to be in proper order. The window was securely closed from the inside. Outside there was communication with a fire-escape, but, as I say, the window was properly fastened within the room."

"What were your next proceedings?"

"We had a careful look all over the flat. I saw nothing to arouse any suspicion or to give any clue. The room which Mr. Graye pointed out to us as the one he had occupied had been slept in; that into which he told us the girl, Miss Graffi, had retired on the previous evening, had not—at any rate, the bed was made. Of this room I made a more careful examination."

"To what purpose?"

"I wished to know, as the girl had apparently gone, in what clothes she had left, if she had carried anything away with her, if she had taken a hand-bag, for instance. I accordingly took Mrs. Acock,



the caretaker's wife, into the room with me. Mrs. Acock had a very good idea of what Miss Graffi possessed in the way of clothes—it was not an extensive wardrobe. After she and I had gone through everything I came to the conclusion that the girl had left the flat in a dark blue, tailor-made costume, that she wore a black fur stole, and had a toque, or hat trimmed with similar fur."

Mr. Chisenbury desires to interpolate a question and answer to and from the last witness, and does so. Does he remember what Miss Graffi was wearing when he saw her retire for the night? Yes, he does quite well. She was wearing the costume which Detective-sergeant Wirlescombe had just described, and she carried the fur and the toque in her hand, having thrown them off in the study when she came in. Mr. Chisenbury nods to the detective to go on with his story.

"I also came to the conclusion that she had not taken anything else away with her—not even an umbrella. Mrs. Acock was able to show me everything that the girl possessed; that is, that she knew her to possess. There was, in Mrs. Acock's opinion, nothing whatever missing. So far as I could judge from what I saw, from what Mrs. Acock said, the girl had simply walked out in her ordinary going-out costume."

"What did you do then?"

"I made a thorough examination of her room with the idea that I might find something which would give me a clue to her disappearance and her whereabouts. I thought she might have a lover, and that there might be correspondence. So I went through a trunk, which was not locked, and through a chest of drawers. All the drawers were unlocked, and I examined the pockets—where there were any—of all her dresses."

"Did you find anything to help you?"

"I found absolutely nothing. There was literally nothing of what one could call a personal nature in the room, beyond a few trinkets of no value, a prayer book with the mere name 'Gemma' on the fly-leaf, and a rosary of Venetian glass beads. There were no letters, and there were no scraps of destroyed letters. In fact, as I have just said, there was nothing—I mean nothing that could give me any clue."

"Did you notice anything in the room which would have given one the impression that the girl had meditated flight?"

"Nothing at all. The room was quite tidy, quite orderly. I came to the conclusion that whatever Miss Graffi's connection with the death of her grandfather was or was not, she had gone off in a hurry without making any preparation. I accordingly questioned Mrs. Acock and her husband with a view to finding out if the girl was likely to be provided with money. I found out from them that it was most unlikely that she could possibly have more than a few shillings in her possession. It appears that Signor Graffi, who had lived entirely alone until he brought his granddaughter to live with him, was a man of very simple tastes, and of a frugal manner of living. Although he presumably earned a considerable income, he was very careful, though he must have spent largely on books, pictures, and scientific instruments. It appears that it was his custom to hand to Mrs. Acock every Friday evening a certain sum of money, which she laid out in certain provisions for him; other provisions he always purchased himself, visiting an Italian warehouse in Soho for the purpose, for he kept up his Italian tastes. He was very absent-minded in some ways, and Mrs. Acock had more than once to suggest to him after he brought his granddaughter to London, that the girl needed certain things, and

that he ought to give her pocket-money. He invariably bought the things, but as regards the pocket-money answered that young people were better without money. Therefore, I concluded that Miss Graffi could not possibly have had much money on her when she left."

Mr. Chrisenbury appears to have been thinking hard: he puts in a question which has already occurred to at least one man amongst the jury.

"Did you see anything, did you gather anything, that would lead you to suppose that Miss Graffi was carried away by force?"

"No! That, I am confident, is absolutely out of the question."

"Might she not have been drugged?"

"Well, I considered that, but I quickly dismissed the idea. No. I am absolutely certain that she simply—left."

"Very well. What steps did you take?"

"I went back to headquarters. It seemed best, after consultation, to find the girl as quickly as possible, and a full description of her, dressed as I have indicated, was got ready, printed, and put into the widest circulation. It was, in fact, specially circulated, within a very few hours. A special watch was put on at all the railway stations; we communicated with all the seaports; in fact, the news that the girl was wanted was known all over England and a considerable part of the continent before evening that day."

"And so far there has not been the slightest result?"

"Not the slightest. We have not heard a word of her. Up to now she has utterly vanished."

"Have you considered the possibility of her having committed suicide?"

"Yes. After hearing what Mr. Graye had to tell me about her dislike of England, and her sullenness,

and her appeal to him, I did think of that. It may be that she has. All I can say at present is that we have had no information on the point any more than we have had any information on any other point respecting her whereabouts."

"Investigations are, of course, proceeding?"

"They are proceeding day and night. They are being carried out most thoroughly. Unfortunately, Signor Graffi appears to have had scarcely any friends amongst his own compatriots in London. I have made the closest inquiries, and I can find very few people, beyond his English pupils, who knew him. Those who did know him, knew him only very slightly, as little more than a mere acquaintance. He did not belong to any club, circle, or association; in fact, he seems to have been a sort of hermit. That makes matters more difficult."

"You heard Mr. Graye's evidence. He told us of a mysterious stranger who visited Signor Graffi on the night of the latter's death. Did you come to any conclusion about that visit?"

"I did. I came to the conclusion that the man was furnished with not only a key to Mr. Graffi's flat, but to the front door of Austerlitz Mansions, and that he was probably a frequent visitor after the front door was closed for the night."

"Have you tried to find that man?"

"We have tried and are trying. Mr. Graye gave me the same description of him which he has just given here. Unfortunately, Mr. Graye's description would apply to hundreds of men in the foreign quarters of London. Day before yesterday, the day after the murder, and again yesterday, I took Mr. Graye round several of those quarters, and into a great many places—clubs, restaurants, cafés, frequented by foreigners, and especially by Italians—in order to see if he could find this man, but without effect. We have heard nothing of him."

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"Doesn't it strike you that if this man, this mysterious visitor, were a friend of Signor Graffi's, he would have come forward at once on hearing of his death?"

The witness hesitates—for the first time.

"Well, he might, and he might not come forward. There may be very good personal reasons why he does not wish it to be known that he visited Mr. Graffi. I believe there is some inner mystery in this case which ——"

The witness gets no further because of a sudden interruption. A uniformed policeman has pushed his way in at the door. With him comes a labouring man, fingering his cap. The policeman forces his way further in, glancing at the coroner's officer. There is whispering between them: the policeman covertly hands something to the officer. The officer goes up the steps to the coroner's dais. The proceedings are, in subtle fashion, stayed. The coroner listens, looks, beckons to the legal gentlemen, to the detective, to the foreman. They group around him to look at something.

And suddenly a whisper runs round the packed court. The labouring man has found something: perhaps the something which sent the old Italian to swift death.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE STILETTO AND THE JURY.

**P**RESENTLY, from amidst the little group on the dais, which breaks up into its original units, the thing appears. The coroner, in speaking to one or other about it, necessarily holds it up. The lights on his desk make play upon it, glittering and coruscating on its surface. The folk at the back of the court so far do not know, cannot tell, even by straining their eyes, precisely what it is. Is it a knife, a dagger, a poniard, a stiletto? Never mind, it is already definitely settled in their minds that it was That that did it. Fascination creeps over them, seizes upon them. This was indeed worth coming for. To be able to look at, even to catch a momentary glimpse of that with which a murder was committed is almost as good as a visit to the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's, where, every now and then, most of their spectators repair to have new vigour put into a mental constitution, which has grown vitiated by diligent reading of the Sunday newspapers. —If only the coroner would allow them to handle That for a moment!

But the coroner is addressing his twelve good

men and true, and incidentally cocking his eye at Mr. Chisenbury.

"The last witness, or I should say, the witness, for I presume Mr. Chisenbury has not yet done with him, was interrupted, gentlemen, by the arrival of a constable, who brought in a man who within the last quarter of an hour found an instrument with which it seems probable that the crime we are investigating was committed. It has, at any rate, been already identified as having a very close connection with the flat at Austerlitz Mansions. I think, Mr. Chisenbury, we had better have the man who found it put in the witness-box, and then hear what the caretaker and his wife have to say about it?"

Mr. Chisenbury assents readily. The man who has come in under escort of the constable, and who has ever since stood near the witness-box, twiddling his cap in his hands, and wondering if there is going to be as much as the price of a pint out of all this, steps up to the place which Mr. Wirlescombe vacates. Name of William Nokes. Resides in Corporation Street, Harrow Road. Is a mason's labourer.

Mr. Chisenbury is in possession of the weapon by this time. He holds it up. Everybody can now get some glimpse of it in the yellow light. Those who know anything about such things recognise in it a stiletto, of a kind which used to be carried a good deal in the south of Italy. The blade, triangular, is some seven inches in length. The haft is of a dark material, horn or ebony, ornamented with silver. The folk in the back benches, exercising a fervent imagination, declare that they can see blood on both blade and haft.

"We understand that you have just found this, Nokes?"

"Yessir."

"When did you find it?"

"'Bout half an hour ago, sir."

"Where?"

"Close by here, sir, between here and Austerlitz Road."

"Just tell us how you came to find it."

Nokes, who has carried his cap into the witness-box with him, twists it in his hands as if he meant to wring imagination out of it. He is obviously not prepared to make what we would call a speech, and would infinitely prefer to answer questions, but under the influence of a whisper from the coroner's officer, who admonishes him to say it straight out, he lifts his chin and plunges boldly into the heart of things.

"Well, sir, it was like this here—me and my mates is doing a bit o' repairing work at the garden walls of a house at the corner of Austerlitz Road there. 'Cause of having other work to do this morning we was late coming to that job. When we got into the garden I was shifting a lot of leaves and stuff what had gathered, and I uncovered that dagger. I says to Jim Smith that was working with me, 'Look here, Jim,' I says, 'that's a nice sort o' thing to find,' I says. So he looks at it, too. 'Av!' he says, 'I shouldn't wonder if that's what done the old mounseer in what was found murdered in them very mansions as you can see there,' he says. 'He was stabbed,' he says, 'and they ain't found the knife what done it,' he says, 'and I'll lay a pint to nothing that's it,' he says. 'What's to be done?' says I. 'You go and look for the nearest copper,' says he, 'and hand it over to him,' he says. 'I believe they're holding of a inquest on that there old mounseer this very day,' he says, 'and it might be what they call important evidence, might that dagger,' he says. So I went up to the end of the street, sir, and found the plecceman what's a-stand-



ing there, and told him about it, and we come on here. That's all, sir."

Mr. Nokes's tale is a straight tale, and there is no need to question or cross-question him about it. Mr. Chrisenbury is obliged to him; the coroner is obliged to him. Mr. Nokes steps down, feeling that this grey work-a-day world has not yet lost its romance. His visions of a pint now run into something more substantial. He begins to think that he may possibly make half a dollar "out of this here business," especially as he is bidden to wait.

And now, as a result of a whispered consultation between Mr. Chrisenbury, the coroner, and Acock, the caretaker, a new witness is produced in the shape of the caretaker's wife. It appears that Mrs. Acock has been in court all the time. She has, in fact, been one of the most interested of the deeply interested folk on the public benches. It puts her all of a tremble when her name is called, but like all strong-minded females of her sort she comes bravely forward, only regretting that she is not wearing her Sunday finery, and especially a new hat, which she bought last Saturday as ever was in Edgware Road. Possibly never again in her life will she ever have such a chance of filling the stage as that which now presents itself—and before lawyers and such-like too!

Emma Acock—leastways, Emma Madeline Acock as really is. Married woman. Wife of Mr. Acock—Mr. Charles Acock. Lives at Austerlitz Mansions; is, in fact, housekeeper there.

"Look at this stiletto, Mrs. Acock. Take it in your hand."

Mrs. Acock takes the stiletto in her hand, gingerly. She looks at it. She puts it down on the ledge of the witness-box, and regards it with horror.

"Ever seen that before, Mrs. Acock?"

"Oh, yes, sir—many a time, sir."

"Where?"

"On Miss Gemma's dressing-table, sir."

"Miss Graffi's dressing-table?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did it belong to her?"

"Yes, sir—leastways, she brought it with her when she come from Italy with her poor grandpa."

"Did she ever say anything to you about it?"

"Yes, sir. I says to her one day, 'Lor', miss, I says, 'I wonder at a young lady like you having a murderous weapon like that lying about,' I says. 'You'll be a injuring of yourself with it,' I says. 'Oh,' she says, 'in my country every girl carries a stiletter.' 'Lor', miss, I says, 'whatever for!' 'To kill people with,' she says, just like that, sir. 'I think nothing of killing people there,' she says, 'any more than you do of killing flies,' she says. It give me quite a turn, sir."

Mr. Chisenbury does not show by even a wink that he believes Miss Graffi to have been pulling Mrs. Acock's leg. He continues to regard her steadily as he takes the stiletto back into keeping.

"You are quite sure, Mrs. Acock, that this is Miss Graffi's stiletto?"

"Oh, quite sure, sir. I know it as well as—as well as I know Acock there."

"But —"

"Well, Mrs. Acock!"

"But I ain't seen it lying about of late, sir. It used to lie in a little tray on Miss Gemma's dressing-table, but I don't remember seeing it, not lately."

"How long is it since you did see it?"

Mrs. Acock thinks, rolling up the strings of her bonnet and inclining her head to one side during the process.

"Well, maybe a month, sir. Of late, as I say, I ain't seen it lying about."

So there is an end of Mrs. Acock's evidence. It has established that the stiletto which Mr. Nokes found is the property of Miss Gemma Graffi. And certain of the jurymen begin to whisper to each other. One of the whisperers—they are all of them, there, whisperers, in the rear bench of the jury-box—leans forward, and prods the foreman unceremoniously in the back. He protrudes a red face over the foreman's shoulder and whispers hoarsely :

"Look 'ere, mister, me and them as is sittin' 'ere considers as 'ow we've 'eard enough o' this case ! Our minds is made up."

The foreman makes pretence of not hearing this. His apparent indifference is rewarded by another and more vigorous prod.

"D'yer 'ear, mister ? We've 'card enough ! You tell that to the coroner, we've 'card enough. We as is sittin' round about here, anyhow. Quite enough."

"Enough and plenty," growls another voice.

"I know what I say about it all," adds a third.

"Just so. Of course," says a fourth.

This whispering, growling, nodding of heads, attracts the coroner's attention. He turns towards the jury-box. The foreman reluctantly rises.

"Some of the jurymen, sir, wish me to say that they consider they have heard quite enough of this case."

The coroner frowns, shaking his head. He points out that the evidence of the detective, Wirlescombe, was interrupted ; that there may be still more evidence to bring forward ; that he himself must sum

up the case to the jury. What he says, however, is listened to with disfavour by the majority of the jury. It is very plain that the views of the restive spirits in the rear bench are shared in by those who sit in front. It presently appears, also, that there is no further evidence to come from Detective-Sergeant Wirlescombe, and that no other evidence of any sort is forthcoming. And so the coroner sums up the case as it has been presented, during the dreary hours of the November morning.

He says little. It may be that as a man of experience and insight, he has already detected the temper of the jury, has put his finger accurately on its pulse. Already knows what verdict nearly every man on the jury has determined upon in his own mind. He is accordingly succinct, matter-of-fact, sparing of words. He points out that the deceased man, Marco Graffi, was undoubtedly murdered by stabbing, in his own bedroom, on the night of the fourth—fifth—to be precise, early in the morning of the fifth of November. He comments on the romantic circumstances under which the medical student, Adrian Graye, was in the flat at the time. He points out that the granddaughter of the dead man apparently had a great desire to get away from him and from the country. It was impossible, from the evidence adduced, not to ask one self the question—did she, in a sudden fit of passion, stab her grandfather and flee? If so, it was an unnatural and diabolical crime, but they must face the facts, especially after the evidence relating to the stiletto. At the same time they must bear in mind another significant fact. It had been proved that at any rate one person had been able to gain admission to the building and the flat after midnight, presumably by means of latch-keys. If one person could do that, there might be others who could. One heard much of

secret societies in connection with Italians. It might be that the dead man belonged to some such society, and that he had been what such a society would call "removed." They must decide for themselves what verdict to give on the evidence put before them.

The majority of the jury want to give a verdict there and then; it is only the persuasion of the foreman and one or two of the elder men that induces the rest to retire. And as soon as the twelve are closeted together, the man who had prodded the foreman's shoulders bursts into speech.

"Wot's the use o' this 'ere retirin'—waste o' time, I call it, and me kep' there hours from my shop as it is! Verdict! Why, o' course, there only is one verdict. The girl done it! We all know wot them Heyetalian girls is—knife a man as soon as look at 'im. Done the old man in and cut her stick—that's what she done! Didn't take me a minute to see that, I can tell yer."

"Nor me!" says another, to be backed up by most of the others. "Clear case as ever I knew on, and that there stiletter business is good enough for me. She done it!"

The foreman expostulates. There is no need for such indecent haste. Let them sit down and go calmly and dispassionately through the evidence. But every man save one dissents. A chorus of growls and grunts arises. And one gentleman, who has forgotten to shave for a few days, in his desire to attend to business, intimates that he don't know what he, the foreman, works at, but as for himself, if he don't attend to his work, the missus and kids 'll know about it, and no error.

"Can't be but one verdict, nohow," say two men at once. "She done it! Wilful murder agin the girl—that's what it is."

So the foreman, resigning himself to the inevitable,

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shamefacedly leads back his companions, the *probi et legales homines* of the Law's requirements, and amidst a dead silence rises and delivers himself of a verdict in which he personally does not believe.

"We find, sir, that the dead man was murdered by his granddaughter, Gemma Graffi."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MESSAGE.

SO that is over. Gemma Graffi, wherever she may be, stands attainted, by the verdict of a coroner's jury of twelve hard-headed English citizens, voters, burgesses, ratepayers, possessors of all manner of qualifications of respectability and its like, of the crime of murder. She may go a-wandering through the wide world wherever she likes ; she may come back to England (supposing she has left it) twelve months hence or fifty years hence—that verdict will be there on the coroner's papers, signed by the coroner and the jury's foreman. Marco Graffi was murdered, and Gemma Graffi murdered him. So the jury has said.

"That," observed Detective-Sergeant Wirlescombe, walking away from the court in company with Adrian Graye and John Herbert, "that, gentlemen, is the sort of verdict one gets from twelve men who are picked up anyhow. It makes one think whether this boasted jury system of ours is worth twopence."

"You don't agree with the verdict?" said Herbert.

Adrian Graye uttered an inarticulate murmur. Herbert laughed.

"Oh, I know what you think, old chap!" he said. "You've treated me to so many disquisitions on the girl's innocence that I know your verdict from start to finish. But I want to know what Mr. Wirlescombe thinks."

"I think as Mr. Graye thinks," said Wirlescombe. "I don't believe the girl guilty for a second—I never did. But—I don't know but what she may have known, either at the time, or just after, who was guilty."

"An accessory?" said Herbert.

"Not in the ordinary sense," replied the detective. "The probability is that she knew of the murder just after it was committed."

Adrian Graye uttered another exclamation of impatience. Herbert smiled at Wirlescombe, and jerked his head in his fellow-student's direction.

"He's a firm believer in Miss Gemma's complete innocence," he remarked. "Doesn't believe she knows—knows, I say—anything about it, even now. Thinks she's been spirited away. But you know. Adrian, old chap,——"

Graye pulled out his watch.

"What I know is that it's nearly two o'clock, and that I've had nothing to eat since half-past eight," he said. "I want some lunch. Let's go somewhere and have some. Come with us, Wirlescombe. But—where shall we go? I don't know this district, and I'm sure Herbert doesn't."

"Thank you," said Wirlescombe. "Capital place down Edgware Road here. Chapel Street—Reggini's—I know it."

"Come on, then," said Graye. "Some decent food and something to drink is just what I want after that beastly business. As for those jurymen they are a set of damned fools."

The other two laughed. Graye growled, and continued to growl until the three found themselves



seated around a table in a quiet corner of the restaurant to which Wirlescombe piloted them. And when they had given their orders, and had drunk something by way of an appetiser, he leaned forward to his companions and smote the table lightly but decisively with his clenched fist.

"Look here!" he said in a low voice. "You might talk to me from now till the Greek kalends, and you'd never make me believe that that girl either killed her grandfather, or that she was accessory in any way, or that she knew anything about it. I saw her. You've never seen her. She's—not that sort."

Wirlescombe smiled indulgently.

"Yours was a short acquaintance, Mr. Graye," he remarked laconically.

"I don't care—short or long. I mean what I say. There are some people that you can judge after a minute's acquaintanceship," said Graye, doggedly. "I'm a judge of character."

"And you're also nineteen years of age," suggested Herbert quizzically. "At nineteen one always is very clever. But seriously, old chap, if you're so convinced of the young lady's complete and entire innocence, how do you explain her absence and her silence? Why doesn't she come forward? I should think even the villagers of the Cheviots know all about the Austerlitz Mansions tragedy by this time. We live in an age of cheap newspapers."

"Don't talk cheap platitudes," said Graye, testily. "You know very well that in my opinion the girl can't come forward. There's been foul play—somebody's got hold of her. She's being kept back—a prisoner, most likely."

Herbert glanced at the detective.

"If it isn't asking too much, Mr. Wirlescombe, what's your honest opinion about the whole thing?" he said. "I'm sure you've got a theory."

Wirlescombe deliberately finished his soup before he made answer to this invitation. Then he looked Herbert frankly in the face and smiled.

"Well, to tell you the truth, Mr. Herbert," he said, "I haven't a theory. I've a lot of ideas—confused ideas, perhaps. Before I can form any theory I shall want to know a lot of things; to find out a good deal which it seems particularly hard to find out. I should like to know a great many facts relating to Marco Graffi. As I said in the witness-box, no one in London seems to know very much about him except that he has been established here as a teacher of languages for some years, and has lived a very quiet and retired life. But I want to go beyond that. I think that for a real solution of the mystery we may have to go back a great many years, and to another country."

"Italy, you mean?" said Herbert.

"It might be Italy; it might be Sicily; it might be Sardinia; it might be France; it might be Russia," replied Wirlescombe. "There are secret societies, associations, bands of crusaders in all of them."

"Ah! You think this was the work of some secret society?" said Herbert. "A vendetta affair, eh?"

"I think that I should like to know who the man was who called after midnight on the night of the murder, and what the object of his visit was," said the detective. "If I knew that—well, I should know a good deal. But that man seems to have disappeared as completely as the girl has."

"You attach great importance to his visit?"

"The greatest importance. The mere fact that he possessed a key to the front door, another key to Graffi's flat, means much, very much. It shows that he was in the habit of visiting Graffi constantly, and that his visits were paid at night. Acock, the

caretaker, cannot bear in mind that he ever saw a visitor answering this description who came by day. Now, who was that man? Why did he come in this hole-and-corner fashion? What errand did he come on, on that particular night? If I knew that ——"

The detective spread out his hands and shrugged his shoulders, and proceeded to apply himself to his plate. Adrian Graye, eating steadily, stared straight in front of him and said nothing. Herbert, inquisitive and speculative, returned to the charge.

"Do you think that man was the murderer?" he asked.

Wirlescombe shook his head.

"I couldn't give any reason why I don't think he was," he answered; "but, as a matter of fact, I don't. I think, though, that he was in some way connected with the murder. I think that he perhaps called on Graffi that midnight to—warn him."

"To warn him? Of what?" asked Herbert.

"Of danger," replied Wirlescombe. "Of coming danger—perhaps imminent danger. There was a certain matter which I did not speak of at the inquest. When I searched those rooms after being called there, I found that in the grate of the room into which, according to Mr. Graye's story, Graffi and the unknown man retired to talk, a quantity of papers had been burned. Now, those papers may have been nothing of importance. They may have been students' compositions, pupils' exercises. On the other hand they may have been of some private importance. They may have been ——"

Graye suddenly started.

"Now I remember something!" he exclaimed.

"Something that I haven't told you before, Wirlescombe. After all, a fellow can't remember everything. Your talking of papers has only just recalled it to me. After Graffi and the other man had gone into the other room to talk, Graffi came back, passed

through the study into his bedroom, and came out again with what looked like a bundle of letters. And I remember, too, that when he and the other chap eventually came back to Miss Graffi and myself, he didn't have anything in his hand. I'd forgotten that until now."

Wirlescombe received this news without sign of surprise.

"That may account for the mass of burnt paper in the grate," he said. "And it makes me still more of the impression that the visitor came with a message or a warning. As I say, one will probably have to go far afield to get at the beginning of this mystery. Between ourselves, I regard the girl as being a small item in the account."

"Grave," said Herbert, glancing at his friend, "is worrying himself a lot as to her whereabouts. He fears foul play. And it certainly seems a strange thing that a young woman can disappear like that in London."

The detective smiled.

"London, my dear sir, is the very place in which people can disappear with ease and celerity," he remarked. "If I only had time I could tell you of some disappearances which are much more remarkable and curious than this of Miss Graffi. The truth is that if a person makes up his or her mind to disappear, he or she can disappear to good purpose, in London. I question if there's another city in the world where complete disappearance can be so thoroughly effected."

"But this girl had no money, no funds, if what the housekeeper said was correct," Herbert pointed out.

"That's nothing. She didn't disappear without help," said Wirlescombe. "My own impression is that whoever it was who killed Graffi afterwards got her away, she being at the time in ignorance of her

grandfather's death. She is probably ignorant of it still."

"You mean," said Herbert, "that she's probably a close prisoner?"

"Probably," answered Wirlescombe. "Or, certainly, if she's still in London. If she's not in London, but already on the Continent, it's a thousand to one against her hearing of the old gentleman's death. She wouldn't be likely to read the newspapers."

"But what about the Continental police?" asked Herbert. "You're communicating with them, aren't you?"

"Certainly we're in communication with them," replied Wirlescombe. "But what of that? There are a few tens of thousands of young women on the Continent—or shall we say a few hundreds of thousands? What is one amongst so many!—the proverbial needle in the bottle of hay. Supposing Gemma Graffi has been taken over to Paris or to Vienna—there are places in both cities wherein she could be buried alive from the instant she entered their doors. There is a regular traffic in that sort of thing, and ——"

A warning look from Herbert checked the detective, who glanced aside and saw that Adrian Graye was looking very flushed and angry. And Wirlescombe suddenly realised something that up till then he had not even dreamed of—the young medical student was more than a little interested in, if he was not already in love with, the Italian girl, of whose disappearance they were talking. He hastened to change his tack.

"Of course, I don't say that," he began. But Graye once more brought his big fist down heavily but quietly on the table.

"Look here!" he said in a hoarse whisper. "We've got to find that girl!—I've got to find her."

You've got to find her, Wirlescombe, and you've got to help, Jack Herbert! I've got heaps of coin—anyway, I shall have as soon as I'm twenty-one, and that's only eleven months off now, and I'll spend anything to find her. Because I'll swear she's innocent. By God!—she looked at me when she made that appeal to me about speaking to her grandfather, and I know—*know*, I tell you—that those weren't the eyes of a murderess! I say she must be found, and I'll pay you anything you like to find her, Wirlescombe. It's fifty thousand that I come into, sir, when I'm of age—my old grand-dad left it to me irrespective of my income—and I'll see you right, Wirlescombe. But—she must be found."

"Offer a big reward, Adrian," suggested Herbert. "A thousand, I say, might work wonders."

But the detective shook his head.

"No," he said. "Mr. Grahn mustn't do that—as yet. If Miss Grahn turned up just now, things would be decidedly unpleasant for her. Let her lie *perdu* for awhile. What we want to find out is, Who killed Marco Grahn? When that's done—well!"

Wirlescombe interrupted himself to look at a twisted-up scrap of paper which a waiter was presenting to him on a plate.

"A gentleman, who has just gone out, said I was to give that to you, sir," said the waiter. "The gentleman what was sitting over there. He followed you in when you entered."

Wirlescombe untwisted the scrap of paper, read the few words scribbled on it, and passed it over to the two medical students. He looked at them enquiringly.

"Well?" he said. "Of course, I sha' go there. This man has evidently something to communicate. Will you two gentlemen come with me? You will—both? Good! But, no hurry; the man has only just gone. Let us smoke a cigar—it will clear our heads for what may be an adventure."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE CAFE ALDOBRANDINI.

THERE lies in the very heart of that newer London, besides which the old, the real London of mediævalism is as a pigmy to a giant, a district wherein, not such a great while ago as one might think from present observation, there were green fields and rural sights and country sounds, where there are now crowded streets and alleys, and a polyglot population which always betrays a strong instinct to turn night into day. Few slices of the town are so crowded, so invariably busy with matters of eating and drinking, of much talk at street-corners and in cafés and restaurants and public places, as that irregularly-shaped wedge which is bounded on one side by Regent Street and the Quadrant, on another by Shaftesbury Avenue and the High Street of St. Giles's-in-the-Fields; on yet a third side by Oxford Street, and is known to all men by the general and comprehensive name of Soho. Yet within the last thirty-five years there were country cottages in its midst, and at least one cowshed, with real cows in it; and in Georgian times—the latter days of which some living folk still remember—there were farmhouses and open fields where there are now theatres and *ristoranti*, patronised greatly by an alien population. The names of these fields are

still in remembrance, though it might be hard to say exactly where each lay. There was Doghouse Field (did somebody keep a pack of hounds or beagles there?), and there was Bunches Close, and there was Coleman Hedge, which, doubtless, signified some boundary. There were the Windmill Fields—in their midst stood the great windmill which gave its name to Great Windmill Street. Soho was rural enough when its mighty sails caught the breezes which swept over the open land between Westminster and Hampstead, which is now open no longer. There were, doubtless, many rustic sights and sounds to be heard around that old windmill. Men in smock-frocks, men in carters' dresses, milk-maids, genuine country folk could be seen and heard what time the sails went whirring round. Citizens of the genuine London, the London east of Holborn and Temple Bar, no doubt, considered a walk into Soho to be as much of a country excursion as we of these days consider an expedition into the middle of Kent or Buckinghamshire to be one. For in those days Soho was—outside.

Nowadays, Soho is inside—a long way inside. Like all the other bits that infringed on London, and on Westminster, and on the strip of land, Charing Cross and the Strand, that lay between them, it gradually became built over. The windmill vanished. Bricks and mortar and lath and plaster began to be dumped down in prodigious quantities where there used to be hedgerows with real, live, fragrant June roses in them. Then marked-out streets and squares where boys used to tend sheep and maids milked cows. In a shorter time than one would consider possible this new neighbourhood became thickly populated. Soon it assumed a distinct characteristic of its own: its population became markedly alien. One understands why most of the folk who live in Soho are foreign if one thinks a little. The foreigner,



who comes to London intending to remain here, naturally turns to a quarter in which he will find men and women of his own nationality. Until he becomes used to his new surroundings, until he is more certain of his attempts to speak the difficult English tongue, he wants sympathy and help from his kith and kin. That is why there is a distinct quarter for Russian Jews, and another for Polish refugees, and another for Spaniards, and why the Americans invariably herd together in the best hotels and eat their meals in the cheap restaurants, it is the gregarious feeling, as common to men in strange situations as to small birds when a hawk or an eagle sails amongst them. Now, Soho has always been French and Italian. It begun to be French when the Terror suddenly lifted its hydra head in Paris. Emigrés came over to England, to London, by the hundred, perhaps by the thousand. They settled in Soho, keeping close together. Somehow or other, they eked out a living. Marquises gave lessons in fencing; abbés gave instructions in French, in mathematics; a duke was known to be glad of five shillings for a morning's exposition of the arts of dancing and deportment at a ladies' seminary. Always, during the trying times through which France passed between 1790 and 1815, there were Frenchmen coming to live about Golden Square, and the Compton Streets, Great and Little, and Dean Street, and Greek Street. Naturally, many things sprang up because of their coming—churches, Catholic and Protestant, for their special benefit, clubs, institutions, restaurants. I suppose they went on coming until the Revolution of 1848; certainly many came then, and again in 1870. In this way Soho became Gallicised—walk about it, forget that you are in England, look at the names over the windows of the shops, observe the escargots in one window and the immaculate lines displayed on sheets

of coloured paper in another, listen to the talk on the kerb and at the street-corners, and imagine you are in some arrondissement of Paris or quartier of Rome or Marseilles. Here is the *blanchisserie*, there the *épicer*, yonder the *boulangier*, beyond him the establishment of *confiserie*. It is all very French; especially the children, who are more French than their parents, and the escargots, respecting which one wonders, before eating them, whether they are French or English.

But besides being peopled with folk from our beautiful sister across the Channel, Soho also harbours the Italians—and, in a less degree, the Swiss. There are no such clear histories about the coming of the Italians and the Swiss as there is about the advent of the French. Probably the Italians heard that the French had arrived, and forthwith set out to provide *ristoranti* for them, having a natural genius that way. As for the Swiss, they followed the Italians, knowing that no cafés and restaurants are any good without waiters. Everybody knows that the Swiss are born to wait at table, just as some men are born to write poetry and others to plough the land. Therefore, in Soho, there are multitudinous restaurants and cafés, where the proprietors are nearly always Italians and the waiters either Italians or Swiss. They are pleasant and delightful places, these centres of restoration for the body, provided you are not too finicky and have no objection to plenty of noise. They are pre-eminently, however, for Youth—the youth that likes a light wine, a pretty girl, and a careless hour. In some of these abodes it is usual to sing at certain hours of the evening, and it makes no difference if different groups sing different songs. The harmony, the true harmony, *mes amies*, is in the Idea—never mind the Effect. The Effect is of no importance.

It was at one of these Soho restaurants that Adrian Graye and John Herbert and Detective-Sergeant Wirlescombe pulled up in a taxi-cab on the afternoon of the day of the inquest. The time was then four o'clock, which, as everybody knows, is about the quietest time of the day so far as Soho and its cafés are concerned. Wirlescombe and his companions, examining the front of the particular café to which they had been driven, saw that it was a very quiet-looking place, with a façade no larger than that of an ordinary shop. There was an open door in the centre, with a little lobby inside, closed to the interior by a glass door, in the panes of which were small muslin curtains tied up in their middles with blue ribbon. On either side of the door were windows, also draped in muslin. In one stood a large soup-tureen of blue and white china; in the other, a magnum bottle of champagne with much gold foil about its neck. On the door, in gilt letters, ran the legend, "Café Aldobrandini." On the lintel, if one had cared to look for it, was the statutory announcement which set forth that Carl Aldobrandini was duly licensed to sell ales, wines, and spirituous liquors to be consumed on the premises. A fully-licensed house, then, though of modest appearance.

Wirlescombe, closely followed by the two medical students, pushed open the inner door and entered the little restaurant. It was like a hundred of its sort—there was red plush seating along the walls beneath big glass mirrors framed in gilt; there were little tables intended *pour deux*; there was the parting fragrance of lunch, in which the odour of soup and the smell of mutton chops played no inconsiderable part. At the extreme end of the place, which was simply one long room, a bar filled up one-half the wall space; behind it stood a plump, dark-haired lady, who was engaged in checking her accounts. Near it stood a olive-skinned, dark

moustached man in a frock-coat, who, at sight of the entrants, came half-nervously forward. Him the detective at once recognised as a man who had eaten a chop at Reggini's while he and Graye and Herbert were lunching. He, therefore, was the sender of the note. Wirlescombe held it out.

"Mr. Aldobrandini?" he said enquiringly. "You sent me this note?"

The proprietor rubbed his hands and bowed.

"Yes, sir. I—the fact is, I followed you into the restaurant where you were lunching, intending to speak to you, but I did not like to interrupt you while you were with your friends. And I wanted you to call here. These gentlemen are interested in the case? I heard one of them give his evidence."

"You were there, then?" asked the detective.

"I was there, sir, at the back of the court, near the door. I had read all about it in the newspapers. And, perhaps," continued the proprietor, eyeing Wirlescombe with a suggestive look, "perhaps I can tell you something that will be of use to you."

The detective looked round. Save for themselves, the industrious lady behind the little bar, and a waiter who stood close to the door, making efforts to see something of the outer world through the meshes of the muslin curtains, there was no one in the place. He sat down, motioning Graye and Herbert to follow his example. The four men grouped themselves around one of the little tables.

"Yes?" said Wirlescombe. "What is it, Mr. Aldobrandini?"

Mr. Aldobrandini leaned forward and lowered his voice.

"The man that this gentleman"—he indicated Graye with a little bow—"saw come to Graffi's apartment that night," he said. "Eh?"

"Well?" said the detective.

"I think I know that man. Yes. But not by

name. I know him by no name, eh? All the same, I think—yes, I am sure, I know him. Perhaps I should say, know of him, about him. Something about him, you understand me."

"Well?" repeated Wirlescombe.

Mr. Aldobrandini spread his hands comprehensively.

"This is a restaurant," he said. "But—it is also a hotel—small hotel. We have three, four rooms that we can let—bedrooms. I think that man you would like to find is the man who had one of these bedrooms—Number Two it is—for three weeks up to this night of that great fog. I think he is the man who was here till that night—yes."

"Was here? Do you mean he left then?"

"Left! Oh, yes, he left! Also left all his things here. What I mean is, he went out then, and he never come back no more!"

"Left all his things here and never came back? What time did you see him that night, then?"

"The night of the big fog, eh? I see him at between ten and eleven o'clock, when he have his supper. Yes, at this very table where we sit. After that, I never see him since."

"And you don't know who he is—anything about him?"

"I know nothing, except what I tell you. His name?—No. Where he come from?—No. What is his business?—No. Nothing. Only what I see. You understand me?"

"Well, what did you see? What do you know about him? Tell me all about it from the beginning. Have a cigar, Mr. Aldobrandini?"

The proprietor accepted the proffered cigar and carefully lighted it. His eyes followed the first spiral of blue smoke to the ceiling.

"Well, I tell you," he said. "This man—what this young gentleman describe—he came in here, it is about a month since. He carry a suit-case,

that is all. He have his dinner ; then he ask if we have a room for a week or two. My wife she show him the room, Number Two—he take it at one pound the week. He take his meals down here in the restaurant. He always pay for them when he takes them ; pay for his room each Saturday. Very irregular about his meals ; gets them when he wants them. He go out a great deal ; where I do not know. He seems to be a what you call friendless man. No friends, no pals, you understand, came for him. He never talk much to customers who happen to sit near him, and little to me or my wife. Very quiet. Once, I hear him say he come from Turin."

" Oh ! then he was Italian ? "

" Oh, yes, Italian ! But he speak English like you or me. Very good. Well, I say—lonely. No letters ever came for him, either. So we do not know his name, anyway, eh ? Well, then, this great fog arrive. That night, he came in about near ten and order his supper, and eat it just where you sit. Afterwards, he go out. I am standing at the door when he pass. He says something funny about the English climate. Then he go away up towards Soho Square, and since then he never come back no more. No ! "

" But you say he has left his things upstairs ? "

" All that he brought with him is upstairs, and maybe some things he has bought since he came. The room is just as he left it that night—just."

" Didn't owe you anything much, I suppose ? "

" Oh, nothing. He was a good payer. Seemed to have plenty of money, you understand. You like to see his room ? There is his suit-case there—locked. Also a drawer—locked. Perhaps you find something in them that tell you something, eh ? This way, then, gentlemen."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SECOND-HAND CLOTHES DEALER.

**M**R. ALDOBRANDINI led the way through a door at the rear of the bar into a narrow hall and pointed out that to the hotel part of the establishment there was a separate entrance, to which each of his visitors possessed a key.

"But he never use this door, that strange man," said Mr. Aldobrandini. "He always came in through the restaurant."

"What about his coming in late—coming in after the restaurant was closed?" asked the detective, sharply.

"He never come in late," answered Mr. Aldobrandini calmly. "He was what you call an early bird. He go to his bed early and he get up early. It is only that last night—the night of the big fog—that he was ever out late. Other nights he have his supper and go to his room before eleven. That night he go out instead. And then he never came back. We go upstairs and look at his room, eh?"

The proprietor turned up the staircase which led out of the narrow hall, and Wirlescombe, motioning Herbert to follow him, drew Graye back.

"That's a strange thing," he said; "that is, if it's really true that this is the man we want and that he never did go out. Because it would show that

whoever he may be, he wasn't in the habit of visiting Graffi's late at night, as we thought."

"He could easily slip down here and go out without any one noticing it," said Graye. "He probably went out when everybody else had gone to bed."

But the detective shook his head.

"No," he said. "The landlord means what he says. I know these foreign restaurant people. They don't go to bed until a very late hour themselves, and they keep a sharp watch on everybody that they have in their houses. If this man says his lodger didn't go out or come in late, he means it. And it suggests something to me. But let's see what there is in the room."

Mr. Aldobrandini and Herbert were awaiting them at the head of the stairs on the first floor. The proprietor produced a key from his waistcoat pocket.

"I keep the room locked and the key on me since he did not come back no more," he remarked as he opened the door. "There might be something of value in his suit-case and in the drawer what he lock up, eh? Now, you see all there is—just as he leave it."

Wirlescombe's practised eye ran over the room and its contents quickly. A plainly furnished bedroom of the sort usually found in cheap hotels. Of its occupant, but few traces. Toilet articles set out on the dressing-table; a sleeping-suit folded on the bed. On the stand at the foot of the bed a suit-case, closed; in one corner of the room an umbrella; on one side of the fireplace a pair of boots; on the other, a pair of slippers; on the chest of drawers several books and magazines and newspapers, and a half-emptied box of cigars. Mr. Aldobrandini waved a fat hand in this direction.

"He read a great deal," he explained. "Always he have a book about him; he read while he eat."



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Wirlescombe turned the books over. Some were in English, some in Italian; two or three were in Russian. All were on subjects relating to economic and social questions. Mr. Aldobrandini shook his head.

"Stiff stuff," he said. "I think he must be student or professor, or somethings, eh? This is the drawer that he keep locked."

Wirlescombe stood on no ceremony. He extracted something that looked like a surgical instrument from his pocket, inserted it in the lock, gave it a twist, and drew out the drawer. The drawer contained nothing but a case of geometrical instruments, some phials which held patent medicines, and a revolver, which was fully loaded.

"Nothing of any significance there," muttered Wirlescombe. "I shouldn't wonder if he wasn't, or isn't, sorry that he didn't carry this revolver on him instead of leaving it here. Now, let's see the suit-case."

The suit-case contained nothing but clothes and linen. There were no letters, no papers. But from the secret pocket of a lounge jacket the detective drew out a photograph, and Adrian Graye uttered a sharp exclamation as Wirlescombe held it up.

"That's the man!" he said. "That's he!"

Wirlescombe turned to the proprietor.

"This the man you're talking about?" he asked.

"The man who took this room?"

"Oh, yes, that's him," replied Mr. Aldobrandini; "that's him, right enough. And taken not so very long ago, I should say."

"And he's the man you saw at Graffi's, Mr. Graye?" continued Wirlescombe. "He is? Well, that settles one thing, anyway. But look here, do you see that the name of the photographer and his address, wherever it may be, has been carefully

trimmed off this photo? And, look here again, do you see that there's been, originally, a tailor's tag inside the collar of this coat and that it's been cut out? I don't think we're going to find much clue to the man's identity in this room."

In this surmise the detective was right. There was not a letter or a written document in the room. There was no name in any of the books, though several of them bore signs of considerable usage, and were dated some years back. There was not so much as an initial on the linen; there was nothing to show where any single article had been purchased; and, in the end, Wirlescombe bade Mr. Aldobrandini to lock up the room again and to put the key in his pocket.

"And you'll communicate with me the moment the man returns," he said, as they went down the stairs. "The very moment, Mr. Aldobrandini."

Mr. Aldobrandini wagged his head and his forefinger.

"I do not think that man will come back," he said. "I think somethings has happened to him."

"And he thinks right," said Wirlescombe, when he and Graye and Herbert were clear of the restaurant and in the street again. "I think, too, that this man, whoever he was, will never go back to the Café Aldobrandini. I think he's probably met the fate that overtook poor old Graffi. And now I must get back to headquarters, and I want you to come with me, Mr. Graye. There are two or three small matters that require your attention there."

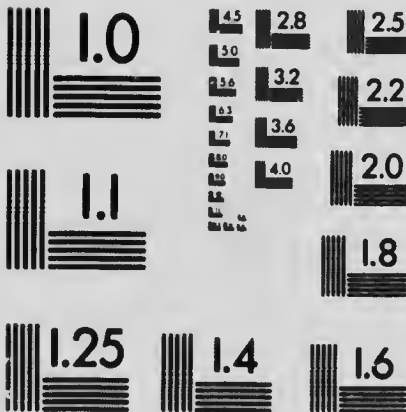
Graye turned to Herbert.

"I'll come in to your place to dinner, Jack," he said. "Seven o'clock? All right. Do you really think," he continued, as he and the detective turned off in the direction of Charing Cross, "do you really think that this man has been murdered?"



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Wirlescombe's good-humoured features took on an inscrutable look. He shook his head.

"I think, Mr. Graye, that we're only on the threshold of a big affair," he answered. "A much bigger affair than the murder of poor old Graffi. I've got all sorts of shapeless ideas and theories knocking about in my head. Maybe they'll eventually work out into something. But I'm more certain than ever of two things. First of all, Gemma Graffi didn't kill her grandfather; last of all, his murder was only an incident in something much bigger."

"Some secret society work, you mean?" suggested Graye.

"Possibly," answered Wirlescombe. "There's a good deal more of that sort of thing going on in the foreign quarters of London than any one who isn't in the know of things would even suspect. I've been mixed up in two or three cases which were certainly murder cases and just as certainly the work of some secret society or association. We've never cleared them up. This may never be cleared up—probably never will."

"I wish we could clear up the question of where Miss Graffi is," said Graye.

Wirlescombe gave his companion a side glance, which Graye did not observe. He was beginning to understand the young medical student's anxiety about the missing girl.

"Oh! there'll be developments," he remarked, encouragingly. "There'll be developments—publicity will bring that. We're sure to hear something."

Something, indeed, was to be heard as soon as they reached headquarters and Wirlescombe's room. A subordinate, who wore a generally bored expression, and spoke as if murders and mysteries were matters of no more moment than the most ordinary things of life, approached the detective.

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"There's a queer sort of party been here enquiring for you," he said, lack-a-daisically. "Says he wants to see you about that Austerlitz Mansions affair. Been reading about it in the papers and thinks he knows something. Wouldn't say a word here. Left his address for you in case you'd like to call round and see him."

He handed Wirlescombe a dirty, much-thumbed card, from which arose a palpable odour of tobacco, oil, and the smell of ancient garments. The detective and Graye together read what was printed on it.

MR. SHIPPS,  
DEALER IN SECOND-HAND CLOTHING.

Turnpike Passage,  
Mortimer Street, W.C.

*Ladies and Gentlemen  
waited upon.*

Wirlescombe put the greasy card in his waistcoat pocket. He turned to another official, who was busied with documents and papers.

"Any news to hand from anywhere about that girl?" he asked with seeming indifference.

"Not a syllable from any point of the compass," replied the other man. "Nothing whatever."

Wirlescombe touched Graye on the arm. Together they left the building and made their way into Whitehall. The detective signalled for a taxicab.

"We'll run up and see this second-hand clothes man," he said, as they got in. "Drive to Frascati's, Oxford Street," he added to the chauffeur. "It's odd," he continued, turning to Graye as they set off, "it's very odd how, as soon as a case begins to get known through the newspapers, all sorts of folk start thinking they know something about it. You'd be surprised how many letters, usually vague and mysterious, one gets when this sort of thing occurs. It's a bit early yet, but you'll see that after the

report of this morning's inquest appears in the newspapers we shall have letters from all sorts of people who have seen Miss Graffi. She'll have been seen in fifty places at once. And if a big reward was offered, such as your friend suggested, why, I don't know how many people wouldn't be willing to swear through thick and thin that they positively saw her at such a place, such an hour, such a minute. Most of 'em, of course, would want to know if they couldn't have a few pounds on account. If they got it, their interest in Miss Gemma Graffi would die a sudden death, and they, themselves, would drop into their original obscurity. This man we're going to see may be one of that sort. And, again, he mayn't. You never know what's going to turn up and what you're going to hear."

Leaving the taxi-cab at the entrance to Frascati's, Wirlescombe led his companion a few yards along Oxford Street, and turning up Rathbone Place, steered him into a district which looked as if nothing short of a general conflagration would redeem it from dirt, disorder, and dilapidation. To Graye, its principal features seemed to be cheap gin-shops, swarms of more or less unhealthy and miserable children, groups of slatternly women, and slouching men and youths who supported life and themselves on the street-posts or at the most convenient corners. There was a fine flavour of dirt, of stale liquor, and of oleaginous fish about the place, and the detective sniffed.

"This is your beautiful London!" he said ironically. "This is the same town in which Park Lane and Mayfair are to be found. But nobody of any consequence ever strays into these recesses, so it doesn't matter. It only matters to the people who've got to live in them. And I don't know that it matters such an awful lot to them—they're born

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to it, most of 'em. Nice hole, isn't it Mr. Graye? And here's Turnpike Passage—old clothes, fried fish, fruit stalls, and the usual places where you get bad ale and fiery gin. There's Shipps's establishment. If I were a betting man, I'd lay you ten to one that Shipps is a Jew."

"And you'd have won," murmured Graye as they entered a shop, of which the doorway was literally festooned with cast-off garments of all sorts and conditions, and encountered a little man of decidedly Hebraic cast of countenance, whose head was ornamented by an elaborately-embroidered but very greasy smoking-cap. "He is—if I know anything of physiognomy."

Wirlescombe produced Mr. Shipps's card and held it out to him in silence. Mr. Shipps started, smiled, and began to rub his hands.

"Ma tear thir!" he exclaimed. "You are from the Yard—yeth? Mithter Wirlethcombe—yeth? I called there. I alwaythe like to help the polithe if it ith in my way to do tho. The young gentleman, now?"

"The young gentleman is with me," said Wirlescombe. "What is it?"

Mr. Shipps rubbed his hands and smiled benignantly but slyly upon his principal visitor.

"What thall I get, ma tear thir?" he said, cajolingly. "What thall I get if I tell you thome-thing?"



## CHAPTER XI.

FOR THREE HALF-CROWNS.

**W**IRLESCOMBE, with a scarcely perceptible glance at his companion, tapped Mr. Shipps on the shoulder and pointed to an inner door at the back of the shop.

"I see you've got a quiet little place in there," he said. "Let's step in and talk quietly."

Mr. Shipps moved aside with alacrity.

"By all meanths, ma tear thir!" he said. "With plethure. Motheth," he added to a curly-headed youth who had been engaged in some remote recess since the visitors' entrance. "Mind the thop, Motheth, and don't do any bithneth without conthulthing me. Now, gentlemen!"

Mr. Shipps opened the door which the detective had indicated and ushered his visitors into a small apartment which immediately communicated a mingled odour of strong waters and equally powerful cigars. It was crowded from floor to ceiling with odds and ends of everything imaginable, and Wirlescombe at once formed the opinion that while Mr. Shipps's ostensible trade was the purchasing and selling of cast-off, second-hand, and misfit clothing, he also did another trade in buying and disposing of any likely thing that came in his way, even to books, pictures and musical instruments, not to speak of

silver and electro-plate. There was, indeed, scarcely room to move, and, at first sight, nowhere to sit down, but Mr. Shipps hastily removed various articles from a decrepit sofa which stood in a corner and waved his visitors towards it as if he had been a Sultan and they Imperial ambassadors.

"You'll thmoke a thigar and take a little thome-thing, gentlemen?" said Mr. Shipps, hospitably and ingratiatingly, as he trotted into another crowded corner and opened a cupboard. "I can give you a drop of the finetht Hollandth gin that ever came into the country, and you'll find thothe thigarth of the very firtht quality. There are thingth to be found even in Turnpike Pathage, you thee, Mithter Wirlethcombe, eh?"

"Trust you for that," answered Wirlescombe, giving Graye a look which signified that he was to accept the old Jew's hospitality. "Gentlemen like you generally have a drop of good spirits and a well-kept cigar somewhere about."

"Hee—hee—hee!" tittered Mr. Shipps as he set glasses and water and a dusky-looking bottle on the table. "Well, you thee, ma tear thir, it'h all the amuthement one geth in a monotonoth life, eh? Now, you couldn't buy Hollandth like thith, Mithter Wirlethcombe, and you couldn't, young gentleman, becauthe you wouldn't know where to get it, you know. It'h like milk, I athure you. Your very good health, Mithter Wirlethcombe, and yourth, young gentleman."

Graye observed with astonishment that the glasses which the old Jew took out of his cupboard were of the very finest crystal and exquisitely shaped. He was further astonished to see that the cigars which he produced were of a noted and most expensive brand, and were all wrapped in foil and packed in tea. The old Jew, who had sipped at his spirits and lighted a cigar himself, noted the look

in the lad's eyes, and leaning back in the crazy old arm-chair, into which he had dropped, chuckled with satisfaction.

"Ah! young gentleman, you won't get a thigar like that every day!" he said. "Thmoke it thlowly—thmoke it thlowly! You're the young gentleman that wath in the flat that night when the poor gentleman wath put away, aren't you? Oh, yeth! I concluded tho."

Graye glanced at the detective. Wirlescombe answered for him.

"Yes, this is the young gentleman," he said. "Now, then, what did you want to see me about, Mr. Shipps?"

Mr. Shipps rubbed his hands on the shiny knees of his trousers.

"And a very unpleathant thing it mutht have been to wake up in the morning and find the old man with a knife thtuck into him," he remarked, ruminatively, still regarding Graye. "Oh, very unpleathant! Ah! And"—he turned his attention to Wirlescombe, bending forward and dropping his voice. "And what about the reward, ma tear thir? What about the little reward?"

"There isn't any reward," answered the detective.

"No reward's offered."

Mr. Shipps lifted his hands.

"No reward! Oh, ma tear Mithter Wirlethcombe, what a mithtake!" he said. "No reward for gentleman what have thomething to tell. Oh, dear me, you can't expect to do no buthneth on terms like thothe, Mithter Wirlethcombe! It'h unnatural. 'Tithn't bithneth. Everything hath it'h value in thith world, Mithter Wirlethcombe, don't it?"

"I never said it hadn't," replied Wirlescombe. "I only said that so far there's no reward offered in this affair."

Mr. Shipps leaned still further forward and laid a claw-like hand on the detective's knee. His eye glittered.

"But thereth going to be, ma tear Mithter Wirlethcombe?" he said. "Thereth going to be, of courth, ithn't there. Oh, it wouldn't be proper, Mithter Wirlethcombe, if there wathn't a reward. Never heard of such a thing in ma life!"

Wirlescombe stared the old Jew in the face for a full minute before he spoke.

"Look here, Mr. Shipps," he said. "Let's get to business. There's no reward offered. Officially, there isn't likely to be a reward offered. But, unofficially, it might be well worth the while of anybody who knows anything to tell what they know. I gather that you've been reading the newspapers?"

"I have read the newthpapers. Altho the two dethcriptions of the girl and the man," answered Mr. Shipps. "It wath a great mithtake not to put five hundred pounds reward on top of thoth dethcriptioneth, Mithter Wirlethcombe—oh, a great mithtake!"

"We're talking business," said the detective. "You know something?"

Mr. Shipps inclined his head and took another sip at his glass.

"Is it about the missing man or the missing girl?" asked Wirlescombe.

Mr. Shipps bent forward again and lowered his voice.

"The mithing girl!"

Wirlescombe felt Graye start. He gave him a slight nudge. Once more he gave the old Jew a steady stare.

"You're sure of it?" he asked.

"As thure ath one can be thure of anything," answered Mr. Shipps. "Yeth—I'm thure of it. So will you be, Mithter Wirlethcombe, if you like to find out what it ith that I'm thure about."

"Aye, of course!" said Wirlescombe. "That means you want paying for what you can tell?"

Mr. Shipps rubbed his knees and chuckled.

"Everything hath ith value, ma tear thir," he observed.

Wirlescombe looked at Graye. His look said plainly enough "Shall I bargain, on your behalf, with this old money-grabber?" And Graye, with a single glance, answered just as plainly, "Yes."

The detective took two or three meditative pulls at his cigar before he spoke. Then he gave Mr. Shipps a glance full of meaning.

"I'm not going to buy a pig in a poke," he said.

Mr. Shipps spread out his hands deprecatingly.

"Ma tear Mithter Wirlethcombe!" he exclaimed.

"That would not be bithneth!"

"It might be, from your point," said Wirlescombe imperturbably. "It certainly wouldn't from mine. Now then, this young gentleman, Mr. Adrian Graye—you've seen his name in the newspapers, so it's no use concealing it here—is anxious that this young woman, Gemma Graffi, should be found. Can you give us any clue to anything about her? Can you tell us anything that might put us on her track?"

Mr. Shipps nodded solemnly three times.

"I can!"

"Go ahead, then!" said the detective. "What is it?"

Mr. Shipps smiled. The smile began somewhere underneath his beard and moustache and gradually opened up his face to his eyes and forehead—even his smoking-cap seemed to wrinkle with it.

"The termth, ma tear Mithter Wirlethcombe," he said, with tender inflexion. "The termth? Bithneth—ith bithneth."

Wirlescombe growled.

"There's no doing anything with men like you unless you get some money in hand!" he said.

"Now, then, look here. I happen to know that Mr. Graye is sufficiently well-off to give you what I shall call a handsome reward if you tell us anything that will lead to the finding of Gemma Graffi. You know me, or you know of me. I'll guarantee that you're paid. Now, then, five pounds down on the spot, and forty-five more when the girl's found!"

Mr. Shipps's smile gave place to a stare of blank amazement. He lifted both hands.

"Oh, ma tear Mithter Wirlethcombe—impothible! I couldn't think of it!" he exclaimed. "What of my valuable time, ma tear thir? I come down to the Yard at the bithietht part of the day!"

Wirlescombe stirred impatiently and growled again.

"How much?" he demanded. "What do you want?"

"Twenty-five pound down, and another hundred when the girl ith found," answered Mr. Shipps promptly.

Wirlescombe looked at his companion. Graye plunged a hand into his breast-pocket and drew out a cheque-book.

"All right, Wirlescombe," he said. "I'll write a cheque. Let's hear what it is he has to tell us."

"Stop a bit," said Wirlescombe, as the old Jew hastily produced writing materials.

"We'll have all that down in black a I whi I'll write the terms out myself—give me a sheet of paper, Mr. Shipps."

Mr. Shipps carefully read over what the detective wrote. He watched Graye sign it. He took a pen to append his own signature, but paused before he put pen to paper.

"Underthand, Mithter Wirlethcombe," he said. "Underthand. I take no rethponthibility for the actual finding of thith girl. All I do ith to put you on thomething that will thet you on her track—"

you mutht do the actual finding yourthelveth, you know, in your own vay."

"All right," said Wirlescombe, motioning the Jew to sign. "Set us on the track—that's all we want."

Mr. Shipps scrawled his signature beneath Graye's. Graye wrote out his cheque and passed it over. Mr. Shipps, putting on a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, inspected it with great deliberation, folded it in three with equal deliberation, and drawing out a large and greasy-looking pocket-book, solemnly bestowed it within one of its compartments.

"Now then—out with it," said Wirlescombe.

Mr. Shipps rose. He went over to a chest of drawers in the rear of his crowded room. He opened a drawer; he brought out a cardboard box, of the sort used by milliners to send home their customers' gowns. He set the box on the table; he took off the lid; took off certain pieces of paper which concealed something that lay inside. He took the something out—held it up.

A girl's tailor-made coat and skirt of dark-blue serge.

Graye uttered a sharp exclamation. Wirlescombe felt him jump.

"By God!" he said. "These are the things Miss Graffi wore that night! As sure as we're here, Wirlescombe, they are!"

"Wait!" said Wirlescombe. "Wait!"

Mr. Shipps was running his claw-like fingers over the material. He chuckled.

"Ah!" he said, "for three half crownth I bought thith little matter at eleven o'clock on the fifth of November from a woman who came into the shop there and offer it to me. Three half-crownth!—a good bargain, Mithter Wirlethcombe, eh? It ith, you thee, nearly new, thith tailor-made coat and thkirt. All I think of at the time ith that I make a good bargain, eh? I put it away in thith box, and

prethently think no more about it. Then at night I thee your dethcription of Mith Graffi—ah, ah, I think, a blue coat and thkirt—I will have a look at vhat I buy in the morning. Then I look, and—thee here ! ”

Mr. Shipps adroitly turned the skirt inside out ; turned its pockets inside out, too. There, inside the pocket, was a little white linen work ticket, “ No. 1341. Miss G. Graffi, Austerlitz Mansions, W. John George, Ladies’ Tailor, 5,500 Edgware Road, W.”

“ Now, gentlemen,” said Mr. Shipps.

Wirlescombe had drawn out a note-book.

“ Describe the woman,” he said, curtly.

“ Middle-aged Italian woman—dark eyeth and hair, stout build. Thaid the cothtume had belonged to her dead daughter, and she couldn’t bear to see it about,” answered Mr. Shipps. “ Perfect thranger to me, of courthe.”

“ I’ll take that away with me,” said Wirlescombe.

“ Pack it up.”

“ But—my three half-crownth ? ” said Mr. Shipps.

Graye, with an exclamation of disgust, flung a sovereign on the table. A moment later he and the detective were outside the shop. And Wirlescombe shook his head.

“ A middle-aged Italian woman—dark—short ! ” he groaned. “ Lord, there are hundreds of ’em ! ”



## CHAPTER XII.

### THE EMPTY HOUSE IN SOHO.

**L**EAVING the detective to return to New Scotland Yard Adrian Graye went slowly away to meet his friend, Herbert, at his rooms in Gower Street. The interview with Mr. Shipps had made him feel more than unusually moody and taciturn. Herbert, on his arrival, could get little more out of him than a bare account of his doings with Wirlescombe during the afternoon. He looked at Graye narrowly as the younger student lay back in an easy-chair, sucking at the stem of a big pipe, which he had filled with tobacco and then forgotten to light.

"I tell you what it is, Adrian," he said. "And you'd better face the fact and have done with it. You're in love with that girl."

Graye flushed and made an impatient movement.

"Don't talk rot!" he said testily. "Can't a fellow be interested in a girl's fate without being in love with her? If you'd met her you'd be anxious to know what's happened to her."

"Well, and what do you think has happened to her?" asked Herbert quietly.

Graye frowned and shook his head.

"I'm sure there's been foul play," he answered.

"How did that woman who sold her clothes to old Shipps get hold of them? Robbed her, of course. May have murdered her. Some of those foreigners would kill their grandmothers for five shillings."

But Herbert shook his head in his turn.

"No!" he said. "I don't believe Gemma Graffi is murdered, nor even in distress. I should say that if we could only get at the real truths Gemma is safely away from England. And I don't believe that she either killed her grandfather, or ever even knew that he was killed when she went—if he was killed then. I don't believe that the old man's murder had anything whatever to do with the girl's flight."

Graye stared at his friend in surprise that was not unmixed with a certain cynical scorn.

"Oh, you don't, don't you?" he said. "And pray what do you think? It's an ingenious theory, no doubt."

"I think," answered Herbert quietly. "I think that after you'd all got to your own rooms that night Miss Gemma suddenly took it into her head to run away, and that she did run away there and then. I think that old Graffi was murdered after she left."

"And by whom?" demanded Graye.

"Possibly by the man you met; possibly by an accomplice of his," replied Herbert. "Remember, the man had keys which admitted to the building and to Graffi's flat. Probably this man and his associates had a reason for getting rid of the old man, and got rid of him. But I do not think that had anything to do with the flight of the girl."

Graye looked doubtful.

"What about her clothes, then?" he said.

"That's just what makes me think as I do," answered Herbert. "She had somewhere to go and she there doubtless disguised herself. The

woman who sold the costume to your second-hand clothes dealer—what do you call him?—Shipps?—was probably the provider of the disguise. Eh?"

Graye growled decided dissent.

"From what I heard and saw," he muttered, "the girl scarcely knew London, or anybody in it. And how could she escape on that particular night, when there was such a thick fog? No—I say there's been foul play!"

"Well, we shall see," said Herbert. "After the reports of the inquest have appeared in the newspapers there'll be enough publicity about the matter to bring Gemma Graffi and the unknown man out of a mouse-hole if they'd crept into it. We shall see, I say."

But at the end of a further week they were not seeing any more or any further into the mystery. As Herbert had prophesied, the newspapers were full of the Austerlitz Mansions mystery; the death of Marco Graffi, the disappearance of his daughter, became the nine days' wonder of the town. But the police heard nothing of the man who had lived at the Café Aldobrandini, nor of Gemma Graffi; nor did those amateur detectives, who invariably spring to light at such times, bring any information or clues to the regular ones. If either the man or the girl were in London, or in England, they remained very safely hidden. If both, or either had escaped to the Continent they seemed to have become just as safely hidden there, for the Continental police sent no news of them, in spite of urgent representations on the part of the English authorities. And Wirlescombe, with whom Graye kept in constant touch, was at his wits' end, and foresaw the moment when he would have to confess himself unable to do any more. It was only too probable, he said, that if the truth ever came out, it would have to come out

accidentally, for he himself could see no further track to follow up.

And then, without warning, information came.

Graye, working in the laboratory one day, looked up from a tank in which he was absorbed, to find a house-porter at his elbow.

"You're wanted at the telephone, Mr. Graye," said the man. "The call's urgent, sir."

"I can't go," answered Graye. "I can't leave this. Say so, and ask what it is."

For he had forgotten all about the Graffi case for the moment, and he was deeply interested in what he was doing. But he forgot that in its turn when the porter came back.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Graye, still annoyed at the interruption.

"It's from New Scotland Yard, sir. They say, will you go at once to Soho Square, and meet Mr. Wirlescombe at the top of Green Street? They say something has been discovered. It's that Graffi case, sir—they said you'd know all about it."

"Yes, I know," answered Graye. "All right. Get me a taxi-cab."

He left his experiment on which he had been working so absorbedly, tore off his overall, and set out to find Herbert. Three minutes later they were speeding away in the direction of Soho, speculating on what they might be about to hear. And Graye was conscious then that he was deeply and earnestly anxious to know something, anything, about Gemma Graffi which would convince him of her safety.

Wirlescombe was awaiting them at the top of Green Street. With him was a man, obviously an Italian, who was strange to them; there, too, looking very grave, was Signor Aldobrandini. Wirlescombe looked grave also as the two medical students left their cab and advanced upon him. He greeted them with a nod, but with no words, for

words, indeed, he had no time at first, for Graye rapped out one word before the detective could speak.

"Well?" he demanded.

Wirlescombe nodded again.

"Yes. Something's been found at last," he said.

"About Miss Graffi?" asked Graye, more impatiently than before.

Wirlescombe shook his head.

"No," he answered. "Not about her. About—the man. In fact—his body's been found."

"His body! He's dead then?" exclaimed Graye.

"Dead enough—most likely murdered," replied the detective. "In fact, I'm sure he was. I want you and Mr. Aldobrandini to see him and to identify the body if you can. It—it may be a little difficult. It isn't—I warn you it isn't a pleasant sight."

Graye shrugged his shoulders. Most of his interest had already died out. After all, he was not greatly concerned with the unknown man; he wanted to hear something of Gemma.

"Where was the man found?" he asked, half indifferently.

Wirlescombe shepherded his small flock together with a motion of his hand. He moved off in front with Graye and Herbert on either side of him; the other men followed behind, chattering voluble Italian.

"I'll tell you," he said. "This man behind us, with Aldobrandini, is an Italian, who owns a bit of house property down one of these courts. A hundred years ago, I daresay the houses were very good, and would be considered handsome. Now they're falling into rack and ruin. He's had one of them empty for some time. During that time he's never been in it. It occurred to him this morning that he would look over it with the idea of doing something or other about it, so he came to it, and looked it

over. And in one of the rooms he found the body I am taking you to see."

"How had he been killed?" asked Herbert.

"Shot," replied Wirlescombe. "Shot through the brain. And—he must have been dead some time. Here's the house!"

He had led them into an ancient-looking court, fenced about with houses built in Georgian times; the one at which he pointed stood in a corner, and wore the peculiarly lifeless and disconsolate appearance which is always the mark of houses that have for a time been untenanted. A policeman stood in the slightly open doorway; another was visible within the hall.

"I've already been in and seen the body," continued the detective as they entered the house. "I should say it is certainly that of the man you saw at Austerlitz Mansions; but I want to know what you have to say about it, and if Aldobrandini can recognise it as that of his lodger. The most extraordinary thing to my mind is what was the man doing in this empty house. According to the landlord it hasn't been occupied for eighteen months."

"It looks like it," said Graye, as they went up the stairs. He was wondering if Gemma, too, had been lured to that place, and made away with. It was not unlikely. If a man could be brought there and murdered, why not a girl? He shuddered at the notion.

"Yes, it's as cold as the grave in here," said Wirlescombe, mistaking the idea in his companion's mind. "I've just been telling the owner that the best thing he could do would be to make a bonfire of these old places and build some new ones. Here's the room: right at the top, you see. And once more I say, I'm wondering what the man could be."

He led the way into a room, inside which a man in plain clothes and a police-constable were talking in a whisper. There was not a stick of furniture in the place. The windows were blackly and thickly coated with dirt. The ceiling was literally festooned with cobwebs, the floor of bare boards was deep in dust. And on it, near the rusty fireplace, lay something which was covered up with a piece of brown sacking.

The men who had accompanied Wirlescombe upstairs removed their hats, and stood silently by while he turned back the covering from the dead man. Aldobrandini and Graye bent down to examine the features. The Italian proprietor of the café-restaurant immediately became excited.

"Oh, yes, that is the man what take my room! I know him in spite of—you know, eh? Oh, yes—I know his face, his clothes, yes. Poor fellow—he wear them clothes when he go out that night. Of course. Oh, to be sure, yes!"

Wirlescombe turned to Graye. And Graye nodded.

"Yes," he said. "That's the man who came to Graffi's. I haven't a doubt of it. I'm sure of his identity."

The detective pointed a finger.

"You see where he was shot?" he said. "From behind the ear. Murder, of course, because if he'd shot himself, the weapon would have been close at hand, and it wasn't. And there was nothing in the shape of letters or papers on him. Not a scrap. My idea is that he was lured in here on some pretence or pretext, and was shot at once. Of course, there's no clue," he added, laying the sheet back over the dead man. "We're no nearer knowing who he was than we were before."

"Has the house been searched?" asked Herbert.

"Oh, yes, from top to bottom, and there was

nothing found," replied Wirlescombe. "Well, now we know something, at any rate. We must try to trace this man abroad. He must have come from somewhere. And there may be others in London who knew him. However, that's all we can do just now."

Downstairs Adrian Graye drew the detective aside.

"You haven't heard anything of Miss Graffi?" he asked.

"Not a word," replied Wirlescombe. "I'm about despairing of ever doing so."

"Do you think she, too, has—you know!" said Graye, nodding in the direction of the room where the dead man lay. "Do you—really?"

"God knows, sir; I don't!" answered Wirlescombe. "I hope not. But it's a strange thing we can't hear of her."

Graye nodded. Then he gave Wirlescombe a queer, keen look.

"You know that—that costume we got from Shipps?" he said. "I want it."

Wirlescombe stared at his companion and suddenly comprehended.

"All right, sir," he said. "I'll bring it to you. And I give you my word, Mr. Graye, I'd do anything to find that girl, sir. But ——"

He ended with an expressive shrug of the shoulders, and Graye nodded and went off in silence.

END OF THE FIRST PART.





## PART THE SECOND.

### THE PATH OF THE TIGER.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### MEETINGS.

THE big, bronzed, golden-bearded man who got leisurely out of the little local train when it pulled up wearily in the small one-platformed village station of Ashendyke, looked around him with some astonishment as he set foot on the flower-bordered asphalt. The buildings were gay with flags, and banners, and bunting. Festoons of coloured paper hung wherever two points could be connected. Venetian masts were set up in the stationmaster's garden. Down the road leading to the village, the church tower of which could be seen rising above the elms in the distance, a triumphal arch of evergreen was set up and surmounted by an inscription, which suggested that the villagers either just had been or were just about to be extremely glad to see somebody. It was evident that Ashendyke was *en fête* on this fine May afternoon. The stranger observed that the stationmaster and the one porter and the one ticket-clerk were all wearing their best clothes, and wore small

bouquets of about the size of saucers in their button-holes. But he was just then more curious about his own immediate concerns than about those of other folk, and he addressed the stationmaster with a personal question.

"I am come on a visit to Dr. Herbert. How far is it to his house?" he inquired.

"A good mile and a half, sir," answered the stationmaster. "But—are you Mr. Graye?"

"I am," replied the arrival.

"Then I've a message for you, sir. Dr. Herbert has just gone down the road in his car, and he'll be back and pick you up in a few minutes. Jim, take this gentleman's luggage outside. If you watch the road there, sir, going down by the wood yonder, you'll see the doctor coming back—he's only gone to the farmhouse there."

Adrian Graye, widened out into a particularly strong and athletic-looking man by six years of continuous travel in all parts of the world, gave a careless glance at the road, and a longer one at the decorations, which fluttered and flapped on all sides of him.

"Are you expecting a royal visit?" he asked, smiling.

The stationmaster smiled in response.

"Well, not quite that, but something like it, sir," he answered. "Lady Wargrave and the young baronet are coming home."

"Oh!" said Graye. "I don't know who they are. The young baronet is your lord of the manor, I suppose? Has he just come of age?"

The stationmaster laughed.

"The young baronet's only about three years old, sir," he answered. "But it's the first time he's ever been here, or his mother either, for that matter. You see, sir, the late Sir Robert was a great traveller. You may have heard of him, and he spent most of

his time in foreign parts, and the last time he was here was five years since. Then he went off again, and we heard he'd married a young foreign lady. And they hadn't been married long before he died, and since then she's lived abroad with the little boy. But now they're coming home, sir, and of course there's a bit of a jollification going forward, for everybody wants to see the young baronet and his mother."

"Of course," agreed Graye. "And where is the young gentleman's place, then?"

The stationmaster pointed to the great elms, amidst which the high square tower of the village church rose, topped by a bravely-waving red and white flag of St. George.

"Ashendkye Manor lies behind the church, sir," he said. "It's a lovely old Queen Anne house—quite a show place, what with its architecture, its pictures and old furniture. If you're going to stay a while with Dr. Herbert, sir, you should take the opportunity of looking over it."

I should be glad to," answered Graye. "It sounds attractive."

"Here's Dr. Herbert coming, sir," said the porter. "Just coming round the bend by the wood."

Graye went outside the station to greet the old friend whom he had not seen for several years. He was conscious of a subdued emotion, of a suppressed excitement. With the exception of his own mother and his two sisters he had seen none of his friends or acquaintances of his youth since his recent return to England. He stared with a certain wistfulness at Herbert as the young doctor drove his motor-car up to the station, and Herbert stared hard and smilingly at him as they gripped each other's hands. But with the characteristic reserve of Englishmen they said little while in the presence of the stationmaster and his men, and it was not until they had

moved off into the road leading towards the village that they gave each other a long searching look. At the end of it both laughed.

"Upon my word, old chap, I don't know whether I should have known you!" exclaimed Herbert. "You seem to have thickened and developed out of all knowledge. And a beard! You look like a veritable Viking."

"And you like a highly respectable country practitioner, greatly beloved of dowagers and gouty old patients," said Graye. "Dear me!—when one comes to think of it, it seems that we shall have a vast deal to tell each other. By the way, you didn't tell me in your note—is there a Mrs. Herbert by this time, or are we speeding to a bachelor establishment?"

"There is no Mrs. Herbert, nor likely to be at present," answered the young doctor. "At my time, my dear boy, has been given to this practice since I bought it—it's a widely-spread neighbourhood, and I've had so much to do of late that I shall have to get an assistant. Of course, there isn't a Mrs. Graye either, Adrian?"

"No," said Graye, "there isn't."

"One in the immediate future?"

"No, not one in the immediate future."

"I should have thought that you might have brought back one of those charming Spanish-Mexican señoritas that you stopped so long amongst," observed Herbert. "Or a beauty from the Argentine. By George, you must tell me all about your travels! But—now that you are back, what are you going to do?"

"Probably travel again," answered Graye laconically.

"Then—you've definitely given up the profession?"

"I won't say that. I still keep up a certain

amount of study, you know. But remember, I'm not yet thirty-two, and I should like to see a bit more of the world. Perhaps I'll begin practising when I'm forty."

"I thought you'd like, perhaps, to come here and have a partnership with me. It's a lovely district, nice people, and lots of society, to which we're expecting a notable addition this very afternoon. That's why the decorations are everywhere. Lady Wargrave is coming home—a young widow, with an infant son that is a baronet and possessor of a fine estate."

"So the stationmaster told me," said Graye. "And who is, or was, Lady Wargrave. I've heard of her late husband—he was the Asiatic explorer."

"Nobody knows who she was," answered Herbert. "Some foreign beauty that Sir Robert met abroad. These are the principal gates to Ashendyke Manor," he continued, drawing Graye's attention to a fine, old entrance gate beyond which an avenue of limes led to a pile of old red-brick seen in the distance. "and there's a glimpse of the house—a grand old place. And here, round the corner, is the large square, and the half-timbered house you see yonder is the abode of your humble servant."

Graye looked around with interest. He found himself gazing at what was really a small, village green, fenced in on all four sides by the various things which had sprung up about it during many centuries of old English life. On one side was the church, with its schools and vicarage, sheltered beneath rows of great elms over which the rooks were wheeling under a canopy of blue sky; on another, set in high hedge of yew, was a second entrance to the Manor; on two other sides were half-timbered houses, mostly thatched, amongst which was a quaint old inn—the Ashendyke Arms. And in the centre of the green was a giant oak-tree,

around the trunk of which was a circular seat, whereon, at that moment, several ancient men sat, presumably discussing the great event of the day. From every house flags were flying; at the entrance to the green was another triumphal arch; children were running about in their Sunday attire; all over the scene was a general air of festivity. But to these evidences of rejoicing Graye paid little attention. He was more concerned with the old-world aspect of the village.

"It's quite refreshing to see something really English," he said as they drew up before Herbert's house. "This is a real old-fashioned place! It almost tempts me to take your offer, Jack, if only to come and live in a fine old house like this."

"It's big enough for two, or for three," said Herbert, as he led the way inside. "I'm lost in it. My predecessor had a family of six sons and five daughters, and a very fine family, too. As for me, I have no family beyond a couple of fox-terriers and a cat. Come in, old chap, and a thousand welcomes!"

From the windows of the room which Herbert had set apart for him, Graye looked out on scenes vastly different to those to which his eyes had been accustomed for the past six years. Those of one side of the room commanded the green; from another side he looked into a delightful garden set amidst high hedges and just then glowing and gay with spring flowers. He had seen masses of greater and bolder colour during his long travels in the great American continent which he had traversed in all its length from Canada to Patagonia; but there was a charm and a simplicity in the trim holly-hedges, the neat paths, the homely flowers and plants of this English garden which attracted him strangely. And in looking out upon it he suddenly forgot the six years of travel, and his mind went back to things as they

had been before he left England. He remembered his father's house and garden in Yorkshire; he remembered his own student days in London—and then he thought of the strange event of the night of the great fog, and unconsciously he sighed.

"It's a queer thing," he muttered to himself as he made ready for lunch, "a very queer thing; but I don't think I shall ever forget her. To drop clean out of the world like that! If one only knew what really had happened ——" But at that he pulled himself together, and shook off all thought of the past, and going downstairs joined his host.

"Heaven send that we may be able to eat our lunch in peace!" said Herbert, as they sat down. "And also to have a quiet smoke and a drink after it. But it is a fact that of late I have scarcely had a meal that hasn't been interrupted. There's a good deal of sickness in a little place outside the village—a hamlet where the water supply's bad, and they're for ever fetching me to some new case. However, let's hope for a quiet hour or so."

But in this devout wish Herbert was not to be gratified, for the two friends had only just finished lunch and repaired to the young doctor's smoking-room when an urgent message came requiring his attendance upon a farm labourer who had fallen from a hay-loft. Herbert went off resignedly, bidding Graye make himself at home and amuse himself as well as he could until his return. And for an hour Graye smoked, and lounged about the garden, and looked at his friend's books, and wondered if, after the life he had led for six years, a life of almost perpetual travel and change, he could settle down to the life which Herbert was living.

The sudden clash of bells aroused him from a deep reverie. He remembered, then, what it was that the village was celebrating, and he went to the door which looked out over the green, and saw



that the great moment of the day must be close at hand: the young baronet and his mother were about to make their entry to the patriarchal mansion. He smiled, and turning indoors, picked up his hat.

"May as well be as curious as the rest," he said, and set out across the green.

It was a very grand procession which came along the road from the station. First came a troop of the local Yeomanry, with its mounted band. Then a number of tenant farmers, all on horseback. The local dignitaries, in carriages. Then children, carrying great nosegays. All these advanced through lines of people who never ceased to shout welcomes as insistent as those of the bells clashing overhead. It struck Graye as very humorous that the object of all this was an infant in arms, and he looked for his coming with interest. And at last, drawn by estate labourers, came the carriage in which the youthful Sir Robert was throned in his nurse's arms, placidly surveying his delighted lieges. But Adrian Graye never saw him—all he saw was the young mother, a radiant beauty, who was bowing and smiling on all sides of her. And it was only one glance that he gave her before he turned quickly away. In Lady Wargrave he had recognised Gemma Graffi.

## CHAPTER II.

### FACE TO FACE.

WHEN Graye came to the full possession of his senses again, the carriage which contained the young baronet and his mother was passing through the gates of the Manor, and the folk who had lined the road across the village green were crowding in after it. Two or three groups on the extreme outskirts of the crowd were staring at him curiously, knowing him to be a stranger; his height and his flame-coloured beard attracted attention to him. And one old man, meaning well, addressed him :

"If so be as you'd like to go into the park, sir, there bain't no reason why you shouldn't," he said. "There be grand doin's going forward—speechifyin's and the like, and open house to all an' sundry. Seein' as you was a stranger, I thought maybe 'twould interest you."

"Thank you," said Graye, mechanically. "I'm afraid I haven't time. I hope you'll enjoy yourselves."

He turned away, and walked back across the green to Herbert's house, feeling as if he were in a strange dream, from which he would presently awake, only to wonder and to feel dazed that he had

dreamt such things. And yet he knew all the time that this was no dream ; it was as true that he had seen and recognised Gemma as that he saw the old oak by which he was walking, and the rustic bench around it. It was impossible that he could be mistaken. He had never forgotten her ; there had never been a day on which he had not had some thought of her ; he had been forced to believe her dead ; and yet he had always cherished a hope that she might be alive. And—she was alive ! ”

He walked straight into Herbert's smoking-room, to find Herbert returned and filling a large briar pipe. Herbert gave him one look, and started from his chair, flinging the pipe aside.

“ Good God, Adrian ! ” he exclaimed. “ Are you ill ? You're pale as death. What is it, man ? Here, get a peg of whisky. Is your heart wrong, by any chance ? ”

Graye dropped into a chair, staring at his host.

“ My heart's all right,” he said presently. “ I—I had a bit of a shock—a facer—that's all.”

“ But how—where ? ” asked Herbert, handing him the whisky and soda he had mixed for him. “ What is it ? It must have been a facer to make such a change in you. You're going all right again now, but you looked like a ghost when you came in.”

Graye tried to smile, and made a failure of it.

“ All right, old chap—don't worry,” he said. “ I just walked across the green to see Lady Wargrave and her infant baronet arrive—that's all.”

“ That's not all, you mean. Come—what is all ? ”

Graye laughed mirthlessly. He gave Herbert a queer look.

“ Well,” he said, “ this is all. I saw Lady Wargrave.”

“ Well—and what then ? ”

“ Lady Wargrave is Gemma Graffi.”

Herbert, just lighting his pipe, let the match

drop from his fingers. For a minute he stared at his guest. Graye calmly stared back at him. Then Herbert laughed, incredulously.

"Nonsense!" he said. "Utter nonsense!"

Graye turned to a box of cigarettes, and calmly picked one out. Herbert saw that his hand was quite steady by that time, and that the colour had come back to his face. He lighted the cigarette and began to smoke it quietly, as if nothing had disturbed him.

"No," he said, "it's not nonsense. I tell you that Lady Wargrave and Gemma Graffi are one and the same person."

"Mayn't it be a fancied resemblance, or, rather, mayn't there be a very remarkable resemblance between Lady Wargrave and the girl you knew as Gemma Graffi?" suggested Herbert. "Just remember, my dear Adrian; it's six, no seven, years since that affair. How is it possible you can be sure?"

"I am sure, nevertheless," answered Graye stubbornly. "I tell you the woman I have just now seen, and whom I take to be Lady Wargrave, is Gemma Graffi. I'm as certain of it as I am of my own existence, or yours."

Herbert's face assumed an expression of bewilderment.

"What an extraordinary thing if it is so!" he exclaimed. "Gad! that would beat all the romances I ever heard of."

"I see nothing extraordinary about it," said Graye, calmly. "It is evident she escaped to the Continent; that in due course she met this Sir Robert Wargrave, and that she married him. What's there extraordinary about that?"

"Oh, well," said Herbert, "if you want me to be plain, I say it's extraordinary that the Continental police never found her. I'm sure there was enough fuss made about it at the time!"

"There, again, you're wrong," said Graye. "Perhaps she wasn't on the Continent. Where did you tell me Sir Robert Wargrave married his wife?"

"I didn't say where, because I don't know where," replied Herbert. "All I know is that after he set off on his last travels he did marry some foreign lady; that he never came home again; and that she sees Ashendyke for the first time. I heard, incidentally, some little time ago, that the family trustees have had the greatest difficulty in persuading her to come, and that even now she has only consented to come for the summer."

"Just so!" said Graye, with something very like one of his old growls. "She did not like England—I remember, of course."

"So you're still certain that Lady Wargrave is Gemma Graffi?" said Herbert.

"I've said so more times than I can remember," answered Graye. "Of course she is!"

Herbert plunged his hands into his pockets and began to pace the room, jingling his stray silver and copper.

"Then I'll tell you what, Adrian," he said at last. "If that's so, it's a great pity she's come back—a great pity!"

Graye looked up at his friend, wonderingly.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because of—well, of the verdict of that idiotic jury. I'm no lawyer, but I know enough of law to know that that verdict still stands against her. She's liable to arrest."

"Rot!" exclaimed Graye.

"It's not rot. Go privately and ask the nearest, or any, solicitor you like. It's the truth. It will be well for her if other folks' eyes are not as sharp as yours, Adrian. Fortunately, people will not be likely to recognise in Lady Wargrave, the widow of one baronet, and the mother of another, a little

Italian girl who lived in obscure surroundings. And there's this much in her favour, from what I remember of the case, and from what you told me at the time, few people knew her."

"That's so," said Graye, nodding his head. "That's quite so."

"Let's see, now," continued Herbert. "There was the landlord, Mr. Quarendon; there was the porter and his wife—what was their name? Acock, yes. But I think no one else but you—at any rate, that we knew of. Well, it's not very likely that any of those people will be in the neighbourhood of Ashendyke Manor at any time—we're a good deal out of the world here. Besides, Quarendon and the Acocks may be dead. But I see where danger may lie."

"Where?" asked Graye, who appeared to be thinking deeply, as well as listening to his host. "Where, then?"

"Lady Wargrave will doubtless go to town occasionally," answered Herbert. "She will be seen about. Now there must have been people other than those we know of who knew Marco Graffi and his granddaughter—must have been. They may recognise her as you have done—if you're right. Moreover, we nowadays live in an age of cheap, illustrated newspapers—it will be a wonder if Lady Wargrave's home-coming is not described in several of these papers, in pictorial form, to-morrow or at the week-end, and —"

Graye uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Confound it!" he said. "I saw a fellow taking snap-shots on the green!"

"There you are!" said Herbert. "Of course—nothing's sacred or private in these times. Well, we shall see. But now let me ask you a very pertinent and important question. You're going to stay with me awhile. Ours is a small world here—

you're dead certain to meet Lady Wargrave sooner or later. I don't think she'll recognise you, because you're an altered man, and that beard makes a wonderful difference. But, Adrian, are you going to tell her that you recognise her?"

Graye made no immediate answer, and Herbert let him remain silent: it was evident that he was thinking deeply. It was some time before he spoke; then his voice had something of a defiant ring in it.

"Why shouldn't I?" he asked.

"Why shouldn't you?" repeated Herbert. "Ah, yes, why shouldn't you? Well, what would it amount to? Simply to this, that in effect you would say to her, 'My dear madam, you are now Lady Wargrave, of Ashendyke Manor, but I knew you not so many years ago, when you were the Signorina Gemma Graffi, living in Austerlitz Mansions.' Do you see, Adrian?"

"Frankly, I don't see," replied Graye, half-surlily. "And I don't understand why she shouldn't be reminded. There's nothing to be ashamed of in having been Gemma Graffi of Austerlitz Mansions. Why shouldn't she be reminded of that fact—and of me being there that night? Why?"

Herbert leaned forward and tapped his guest's knee.

"Why?" he said. "I'll tell you why. Because I don't believe that Lady Wargrave, whom we will take to be Gemma Graffi, knows either that her grandfather was murdered, or that there is a coroner's warrant out for her arrest as his murderess. That's why, Adrian."

Graye started. He passed his hand across his forehead two or three times, and shook his head as if the effect to think pained him. And Herbert went on talking.

"You see, Adrian, nobody knows where Gemma

Graffi went when she made her wonderful escape. Nobody knows, either, where the present Lady Wargrave was married to the late Sir Robert—unless, indeed, it's the trustees. But I can quite believe—in fact, I do believe—that Gemma Graffi never heard of her grandfather's death. And I am sure that Lady Wargrave does not know of that coroner's warrant, otherwise she would not have come to England. Are you going to let her into the truth of these things?"

"If I did it would only be with the desire to clear her of that damned suspicion!" muttered Graye. "You know that's all I'm thinking about."

"Better let sleeping dogs lie," said Herbert. "Well, as I said, in a little world like ours, you're sure to meet. Before you give sign or speak word, see if she remembers you. I understand that she doesn't intend staying long in England—in my opinion, it would have been a good thing if she'd kept out of it until the boy is grown up. For with every year the chances of her being recognised as Gemma Graffi grow less and less."

Graye made no answer. He was wondering when, where, and how he and Lady Wargrave would meet. But the days went by, and neither he nor Herbert saw anything of her. Whether it was that she was busily engaged in superintending the setting to rights of a house which had been left to a small staff of servants for so many years, or that she found the park and grounds of the Manor extensive enough for her airings, it was certain that she did not come into the village or drive about the surrounding country. At the end of a fortnight no one had seen her since the day of her arrival.

And then, to Graye, the unexpected happened. He was smoking and reading late one evening, Herbert being out on a sick call to an outlying part of the parish, when the parlourmaid came in to



tell him that a man-servant from the Manor had come down with an urgent message from Lady Wargrave—her little boy was ill, and would the doctor come at once.

Graye put down his pipe and his book and went into the hall. Outside, he saw the lamps of a motor-car. The man-servant looked concerned as he bowed to the big man who suddenly loomed before him.

"What is the matter with the child?" asked Graye.

The man lowered his voice.

"Well, sir," he said, "they didn't say so to my lady, but Mrs. Jenkinson, the housekeeper, and the head nurse, I heard them talk of the diphtheria. There's a lot about, sir!"

Graye turned into the surgery, made a hasty selection of a few requisites, snatched up a hat, and got into the motor-car. This, he said to himself, was Fate. Ten minutes later, he found himself standing in a small boudoir, waiting impatiently for he was not sure what. And then the door was hastily opened, and with a swelling heart, he turned to meet Lady Wargrave.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE DESPERATE COURSE.

WITHIN the immediate moment which followed upon Lady Wargrave's entrance, Adrian Graye became certain beyond doubt of two facts—first, that he was looking at a woman whom he had known as the girl, Gemma Graffi ; second, that she had not the slightest recognition of him. Not that there had ever been any real doubt in his mind since the moment in which he had seen Lady Wargrave enter the village, but he had always remembered the possibility of being mistaken even when most sure, and when his first excitement had worn off, he had reflected that he might have been mistaken. But now he had no doubt—he *knew*. And maintaining a calm and stolid demeanour by a mighty effort which made all his nerves tingle, he looked steadily at the woman who had come into his life so mysteriously that night in London, had gone out of it again even more mysteriously, and now had come into it again in so unexpected a fashion. And as he looked he felt that the strong impression which the girl of sixteen had made upon him was being deepened by that given by the near presence of the woman of twenty-three. He had been in love with her, girl or woman, all the time,

never forgetting her at any moment ; he was in love with her more than ever now that he was in her presence.

He recognised, with a strange quickening of his senses, a sharp leaping of his pulses, that she had grown from a beautiful girl to a supremely beautiful woman. She was of the type that artists and sculptors would rave about, that men of the dullest sense would suddenly wonder and marvel at. And with his perception of that came a quick fear : it was impossible that such beauty as hers should not be talked of ; that her face should not become familiar to everybody once she let herself be made known to London. He found himself wishing that he and she were far away in some of the many wild and lonely spots in the western world in which he had spent six years of adventurous life. There she would be safe ; here it seemed impossible that she should remain unknown. Who, he thought, with a certain bitterness, could forget her that had once seen her ?

But he saw that she had no recollection of him. There was not a trace of remembrance anywhere on her face—no sudden gleam of the eye, no lifting of the eyebrow, no movement of the lips, no involuntary start at seeing one not seen for many years, but remembered through them all. She did not know him. Nor was it that she was just then so absorbed with anxiety about her child that her mind was obsessed by that alone ; he knew that she could not have recognised him under any circumstances. And then he reflected that travel and hard living had thickened out a muscular youth into a big, finely developed man, and that the once smooth chin was covered by a beard—of course, he thought, it was impossible she should recognise in him the medical student whom she had met seven years before for so short a time.

But all these thoughts and feelings had flashed through Graye's mind in a moment, and he was hearing Lady Wargrave's voice even as they came and went. He saw from her eyes, her lips, her hands, that she was terribly agitated; he was conscious of a stern mental effort on his own part to be composed and cool himself.

"You are the doctor?" she said as she came hurriedly across the room to him. "Thank you for coming so quickly."

Graye was half-afraid of hearing his own voice. Then he suddenly heard it: it was calm enough, almost to indifference.

"I am not Doctor Herbert, Lady Wargrave. He is away on the other side of the village, and he will not be back for some time, I am afraid. But I am a friend of his and a medical man. What is it?"

He watched her face change from hope to despair at his first words; change back again to thankfulness. She motioned him towards the door. "It is my boy. Please come to him. The nurses think him very ill, but they do not tell me what it is. Come!"

She hurried him out into the corridor, along softly-carpeted passages, walking so quickly that even he with his long stride found it difficult to keep up with her. As she was about to open a door he checked her.

"Lady Wargrave! Before we go in—is your head nurse a thoroughly capable woman?"

"Oh, yes!" she answered. "She is a properly trained nurse—she came to me from England before my son was born. She has been with me ever since."

Graye bowed his head and motioned her to proceed. An instant later the two stood in the nursery.

In the swift glance which he threw around him, Graye saw that whatever money could provide in the fitting up of a nursery in accordance with the

very latest ideas of medical science had been provided. No child in the world was probably surrounded with so much of luxury of the hygienic and scientific sort. If the lavish expenditure of money on all the fads and fancies of health specialists could have availed anything, the small baronet ought to have been safeguarded from all and every disease. But in spite of money, and science, and care, there he lay, with two nurses anxiously bending over him, a victim to a scourge which just then had seized on many of his tenants who would make no better and no worse a fight than himself, advantages or no advantages.

Graye strode rapidly up to the child's bed, and without a word bent over him. He glanced up at the head-nurse, a middle-aged woman with a clever face, and whispered one word. And without waiting for any reply, he turned on Lady Wargrave, who was hovering behind. His voice took on a strangely forceful tone of command.

"Now, Lady Wargrave, you must leave the room—at once. Come!"

Lady Wargrave hung back, looking at this insistent man with beseeching eyes.

"Oh, please don't send me out!" she said. "Please let me stay! What—what are you going to do?"

"Save your child's life," he answered, almost roughly. "And I'll have to be quick about it. Come, Lady Wargrave, you must go!"

He took her by the arm, without ceremony, and led her to the door. There she turned, clinging to him.

"You'll save him?" she breathed. "You will?"

"I'll save him," he answered. "Go!"

Then he locked the door and turned back swiftly to the bed. The two nurses stared at him. Graye looked at the elder one.

"There's only one thing I can do," he said, meaningly. "It's well I came at once."

The woman threw up her hands—she saw now what he meant. Into her eyes came a look of mingled fear and admiration.

"Oh, doctor!" she said. "Think of the risk to yourself—your life! After all, he's only a child. But you ——"

Graye laughed, and passing to her the bag which he had hastily packed in Herbert's surgery, pointed to certain articles.

"Hurry up with those and have them ready," he said. "He's got to be saved. Didn't you hear me promise the mother?"

And without more words he tore off his coat and waistcoat.

\* \* \* \* \*

Herbert, returning home some time after Graye had set out for the Manor, heard of the urgent summons, and immediately ordered out his car again. His parlourmaid had not caught the messenger's whispered remark to Graye, and had accordingly been unable to tell her master what was feared as to Lady Wargrave's child; but Herbert, speeding up through the park, guessed at the truth of the matter himself. He had eight cases of diphtheria on his list, and he feared more.

"And if the child has been struck down by it, who's to blame but his forefathers that he has and that his tenants have?" he mused, as he drove along. "In the whole of this charming and picturesque village, so loved of artists and poetry-writing chaps, there isn't a well that isn't more or less contaminated, nor a drain that doesn't need examination. This child's father never gave the least attention to the place, never cared a scrap for it, except as something that yielded him so many thousands a year. No wonder if his son has con-

tracted diphtheria—I'd lay a thousand pounds to a penny that the sanitation at the Manor has never been seen to for ages, and that the water supply is as bad as those confounded wells are at Fox's Spinney. But if it is diphtheria, I wonder what Graye's doing or done."

Speedily admitted to the house, Herbert was taken straight to Lady Wargrave, who was pacing up and down the corridor outside the nursery. With one swift glance at her, in which he took in her wonderful beauty, he went brusquely to the matter which had brought him there.

"What is it, Lady Wargrave? My friend Dr. Graye is here, I know. Has he told you?"

"He would not let me stay in the room. But he promised that he would save the child's life. He will, won't he?"

"If he said he would, and it is humanly possible, he will. But did he not tell you what ailed the child?"

"No. He gave one look at him, and put me out of the room. And here I have waited. But they would let you go in."

"Leave him alone a little," said Herbert. He stood watching her, and thinking of all that he had heard. And he wondered if she had recognised Graye. "Doctor Graye is a man of resource and of great strength of will," he said suddenly. "Take courage, Lady Wargrave. No doubt ——"

The door of the nursery suddenly opened: the younger nurse appeared.

"The doctor says you may come in now, my lady," she said.

Lady Wargrave hurried in, with Herbert in close attendance upon her. Graye, still without coat and waistcoat, was standing near the child's bed, talking to the head-nurse in low tones. He turned sharply on Lady Wargrave and Herbert.

"He's out of danger now," he said brusquely. "I think he'll do all right under Doctor Herbert's care. I've told the nurses what to do."

Herbert gave the child, now asleep and breathing quietly, one quick glance, and turned to Graye, who had begun to put on his upper garments.

"Diphtheria?" he said in a whisper.

"And jolly bad, too," answered Graye laconically.

"And you've done—what?" demanded Herbert, suddenly suspicious.

"All that one could do under the circumstances," said Graye.

Herbert's cheeks grew pale.

"What—that?" he exclaimed.

Graye frowned. He sank his voice to a whisper.

"There was nothing else to be done," he said.

"He'd have been dead in a few minutes if I hadn't done it."

"And you'll probably be dead in a few weeks or days because you have done it," said Herbert under his breath. But to Graye he said nothing, and did nothing except to squeeze his arm. Then he drew Lady Wargrave and the nurses aside and talked to them in his turn, and at last beckoned Graye to come away with him. But Lady Wargrave held out both hands to Graye, all unconscious as yet of the terrible risk to his own life which he had undertaken in order to save her child. Graye felt ready to sink with weakness at their warm pressure.

"To-morrow I will thank you," she said, looking him full in the eyes. "Not to-night—not to-night!"

Graye was not conscious of anything after that until he found himself at Herbert's side in the motor-car, gliding down the lime avenue with the still, cool, night air all round them. Then he spoke:

"Jack! unless you give me your word not to



mention a syllable to me about—about this, I'll pack up and be off before breakfast, I will!"

"All right, old chap," said Herbert, a little huskily. "I won't. But, pray God, you're safe. Adrian, the risk is awful!"

"I'll be safe. Now, that's enough. Shut up about it!"

"Yes," answered Herbert. "But I'm not going to shut up about the drains and wells of this Arcadian paradise. I'm going to have a regular cut-in, and I shall start on Lady Wargrave and her trustees. I shall tell her to remove to town, or somewhere, as soon as the child's fit, while that old house is overhauled. And then there'll be the estate. Well, and so at last I have seen her, Adrian. A beautiful woman. Strange that you should meet her again like this!"

"I believe in Fate," muttered Graye.

"Did she know you?" said Herbert.

Graye threw away his cigar into the road and laughed, a little harshly.

"She didn't know me from Adam," he answered. "She'd—forgotten."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BLACK VEIL.

**I**F a few cottagers had contracted and died of diphtheria or of typhoid fever either in Ashendyke itself, or in the outlying hamlets whose surroundings and arrangements were still more primitive than those of the village, no great revolution would have taken place in the small world over which many generations of Wargraves had ruled with more or less indifference to anybody's feelings but their own. The epidemic would have been put down to the will of Divine Providence, and the people told that they must bear such afflictions with humility and patience. But when the eighth holder of the title was stricken and brought close to death, and when the doctors said in no uncertain fashion that every well and drain in the house, the village, and the estate, ought to be thoroughly examined and most likely condemned, affairs assumed a different complexion. Luckily, although several of his tenants died, the youthful Sir Robert survived, and as soon as he was convalescent, his anxious mother bore him off to London, where there was a family house in Park Lane. Lady Wargrave was determined to be safe about that, and she begged Adrian Graye—that courageous

gentleman having experienced no ill effects from what he had done in saving the child's life—to see that it was all that a house should be. And Adrian had accepted the commission, and Lady Wargrave was safely installed, and Dr. Graye had become a regular visitor to the house by the time she had settled down there. He, too, had come to town and taken a suite of rooms at a fashionable hotel; if there was danger to her in coming, he observed to Herbert, then he, Graye, would be at hand to help her.

"The danger to her grows less and less every day," said Herbert. "It may be said to be infinitesimal by this time. But I foresee a pretty tidy lot of danger to you, Adrian, old chap!"

Graye answered with one of his inarticulate growls. And Herbert laughed, and went on:

"You know," he said, "you know you're madly in love with Lady Wargrave. You're falling more deeply in love with her every day. You'll only make yourself worse by seeing her so much. You've been up at the Manor every day lately; now that you're both going to town, you'll be in Park Lane as regularly as you've been dancing attendance here. How's it all going to end?"

Graye replied with another growl. He muttered something in his beard about the foolishness of attaching too much importance to slight things.

"All right, my boy!" said Herbert. "But love isn't a slight thing. It's the most serious thing in the world—to some people. You're one of those people. And I don't at all know that Lady Wargrave is in love with you, Adrian. I think she's profoundly grateful to you for saving the child's life, and she admires you, and she likes a big man's help, just as some folk like to have a Newfoundland dog on the premises; but at present I think that all she's in love with is her baby. However, there is a fine

mixture of the Chevalier Bayard and of Don Quixote in your composition, and I know very well what you will do. But I'm not sure that you wouldn't do better and more wisely if you set off to do a bit of exploring amongst the Cordilleras of the Andes, or in the wilds of Patagonia."

"You're always anticipating trouble," said Graye. "What's the use of meeting it half-way?"

Nevertheless, he himself was by no means easy at the thought that Lady Wargrave would, for some time, at any rate, be in London. And yet, he reflected, nine days' sensations are quickly forgotten, and few people would ever connect the granddaughter of an obscure foreign professor with the widow of a famous and wealthy baronet. And his hopes were heightened, and what measure of confidence he had increased by an accidental meeting with Wirlescombe, now a detective-inspector, whom he met one day in Piccadilly, and whom he knew at once, though the detective did not know him.

"But there's a big change in you, Mr. Graye," observed the detective. "There's little in me, though, like all men inclining to middle age, I've had to have my waistbands let out, sir. Now, why it must be six or seven years since we were thrown together."

"Fully seven," replied Graye.

"Aye, I dare say it is," said Wirlescombe carelessly. "It was a queer case, that; I remember it all, though I've had some equally queer ones since. Oh, yes, I can call it all to mind—your queer adventures, and old Graffi's murder, and the girl's disappearance, and the second-hand clothes dealer, Shipps, and the finding of the man's body in the empty house. Oh, yes, a queer case!"

"Did you ever find out who that man was?" asked Graye.

"Never, sir, never. He was buried as an unknown man, and he has remained unknown to this day," replied Wirlescombe.

"And—the girl? Ever hear more of her?"

"Not one word. No," continued the detective, shaking his head, "not one word. You see, Mr. Graye, we never had any photograph of that girl to circulate. Nobody knew what she was like except from the descriptions which you and the landlord and the caretaker and his wife gave. And, however accurate word description may be, sir, they're not equal to photographs when it comes to identification."

"Of course," said Graye. "Well," he went on presently, as if the affair had become a matter of indifference to him, "I suppose there's no great amount of interest in all that now?"

"Oh, absolutely none, sir, absolutely none!" answered Wirlescombe. "Lord bless you, I question if half a dozen people could recall it. There's been a score of much more exciting affairs than that before the public since then. Perhaps you haven't heard of them with being away all this time. Oh, the Graffi affair is dead, sir—another of the thousand and one unsolved mysteries."

Graye left the detective, feeling much cheered and encouraged. It might be that no one would ever connect the Lady Wargrave of Ashendyke Manor and Park Lane with the Gemma Graffi of Ansterlitz Mansions—never. In that case—but there Graye obliged his speculative mind to cease its speculations.

But at times he found himself asking questions of something that could not answer them. What of Lady Wargrave herself? Did she or did she not know of the murder of her grandfather? What happened to her on the night of the murder? Where did she go? What became of her after that? Where had she

been during the time which elapsed between her escape and her marriage with the late Sir Robert Wargrave? As they came to know each other better and talked more freely, these questions came oftener to Graye's mind. She always spoke of London as if she had never seen it before; now and then she spoke of lands and places which she had visited with her husband; but of anything else she never spoke. It seemed to him that at some time she had said to herself that to her the Past should be as a Scaled Book.

"I've often wondered if she ever will recognise me," he said to Herbert in a sudden and rare burst of confidence when, on one occasion, Herbert being in town and staying with him, they had been dining at Lady Wargrave's. "You saw her to-night, Jack—you noticed her, of course. She's everything that she could be to me in the way of niceness, you know, because I had the luck to save the little beggar's life; but I'm always looking for some dawning recognition, you know—I'm always feeling as if I wanted to—well, by George, if you will have the plain truth, to wake her up, to—yes, to shake her, and to say 'Don't you know me? Don't you remember me? Have you forgotten that night of the big fog?' Why, she knew my name then, you know. But when she heard it down there at Ashendyke, it recalled nothing to her—nothing."

"No—she's forgotten," said Herbert musingly. "And—I'm wondering why she's forgotten. I'm wondering —"

He paused, and remained silent so long that Graye grew fretful and impatient.

"You're wondering—what?" he demanded in his brusque fashion. "Out with it, Jack"

"I'm wondering if, after she got away from Austerlitz Mansions that night, anything occurred that produced a loss of memory," answered Herbert

"It's possible. She may have completely forgotten everything about herself and her past life. There may have been an accident—a blow on the head. She may not even know that she ever was with her grandfather at Austerlitz Mansions: she may have even forgotten that her name was Gemma Graffi. Eh?"

Graye was staring at him with widening eyes.

"By Gad!" he said, with sudden emphasis. "There's a lot in that, Jack! I never thought of that. Of course—of course that would explain a lot—everything. One's heard such a pile of things about cases of that sort. I'm glad you thought of it—I've never been able to make matters out, because in my experience if you've ever met anybody under exceptional circumstances, even for a few minutes, you don't forget 'em. You may at first, but the recollection wakes up, you know, sooner or later."

"Generally," said Herbert. "Generally—not as a hard and fast rule. Yes, I had thought of that. And there's another thing I've thought of, Adrian. You know nothing of the circumstances under which Lady Wargrave was married to her late husband?"

"How should I? I know nothing except what I heard from yourself," answered Graye. "What do you know?"

"All I know is what anybody knows down there at Ashendyke," replied Herbert. "And that is simply that the late Sir Robert was married soon after he went abroad the last time; that he was taken ill about eighteen months ago in Sicily; that his solicitor and a trustee hurried over there to see him, and that he introduced his wife to them on his death-bed, and that the child was then a few months old. That's all. But, has it ever struck you that it might be well to know under what name Lady Wargrave was married to her husband?"

"Under what name? Why—I don't under-

stand," said Graye. "It would be under her own name, of course."

Herbert drew out of his breast-pocket an envelope.

"Have you ever received a letter from Lady Wargrave?" he asked. "Have you ever seen her signature?"

"No, never. It's odd, but I never have," replied Graye.

Herbert took a folded sheet from the envelope.

"This is a letter from Lady Wargrave to me, enclosing a cheque for some people at Ashendyke who have fallen on bad times," he said, passing the letter over. "Look at the signature!"

Graye's fingers shook as he took the delicately-scented sheet. He gave one glance at the signature at the foot, traced in a characteristically Italian hand: *Leonora Wargrave*.

"Good God!" he ejaculated, looking at Herbert with a blank face. "What can—what does it mean? *Leonora*!"

"They'll have a Baronetage in the hotel," said Herbert. "Send for it. Let us see what is set down there."

The waiter who brought in the Baronetage ten minutes later apologised: it was two years old, but the latest they had.

"I daresay it will serve," said Herbert, when they were once more alone. "Now, let's see. Wargrave, Sir Robert. Here you are. Seventh baronet. He wasn't dead, you see, when this edition came out. Now, then—there!"

He pointed to the brief announcement at the end of the enumeration of the seventh baronet's lineage, possessions, and doings.

M. at Palermo, Sicily, April 25th, 19—. *Leonora Cambertini*. Has issue a son, Robert Francis, b. January 4th, 19—.



Herbert closed the book with a snap. He looked at Graye. Graye's face was a study in wonder and astonishment. Suddenly it cleared and he laughed his old laugh of defiance.

"I don't care," he said. "She might be married as Leonora, and she can sign herself Leonora; but she's Gemma all the same."

"Very likely," said Herbert. "But that's not the question. The question is—What is the truth about the mystery of the disappearance?"

And Graye knew that Herbert was right, and he began to wonder more and more deeply and anxiously how he was to get at that truth. For some days, being occupied in doing the honours of the town to his guest, he was not able to call at Wargrave House; then, one evening, feeling that he could keep away no longer, he went, on pretext of asking after his small patient. And turning into Park Lane out of South Street he was suddenly aware of a graceful figure, clad in dark garments and wearing a thick black veil, which was entering a motor-cab a few yards away, and he swore deep down in his soul that it was Lady Wargrave. No other woman in London owned such a figure. The motor-cab sped away. Graye hesitated. A man who had opened the door of the cab watched him, half expectantly. And suddenly Graye strode up: he felt that he was doing a dirty thing, but he set his teeth. His hand went to his pocket.

"Tell me where that lady has driven to, and I'll give you this sovereign," he said.

The man smiled and held out an eager hand.

"That's earned ~~me~~ then, gov'nor," he said. "Austerlitz Road ~~Wargrave~~ Vale."

## CHAPTER V.

### WHERE THE BLACK VEIL WENT.

IT was already dark when Lady Wargrave stepped out of her motor-cab at the end of Austerlitz Road. She walked swiftly down the road as the cab drove away ; then, drawing her veil more closely about her face, she paused and stood looking down the lamp-lighted vista of houses and gardens which she had not seen for seven years. It seemed to her that there was no alteration in that vista. She remembered, quite clearly, the little villas, detached or semi-detached, with their bits of garden, their plane-trees, their evergreen shrubs overhanging stuccoed walls. And there, towering high above them, planted where an enterprising builder had found a likely spot of ground, was the square bulk of Austerlitz Mansions, its many windows making patches of yellow light in the gloom. It was all the same. She might not have been away from it six months, or even six hours, it seemed all so unchanged. And as she set out again along it, her heart beating with unusual rapidity from excitement, she formed a mental picture of her grandfather sitting amongst his books, just as he had been used to sit about that time every evening. She imagined his surprise at seeing her ; his amaze-

ment at hearing her story. As she hurried along she wondered if he would forgive her for her wilfulness; then she thought of her own intentions towards him, and she went forward hopefully and in confidence.

She reached the front of Austerlitz Mansions, and for an instant stood gazing at the open door and the lighted windows. There were lights in the first-floor flat which she remembered so well; her grandfather, then, was at home. She went up the steps and pushed open the swinging doors, expecting to see the hall-porter. She had forgotten his name, but she remembered his face. But there was no hall-porter there; the hall was empty. And, half-breathless, she ran up the stairs to the first floor, and without pausing to think or to reflect, touched the electric bell at the side of the well-remembered door. And, never doubting in her innocent assumption of things, that old Marco would open the door to her, she hastily threw back the veil from her face and head so that he should see who it was that had come to him. She heard steps presently; not the shuffling steps of an old man, but the firm, decisive tread of a young one. The door opened, a man looked out. His back being to the light she could not quite distinguish his features, but she gained a general swift impression of a dark face, a closely-trimmed black beard, a slender yet athletic figure in evening dress. And a curious sense of fear came over her, filling mind and body in some subtle fashion; she felt herself trembling, and her voice sounded strange to herself when she spoke.

"I—does Signor Graffi still live here?" she asked timidly.

The man stood aside with a courteous bow which motioned her to enter. And Lady Wargrave, never doubting that she was to see her grandfather, and that it was some pupil or assistant of his who had

given her admission, walked in through the little hall and into the sitting-room, which Marco Graffi had used as his study, and wherein he and she and Adrian Graye had supped on the night of the great fog.

She gave a quick look round as she entered. In that look she saw scarcely a sign of change. There were the familiar books, the well-remembered pictures, the various objects which the old professor had gathered round him during a long life. She almost saw him sitting at his accustomed seat in his high-backed chair at the table littered with books and papers. But the room was empty. Yet—at any second he might enter it.

The sound of a door closing softly behind her made her turn sharply—to confront the man who had admitted her. He stood between her and the door, quietly watching her, quietly smiling. And Lady Wargrave suddenly felt a new sense of fear—there was something here which she did not understand, something that was closing in upon her. She stepped back, staring at the face and figure before her—in her mind memory was awakening. The man smiled again.

"So it is Gemma!" he said in low tones. "Gemma! Come back!"

Lady Wargrave's right hand unconsciously tightened on the edge of the table. She still stared into the man's face, searching his eyes, his mouth, his forehead. Suddenly she uttered something like a cry.

"Di Spada!" she exclaimed. "It is—you!"

The man smiled and bowed again. He pointed to a chair, but gave no sign of altering his position.

"It is I, signorina. Be seated," he said.

But Lady Wargrave showed no inclination to accept a seat. She backed further away into the room, glancing about her in alarm.

"Where is my grandfather?" she demanded. "Tell him I am here—tell him at once!"

Di Spada laughed gently. Again he waved his hand—a very white, slender hand—to a chair.

"That, signorina, is, I regret to say, impossible," he replied. "Your grandfather, my esteemed old friend and my predecessor in this establishment, is—dead."

"Dead! When did he die?" she ejaculated. "When?"

Di Spada kept his eyes still fixed upon her. There was something in them, something in the persistent smile about the corners of his mouth, which not even his black moustache could conceal, that frightened her excessively; she was already trembling so much that she knew she must, sooner or later, sink into the chair at her side. Already she felt as if she were some weak and defenceless wild thing of the woods, unarmed, on which a tiger, hungry for blood, was advancing with relentless and sure purpose.

"When—when?" she repeated faintly.

"Signor Marco Graffi died on the night, seven years ago, which may be brought to your recollection by the fact that it was remarkable for a dense fog," replied Di Spada. "I see you remember."

"That night!" she said. "That night?"

"It was also the night on which you—ran away," continued Di Spada. "I am sure you have not forgotten that, either."

She stared at him wonderingly, as if she did not yet comprehend the full meaning of his words. And, suddenly, her strength going, she dropped into the chair at her side.

"That is better," said Di Spada. "We can be at our ease. There is much to talk of."

He reached out and drew a chair towards himself, carefully placing it between her and the door. But at that Lady Wargrave made an effort and recovered some of her strength. She stood up.

"No! I have nothing to talk of," she said. "Now that I know of my grandfather's death, that is all. Please to open the door for me."

But Di Spada sat immovable, continuing to smile.

"I think we have much to talk about—Lady Wargrave," he said, with a curious glance that turned her cold and forced her to resume her seat.

"Let us talk—quietly."

"You know—who I am? Now?" she said.

"I do, now that I have thought things over—within this last few minutes," he answered. "When you came in I only thought of you as Gemma Graffi, returned from the unknown. But then I remembered that a few weeks ago I saw in one of the picture papers a photograph of the beautiful Lady Wargrave, and I said to myself at the time, 'What a resemblance between Lady Wargrave and Gemma Graffi—as Gemma would be now were she alive or were she here!' And—after you had come in, I thought quickly. And so, of course, I see. Gemma is now Lady Wargrave. I congratulate her."

Lady Wargrave had again risen during this speech. She pointed to the door. "I wish to go. Open the door for me!" she said.

Di Spada shook his head.

"Not yet. We must talk," he replied. "We have much talking to do. When angels come to one's door, one should not turn them away—one should entertain them."

Lady Wargrave made two steps to the window and seized the latch.

"If you do not open that door instantly," she said, in tones that had become very quiet, "I shall throw up this window and scream for the police."

Di Spada laughed aloud.

"If you do, Lady Wargrave, you will spend the night in the prison cell!" he said. "The police

will be glad to see you. They have been wanting you for seven years."

In the act of unfastening the window she paused, stared at him, saw that what he was saying was no vain boast, and let her fingers drop from the latch. She came slowly back to the table, beyond which Di Spada sat, and leaning on it, looked narrowly across at him.

"You say that the police want me!" she said in low, vibrating tones. "For what do the police want me?"

"For the murder of your grandfather," answered Di Spada quietly. "There has been a warrant for your arrest out for seven years."

Lady Wargrave sat down again. She was fighting hard to keep her wits; from all that she remembered of this man in the old days, little though that was, she knew that she needed them. She faced him boldly.

"So my grandfather was murdered?" she asked.

"On the night you ran away."

"And suspicion fell on me?"

"Naturally it did."

"What evidence was there against me?"

Di Spada pointed to a drawer in a cabinet at the side of the room.

"In that drawer are all the newspaper accounts of the affair—you may examine them if you like," he said. "But, as I know the whole thing by heart, I can refresh your memory. You have said you recollect the night of the great fog?—yes. On that night you and your grandfather were helped to find your way home by a young gentleman, a medical student, who came in here to supper, and, on your grandfather's invitation, stayed for the night. Do you remember that young man's name?"

"I remember him—faintly. But not his name—oh, no! After all these years!"

"His name was Adrian Graye. He—what is it?"

Lady Wargrave was leaning forward in her chair, staring at Di Spada with eyes full of incredulous wonder.

"You said—Adrian Graye?" she exclaimed. "Adrian Graye!"

"Adrian Graye, a medical student, of University College. The name affects you?"

She waved her hand.

"Go on. It is nothing. Only—but continue."

"Very well. This Adrian Graye was the chief witness at the coroner's inquest. He narrated how he woke in the morning to find your grandfather dead, stabbed to the heart, and you—vanished. He also told that you had seemed very angry with your grandfather for taking you away from Italy, and had begged him to intercede with Graffi to let you return. And, having heard all the evidence, the jury—good, stolid, beef-fed British men—returned a verdict of murder against you. That verdict still stands—the warrant for your arrest still stands. I have only to tell the first policeman who you are and he will take you into custody. Then you will be tried. And in due course you will be—hanged."

Lady Wargrave laughed gently. She seemed to herself to be recovering her nerves. She looked at Di Spada with something of speculation.

"And this—this Adrian Graye. Did he believe that I killed my grandfather?" she suddenly asked.

"Did he? Let me read his evidence."

"You may take all the papers away with you, if you like," Di Spada answered. "You ought to read them. No—so far as I remember, he didn't."

Lady Wargrave shot a straight glance at him.

"Do you?" she asked.

Di Spada's strange smile grew deeper around his lips.

"I never answer questions of that sort," he



replied. "But, for the sake of the Wargrave family, and the son—ah! that touches you!—it will pay you to keep me from telling the police that Gemma Graffi and Lady Wargrave are one and the same person. Eh?"

"How much?" she asked calmly.

Di Spada rose, and going over to the cabinet, opened the drawer which he had indicated, and took out a large envelope, heavily sealed.

"Before we go into that," he replied. "You must read these papers. You will then understand your position. To-night or to-morrow you will read them—to-morrow evening, at the same hour, you will come here again. Then—we shall do business. Now, I will see you downstairs and find you a cab."

So Lady Wargrave went back to Park Lane, with but one thought in her mind—a thought which, just then, blotted all other thoughts out.

"For the sake of the son—for the sake of the son!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE TORTURE OF UNCERTAINTY.

**G**RAYE walked away from the recipient of his sovereign full of mixed feelings. He felt mean and miserable because he had seemed to play the spy. He had not been sure that the wearer of the thick black veil really was Lady Wargrave; then he had presumed on his suspicion that he was to endeavour to find out where she was going. What right had he to seek knowledge about her incomings and outgoings, he asked himself? She might have reasons for going somewhere or other, quietly dressed and heavily veiled, of which he knew nothing and with which he had nothing to do. He felt as if he had committed a crime, and his face was hot when he dropped his gold into the cab tout's dirty palm and hurried away. It was almost within his imagination to conceive the man sneering at him.

But—Austerlitz Road, Maida Vale! That—and the fact that the Wargrave town mansion in Park Lane was only thirty or forty yards away! The more he thought of it, the more he was certain that the graceful figure which he had watched into the motor-cab was Lady Wargrave. What could she

want in Austerlitz Road after her long absence from England?

He had never, during all the careful watching of her which he had exercised since their meeting on the night of the child's illness, known her make any reference to any previous knowledge of London or of a past life in it, and yet she never seemed to be on her guard. She always appeared to be genuine and natural. Why, then, this apparently secret, clandestine visit to the very scenes from which she had been so anxious to escape?

Walking rapidly up Park Lane and trying to analyse his conflicting thoughts, Graye suddenly pulled himself up with a jerk.

"I'm a damned fool!" he said, half-aloud. "Of course, it wasn't she at all. Aren't there a hundred women hereabouts with pretty figures so much alike that you can't tell one from the other in a half-light? Of course, there are! And don't heaps of women wear thick veils when they go out at night? Of course, they do! And is it without the bounds of possibility that some woman, of elegant figure, resident in or near Park Lane, quietly dressed and thickly veiled, should hire a cab and drive to Austerlitz Road? Of course, it isn't! You're a damned old ass, Adrian Graye, and the sooner you know it the better. At this moment Lady Wargrave is, of course, in her nursery, admiring the first sleep of that blessed infant."

And then he retraced his steps, and after more uncertainty and cogitation, went to Wargrave House and asked to see its mistress. The butler evidently believed that his mistress was at home, and went off in search of her. But in a few moments he was back with a solemn shake of the head.

"My lady's maid says, sir, that my lady was

seized with a bad headache soon after dinner and has retired for the night," he announced.

Graye made a suitable expression of regret, asked after the health of the little baronet, and departed. And once away from the house he found himself, against his will, putting this question to himself. Was that true or wasn't it? Was Lady Wargrave really at home, indisposed, or was she off to Austerlitz Road in that motor-cab?

"It wouldn't be a lie, I suppose, if she told the maid to say all that to the butler," he mused. "People say they're not at home when they're safely planted just behind the door. And I'm a cad and a beast to even seem suspicious—but God knows it's all because of anxiety for her sake!"

Then he went to his club, and tried to forget all the events of the evening, with the result that when he returned to his rooms he thought about them all the more. He spent a bad night, ate next to no breakfast, and before noon resolved to call at Wargrave House—once more on the plea of professional enquiry after the boy's health. He knew he was acting—only to his own knowledge—in a strange fashion. He also knew that what really was in his mind was the hope that if Lady Wargrave was in any trouble or difficulty she would confide in him. And so he set off—with nerves irritated and unwrung by a restless night and a troubled mind.

As he walked along South Street, Graye suddenly became aware of a man who had stolen out of a mews and was gliding along at his side, smiling at him confidentially out of his eye-corners. He frowned, wondering what the fellow meant—whereat the smile became still more confidential. A dirty forefinger went up to the battered brim of a disreputable hat.

"Mornin', guv'nor. It was me as you give that thick 'un to last night—much obliged to yer, guv'nor. And, I say, guv'nor, if so be as yer'd like to know where that there lady what went off in the cab came back to, I can tell yer, guv'nor, 'cause I see her when she came back and watched where she went in, d'yer see?"

Grave paused, scowling. He looked at the man—and the man misunderstood the meaning of the look.

"Yer needn't give me any more, guv'nor," he hastened to say. "Yer did me handsome last night. I'll tell yer free, gratis. Come back ten-thirty, she did, that there lady with the black veil, and stopped at the corner yonder, and let herself into the garden door at the back of Wargrave House. Thought yer'd like to know, guv'nor."

Grave was thinking. After all, it was he who had set this man to work. The fellow was not to be blamed for thinking that he had some object. He stopped and, leaning on his umbrella, looked down at the figure before him.

"Look here, my man!" he said. "I asked you that question because I had an idea that the lady who drove away just as I came up was a friend of mine, and I wanted, as I was too late to catch her, to know if she was going to a certain place. She wasn't the person I thought she was. It's no concern of mine who goes in or out of Wargrave House. Do you understand that? So don't watch on my behalf."

The man smiled, slyly.

"All right, guv'nor," he said. "I understands. On'y, 'cause o' what you said last night and what yer give me, I thought yer was interested in Wargrave House, 'cause, yer see, I knocks a lot round this quarter, guv'nor, doin' odd jobs, and I seen yer

go in and come out there a lot o' times—there ain't no mistakin' you, guv'nor!"

Graye felt the foolishness, the ridiculousness, of the situation. Yet—once more it was his own fault. He had set the man on.

"Can't you find something better to do than run after cabs and luggage?" he suddenly asked. "You haven't always done that?"

The man grinned.

"No fear, guv'nor! If I'd clothes and boots I could go back to my old job as boots and handy man at a pub in South London," he said. "But I've been ill, and got down on my luck, and—yer know how it is, guv'nor."

Graye put his hand in his pocket and fingered about until he had found five sovereigns. He dropped them into the astonished man's hand.

"Go and get your clothes and boots, and be off to your old job, then!" he said gruffly. "That'll suit you better than hanging about here."

Then he strode away with his head in the air, affecting lofty indifference. He wanted no watching of Lady Wargrave. And he cursed himself heartily as a fool and a beast for his action of the night before. All the same, he went on to Wargrave House, eager, hungry to see her.

He did not see her. Lady Wargrave was not at home that day to anybody at any time. She had given particular instructions. So Graye went away, sore and disappointed. And, suddenly, an idea struck him, and he hailed a motor-cab and went down to Whitehall, and made his way into the sacred precincts of New Scotland Yard, and asked to see Wirlescombe. And as he was taken to that gentleman's office he laughed to think how very

futile he was becoming in the production of excuses and reasons.

Wirlescombe, who seemed to be increasing in girth and good-humour with every new moon, received his visitor with great cordiality.

"Well, Mr. Graye," he said jocularly, "and what brings you into these regions? You don't happen to have hit on some new and surprising clue in relation to that Graffi case, I expect? No such luck, eh? Ah, no! that's closed, sir, closed!"

Graye thought as he took the chair which the detective placed for him that if he only told Mr. Wirlescombe all he knew, that gentleman would declare just as emphatically that the Graffi case was by way of being re-opened. But, at that point, he thought it best to dissemble, so he merely shook his head without uttering a negative in word and smiled faintly.

"All the same," he said, "I came to speak to you about something in connection with it. I don't know whether you remember that, in my evidence before the coroner, I mentioned that Signor Graffi took me into his bedroom to show me a very fine picture which he had there?"

The detective screwed up his lips and his eyebrows.

"Can't say that I do, Mr. Graye, after all these years," he answered. "That would be a detail which wouldn't interest me, unless something important rested on it."

"Well, he did," continued Graye. "And I've often thought that if I ever furnished a flat in town, as I'm thinking of doing now, I should like to acquire that picture. Now, do you happen to know what became of Signor Graffi's effects?"

"Well, as it happens, I do know," replied Wirlescombe. "You won't know, because I remember you left London very soon after that affair. No trace of any relations of the old man's could be found. Nothing could be traced as to where he put his spare money—if he had any, which, in the light of what I'm going to tell you, seems very doubtful. Then it turned out that he was owing the landlord—what was his name?—oh, Quarendon—rather more than a year's rent—perhaps a year and a half's rent. So, of course, Quarendon took over all there was in the place. Then, at that juncture, a man who had sometimes assisted old Graffi in teaching came forward, took the place over as it was, and continued his work there. So I should say the picture you want is still there; that is, if the successor's there. I know all this because I once met Quarendon in the Strand, and he asked me into Simpson's to a bit of lunch, and told me all about it."

Graye tried hard to show no undue interest.

"I wonder if the man is still there?" he said meditatively. "It seems hardly likely after all this time. You don't remember his name?"

"Let's see," answered Wirlescombe, again knitting his brows. "It was—stop a bit—I've got a memorandum-book somewhere, in which I put down the names of anybody and everybody who had even the remotest connection with that case—I think it's in this drawer. Yes—here it is. And here's the man's name—Signor di Spada."

"Di Spada," repeated Graye.

"D—i S—p—a—d—a," answered Wirlescombe. "Italian, I suppose. Yes. I daresay you'd find him there. It's a good neighbourhood for teachers of languages, that. But poor old Graffi, I understood, was getting past his work."



Graye rose to go. But in going he lingered, affecting to look at some pictures on the wall.

"I suppose," he said, trying to appear indifferent, "I suppose that verdict of the coroner's jury still stands?"

"Oh, of course!" replied Wirlescombe. "Of course! And, of course, the verdict still holds good. I've got it."

"You've got it!" exclaimed Graye.

"Of course. I had the case in charge," Wirlescombe answered. "But there—I regard it as so much waste paper."

Then Graye said good-bye, and went off; and the detective, when he had gone, put his head on one side, and stared at a corner of the room, as if he were trying to see something there.

"Upon my word, now I come to think of it, I shouldn't wonder if that young fellow was fishing for some information!" he muttered. "Now, what is it—is he trying a bit of amateur detective work himself? I must make it in my way to cultivate his acquaintance. Warrant!—jury's verdict!—picture!—um! Um!"

Graye went away from Wirlescombe determined upon one thing. If it was Lady Wargrave—as he now had little doubt it was—who went to Austerlitz Road on the previous night, she doubtless went to see this Signor di Spada. But—why? Was she in danger? If so, then he was going to have a cut in. And as a preliminary he himself would go to Austerlitz Mansions that very night and call on Di Spada. He would have an excellent excuse—the purchase of the picture.

He waited until after dark, and then took a motor-cab to the neighbourhood of Austerlitz Road. He had never been there since the affair of the murder, but he had no difficulty in finding the mansions. And as he approached them from one

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direction, a woman approached them from another—a woman of graceful figure, and singularly attractive carriage, whose face was thickly veiled. She ran hastily up the steps of the mansions and disappeared. And Graye knew—*knew!*—that she was Lady Wargrave.

## CHAPTER VII.

### INEXPLICABLE.

GRAYE instinctively drew back. Whatever doubts he had felt as to the real identity of the veiled lady of Park Lane he had none as to the identity of the woman who had just hurried up the steps of Austerlitz Mansions. That was Lady Wargrave, beyond all doubt. And, logically, it was beyond all doubt that it was Lady Wargrave whom he had seen the previous evening. And . . . could there be any doubt that she was on her way then, had been on her way the night before, to visit the man who now lived in Marco Graffi's old flat—Di Spada ! It required no great amount of reasoning, no great exercise in the primitive art of putting two and two together, to decide that there could be no doubt at all—none ! But—what did it all mean ?

If Graye had felt no more than a mere friendly interest in Lady Wargrave, he would have shrugged his shoulders, laughed, perhaps a little sardonically, and gone away, feeling, as a man of the world would, that he had no right to bother his brains as to what she did, no right to pry into her actions. But, whether he had known it or not at the time, he had fallen in love with her when he knew her as Gemma

Graffi ; he had remained in love with her through all the mysterious (and what to some men would have seemed the incriminating) facts of her strange disappearance.

He had never forgotten her during all his travels and adventures on the other side of the world, and he had fallen in love with her anew when he saw her, as Lady Wargrave, arrive in state at the gates of Ashendyke Manor. He had gone on deepening in love ; he was restless, miserable, if he did not see her constantly, and being a very natural and primitive man it was torture to him to know that she was engaged in something, some mystery, of which he knew nothing, and in which he could not share.

She might be in danger — in danger at that very moment—and he was powerless. She might be the victim of unscrupulous and designing persons, and he could do nothing. That she was engaged in some intrigue never entered into his mind. He was one of those men to whom it is impossible to doubt the woman upon whom their affection is fixed. Yet . . . why did she visit this unknown Di Spada ?

Then, as he stood there in the darkest part of the tree-lined road, a new thought, a terrible suspicion came into Graye's mind. He had no doubt whatever that Gemma Graffi and Lady Wargrave were one and the same person. Neither was there, nor could there be, any doubt that Gemma Graffi escaped from those very mansions, which he was so doubtfully and gloomily regarding, under extremely suspicious circumstances. How did she escape ? Where did she escape to ? And above everything, was she helped to escape, and if so by whom ? Was it by this Di Spada ? That might be. It might also be an explanation of her visits to him. For that she was visiting him Graye felt assured, just as

fully assured as that there was a mystery in the visits which seemed unsolvable. But even in the case of apparently unsolvable mysteries one may presume to conjecture, he thought. Might it not be that these visits were in some way connected with the event of some years ago? Nothing could be more certain than that at one o'clock of a certain November morning, all those years ago, Gemma Graffi, in his presence, retired into her own room in that very flat.

Nothing more certain than that she was not in that flat at eight o'clock that morning, and that she vanished from all knowledge for seven years, to reappear as the beautiful young widow of the late Sir Robert Wargrave. And the more he thought of it, the more Graye felt sure that she must have been helped to escape; that she must have had assistance in getting away from England at a time when the police were carefully hunting for her—was it not a likely thing that this Di Spada, who, according to Wirlescombe, had been a pupil or assistant of her grandfather's, had been one of her helpers, and that he had some claim on her?

Graye was by this time a rich man, for in addition to the fortune of fifty thousand pounds, which had come to him on his twenty-first birthday, he had stepped into another scarcely less handsome during his travels.

He felt as he stood there (with the rashness of a distracted and sorely-puzzled lover) that he would give a good deal of his riches to know what the mystery which surrounded Lady Wargrave really amounted to. And, hanging about the road, fortunately destitute of policemen, and only rarely traversed by pedestrians at that hour, he made up his mind that on the morrow he would do one thing: he would go to Lady Wargrave, and tell her straight

out how it was with him. In his view of things if a man was in love with a woman it was his duty to tell her, then she could either pack him off or bid him stay. He at any rate would know his fate.

"I'll tell her and be done with it," he swore to himself. "And if—if she does care, why, then, of course, she'll tell me everything, everything! And if she is in any danger, or in any trouble I shall have the right to protect her."

One may gather from that that Adrian Graye was by way of being a good deal of an innocent as regards women. But that was his creed at the moment, and he felt all the better when he had recited it. He pulled up his big form, and lifted his handsome head an inch higher, and felt himself almost pious.

It was his mission to defend Gemma—he always thought of her as Gemma, never as Lady Wargrave—and he would accomplish it. Let anyone dare to wrong her, to occasion her trouble—they should have him to deal with! But in the midst of this uplifted feeling there came another, which acted like a cold douche. For he suddenly remembered that Lady Wargrave had certainly never shown the slightest sign of recollection of him. That no remembrance of him had ever been awakened by fairly constant meeting with him. That beyond a mother's natural gratitude to the man who had unselfishly risked his own life to save her child's, she had shown no particular partiality to him. He fell from the drear heights of happiness to the cold floor of stern reality.

"Well, never mind—she can't stop me from keeping an eye on her safety, as far as I can!" he groaned. "But unless I know more what can I do? What can I do now? Certainly I can't kick my heels up and down this road all night. I seem to have been here for hours already!"

As a matter of fact he had not been in Austerlitz Road anything like ten minutes, but his own uncertainty, and the knowledge that Lady Wargrave was almost within touch of his hand, made him inclined to magnify everything. And instead of going away, as a wiser and cooler man would, he continued to linger, pacing up and down under the plane-trees and the sparse lamp-posts, exactly as if he had been the housemaid's young man, who was waiting for his love to emerge from the area.

"What to do—what to do?—that's the confounded question!" he growled. "If I could only think!"

And suddenly he thought. He remembered the man who had given evidence at the inquest. The man who was described as housekeeper, hall-porter, general 'factotum, at Austerlitz Mansions. What was his name?—Ah, yes, Acock! Acock would doubtless still be there—men who got into good posts like that generally stick to them, and Acock, as he remembered him, was scarcely a middle-aged man.

He had a recollection that Acock, in his evidence at the inquest, had mentioned that he was always on duty in the evening from eight until midnight. He would be on duty now, then, if he were still there, he would have seen Lady Wargrave enter. Would he, too, have recognised her, in spite of the veil? And would he recognise him, Adrian Graye, in spite of his additional seven years of ageing and his golden beard?

Weil, then, for an excuse! He laughed bitterly, once more thinking how adept he was becoming at the making and framing of excuses. Oh, well, he was looking for a flat—that was a good enough excuse for a call at Austerlitz Mansions, quite good enough.

Always impulsive when spurred on by his own initiative, Graye crossed the road, and slowly walked up the steps which he had seen Lady Wargrave climb ten minutes before. As he reached them he glanced at the flat on the first floor. There was the very window which he himself had opened that morning after the fog, the very window from which he had called to the policeman who strolled so unconcernedly beneath, the window from which he had given the tidings of murder. There was a light in it, and in the other windows of the flat; behind the drawn curtains he fancied that he saw Gemma.

Graye pushed open the swinging doors of the inner hall and walked in, staring about him in his affectation of strangeness to the place. In the porter's chair, set comfortably near an open fireplace, sat a uniformed man, who read the evening newspaper. At the sound of the opening doors the newspaper dropped; its reader looked up and rose. And Graye realised at once that this was not Acock, whom he would have remembered quite well; this was a stranger.

The man came forward with a look of enquiry, bidding Graye a good evening.

"Oh, good evening!" returned Graye. "I—er, called in, in passing, you know, to find out if there is a flat—a furnished flat—to let in this building. I used to call on a friend here some years ago, and I remember thinking that these flats were very well arranged. Is there anything likely, do you happen to know?"

The man glanced at a neighbouring door, on which was painted the word "office." He shook his head.

"I don't think there's anything at present, sir," he replied. "Of course, the office is closed now. Mr. Quarendon, the proprietor, he's usually here



from about eleven to one, and from three to five every day. He might know of some tenant that's going to leave soon, of course. But just now, sir every flat's tenanted."

"Oh, ah, I see!" said Graye. "Perhaps I'll call on Mr. Quarendon some day—there's no great hurry. By the by, when I used to come here, the hall-porter was Acock—I remember him. Where is he now?"

"Dead, sir. Died of double pneumonia four years ago," replied the porter. "I succeeded him. Yes, sir, went off uncommon sudden did Charlie Acock—gone in a week, sir."

"Dear, dear!" said Graye. He presented the man with a shilling, said good-night to him, and walked out. And once outside he cursed himself heartily for his folly in ever going in.

"I shall bring myself down to the level of an enquiry agent's spy if I go on like that!" he growled as he walked away. "What right have I to peer and pry about in that fashion? It's—rotten!"

Nevertheless, he was sorely tempted to wait in the vicinity of Austerlitz Mansions until he saw Lady Wargrave leave. He conquered that temptation, and went away, only to encounter another in the shape of a thought that he might go down to Park Lane and watch the garden door of Wargrave House. He knew how that could be done with small chance of detection from anybody. But he conquered that too.

"No! I'll speak to her to-morrow," he muttered. "That's the straight thing to do. She's a woman—she'll understand. To-morrow!"

But when he called at Wargrave House next day it was only to hear that Lady Wargrave was not at home. The same answer met him on the following day. It sent him away mystified and a little angry. She had been receiving him in friendly fashion, had always seemed glad when he came—surely there was

something beyond the conventional answer. He waited there days, loafing about town in the meantime, and called again. And once more Lady Wargrave denied him—and it was impossible to ask the man-servant, who gave him his answer, what that answer meant.

Next day Graye went off to Ashendyke, and told Herbert all about it, leaving nothing out. By the time he had finished Herbert knew every detail. He had also obtained a very complete insight into the state of his friend's mind. And he inspected Graye through his spectacles pretty much as a microscopist inspects something that he has never seen before.

"And that's where it is," said Graye in conclusion.

"That's where what is?" asked Herbert.

"That! What I've been telling you about," replied Graye testily. "You know. What would you do?"

"What would I do? Nothing. Leave the thing alone. Don't go Don-Quixotically after ladies who possibly don't need help. Wait until Lady Wargrave asks for your help, if she ever does. After all, Adrian, remember this—she's Italian, and has vastly different ideas to ours. This man Di Spada, is probably much more in sympathy with her ideas than you could be."

Graye ground his teeth.

"You know very well I'm in love with her," he growled.

"I'm glad to hear you admit it. That's the most sensible thing you've done. Now, do something even more sensible. Let things slide. Wait. There'll be developments. You may come in at them. Be sure of this—if trouble is coming to Lady Wargrave, it won't be a hole-and-corner affair, so you'll know of it, quick. Now, then—have you taken any flat, made any arrangements?"

"No!" answered Graye.

"Then, to-morrow morning go and clear your things out of that hotel and come here," said Herbert.

"I want help."

And Graye, having meditated for five minutes, said  
"All right!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### IDENTIFIED.

**D**ETECTIVE-INSPECTOR WIRLESCOMBE, at that time busily engaged in an attempt to unravel the mysteries of a case which presented features of unusual complexity, gave no immediate attention to the train of thought which had been aroused in him by Adrian Graye's visit. He recorded the visit and its circumstances in his mental tablets, memorised what he thought might be of value concerning it, and then put the matter aside for his more urgent affairs. But within a few days a fresh incident recalled not only it, but something of far greater importance to him.

This was a visit from Mr. Quarendon, who was shown into Wirlescombe's room one morning, wearing an air of great mystery. Wirlescombe had not seen the landlord of Austerlitz Mansions for some years, but he knew him at once, and his presence recalled all the facts of the Graffi affair. And with a keen sense of intuition he immediately conceived the notion that his visitor's call was not unconnected with that affair, and he wondered, remembering Adrian Graye's recent visit, if it was about to be revived. But, like all artistic men of his profession, he asked no instant question; instead he installed

Mr. Quarendon in the easiest chair at his disposal, gave him a cigar, complimented him on his evident good health, and waited for him to open the ball. It required only half a (detective) eye to see that the caller was bursting with news. And presently, having exchanged views on the weather, he came out with it.

"I say—you remember that affair at my place, Austerlitz Mansions? The affair—seven years ago, isn't it?—of old Graffi?" he asked, with a knowing look. "You were in it, you know."

"Why, of course," replied Wirlescombe. "I was in charge. Oh, yes, I remember—everything."

Mr. Quarendon looked more knowing than ever.

"Never heard head or tail of the girl, Gertie, since, eh?" he said.

"Not a syllable!"

Mr. Quarendon, who had grown stout and sleek, drew out a many-coloured bandana handkerchief, and rubbed his shining head.

"Well!" he exclaimed. "I'm not sure that I haven't. If I were a betting man, Mr. Wirlescombe, I should be inclined to lay ten to one that I have!"

"Oh, indeed!" said Wirlescombe. "How? Where? Where?"

"Well," continued Mr. Quarendon, still rubbing his forehead. "It's a curious story, but I'm certain there's a good deal in it, and that's why I came to you. Now, I don't know if you'll remember a man who gave evidence at that inquest, a man that was my hall-porter—name of Acock?"

"Charles Acock—I remember him. Also his wife," replied the detective.

"Just so. Well, now, it's about the wife—widow, rather—that I'm here. Acock's dead, and the widow lives near Austerlitz Mansions, and she goes there pretty regular to help with the cleaning and such like. Now, then, yesterday, she comes to me, and

she says, 'Mr. Quarendon, I was at the Mansions the other night, and as sure as I'm a Christian woman, I saw Miss Gemma!' 'Nonsense,' says I. 'No!' says she. 'I'll swear it!—I saw her coming out of Mr. di Spada's flat.' Now, then, what d'ye think of that, Mr. Wirlescombe? Eh? How's that for a bit of news in your line, eh?"

Wirlescombe, who had begun to think uncommonly hard as soon as Di Spada's name was mentioned, remained silent for a while, meditating. He was, in fact, linking up Mr. Quarendon's visit with Adrian Graye's. At last he looked up from his desk and nodded.

"Aye!" he said. "Um! Well, Mr. Quarendon, what I think of that is that I should like to talk to Mrs. Acock about it."

The proprietor of Austerlitz Mansions jumped out of his chair with an agility which was as conspicuous as his alacrity.

"That's just what I expected, Mr. Wirlescombe!" he exclaimed. "I knew you'd want to see her, so I brought her along with me in the 'bus, and she's sitting in one of your waiting-rooms at this minute. Shall I fetch her in, Mr. Wirlescombe?"

"By all means," answered the detective. He sat thinking deeply while Mr. Quarendon bustled away, presently to bustle back with his late hall-porter's widow. Wirlescombe favoured her with his most friendly smile as he waved her to a seat. "Well, Mrs. Acock, I hope you haven't forgotten me?" he said cheerily.

"Which I have not, sir, though not having had the pleasure of meeting you these many years, but remembering you, as I have oft remarked as a pleasant-faced gentleman that had a polite way of doing things in the unpleasant line," answered Mrs. Acock. "Oh, dear me, no, sir—I never forgets faces, as I observed to Mr. Quarendon there, a-coming along in the 'bus, sir."

"Ah!" said Wirlescombe. "Well, it's something to be remembered in that way. And so, Mrs. Acock, you think you've seen Miss Graffi again?"

Mrs. Acock sniffed, and looked hard at the various objects on Mr. Wirlescombe's desk.

"Which I don't think nothing about it, sir," she answered. "I'm as sure of it as I am that I'm a widow woman these four years, and that Acock died of the pneumonia within a week. No thinking, sir."

"And when did you see her and where?" asked Wirlescombe.

Mrs. Acock prepared herself for the narrative by sitting very straight in her chair, folding her gloved hands, and inclining her head to one side.

"Well, sir," she said, "to be particular it would be at ten o'clock on Tuesday night, which is night before last. And as to where it was, it was in the corridor outside Mr. di Spada's flat, which, as you gentlemen knows, was Miss Graffi's poor grandpa's flat before he was done in—excusing me for using of such a term, though expressive and fitting, as Acock once remarked to me and a friend of ours. Yes, sir, that's the where and the when!"

"Did you meet her face to face?" enquired Wirlescombe.

"No, sir, I did not," replied Mrs. Acock. "The way of it was this, sir. As Mr. Quarendon there can assure you, sir, I go so many days a week to the mansions to help in various ways. Now on Tuesday night circumstances kept me there late. As you may be aware, sir, there is in them mansions both a lift and a stairs. Now, I was cleaning of the stairs a little above Mr. di Spada's flat when I heard the outer door open, and I looks over the banisters, which, I won't deny it, was from nothing but curiosity, gentlemen. Not that I expected to see anything out of the common, but did the same from habit, as it were. And lo and behold! what should I see

but Mr. di Spada come out with Miss Gemma, who was at that moment drawing off a thick black veil over her head and face. It give me such a turn that I was obliged to go downstairs (them having previous gone down by the lift), and take a little something. For never did I expect to see her again, and especially not there!" concluded Mrs. Acock. "Oh, dear me, no, gentlemen!"

"You're quite sure that it was Miss Graffi?" asked Wirlescombe.

Mrs. Acock tossed her head and laughed.

"I'm certain, sir!" she answered. "Sure as sure ever can be in this wicked world. Of course, you'll bear in mind, gentlemen, that seven years is passed since her poor grandpa happened his misfortune, and at that age young women changes, her being then a slip of a girl, and now of a more what you might call growed-up figure, but I'd have known her face anywhere in a crowd—there ain't many girls has as much beauty as what she has."

"She didn't see you?" asked Wirlescombe.

"Neither of 'em see me, sir," answered Mrs. Acock. "It's my experience that if you happen to be looking down at people from over banisters or a upper floor it's very rare that they ever look up at you."

"You're evidently an observant person," said Wirlescombe. "Well—where did these two go?"

"He see her downstairs, sir," replied Mrs. Acock. "In the lift, of course, and then I hear the car whistle go. Then he came up in the lift again, and then, as I say, I was that upset that I had to go down and take a little something—me not being over and above strong, gentlemen, since Acock was took."

Wirlescombe looked at Quarendon, and rubbed the end of his nose with one of his pens.

"That seems pretty conclusive," he said. "Now, Mrs. Acock, have you spoken of this to anybody?"

"Not to a soul, sir, excepting to Mr. Quarendon



there," replied Mrs. Acock, with emphasis. "Which, when I was that upset by the shock, I was sore tempted to impart the news to Mrs. Jakes, as is now housekeeper at the mansions, more especially as she give me a little gin-and-peppermint, seeing I was overdone; but attributing the same to my heart. But, thinks I, no, not a word to nobody but Mr. Quarendon, which brought me here to see you, sir, this being the first occasion in my life wherein I was ever where the police are, and uncommon civil, I must say, not to say surprising tidy and clean as regards what rooms I have looked at."

Then Wirlescombe bade Mr. Quarendon take Mrs. Acock whence he had fetched her, and to come back to him, and when he returned he nodded his head at him as if in his absence he had come to some conclusion.

"I believe that woman's quiet," he said.

"So do I, Mr. Wirlescombe," said the landlord.

"So do I!"

"So that the girl is in London, or was on Tuesday night," Wirlescombe continued. "Now, I wonder why, and how often she visits Di Spada? By the by, do you know much of him?"

"No, very little," answered Mr. Quarendon. "In short, beyond the fact that he is a good tenant, pays his rent regularly, and seems to have a nice little number of pupils, I know next to nothing about him."

Wirlescombe, who had risen from his chair during Quarendon's brief absence, and was walking up and down the room, hands in pockets, sat down again on the edge of his desk. He looked at his visitor meditatively.

"Haven't you got an office at Austerlitz Mansions?" he asked.

"I have."

"Where is it in the building?"

"On the left-hand side of the hall, as you go in!"

"Do the windows command those approach steps?"

"They do, Mr. Wirlescombe. Standing in the window you can see anybody who comes."

"Have you a clerk in that office?"

"No, sir. I do all my own clerking and book-keeping. If I'm pressed, my daughter gives me what help I want."

"All right," said Wirlescombe. "Now, I want to know all about this man, Di Spada. I also want to know where this girl is to be found. I don't think she'll go there again, but he'll go to her. Now, I'll send along a likely young fellow who'll be supposed to be your clerk. Let him do what he likes. And somebody else—you'll never notice anything—will keep an eye on Di Spada's outside movements. Can you fix that—I mean about the inside man?"

"Certainly!" answered Mr. Quarendon, who was secretly delighted to be mixed up in a mystery. "Certainly. Let him come whenever he likes."

"This afternoon, at four," said Wirlescombe. "Now, then, a last point. Can you yourself identify Gemma Graffi?"

"I? My dear sir, of course I can!" exclaimed the landlord. "Lord, yes! If the woman outside can, so can I! I remember her face as well as I remember my own daughter's, which I saw two hours ago."

"Very good. Then for the next few days," concluded Wirlescombe, "keep me informed over the telephone of wherever you may happen to be every few hours, so that I can communicate with you at short notice. Better ring me up every morning, and tell me your movements for the day. And now run away."

"Yes," said Mr. Quarendon obediently. He made for the door, and lingered. "I say," he said, in a

whisper, "you—you don't think the girl really did it?"

Wirlescombe laughed.

"I think that if we catch her we shall be in the way of finding out who really did kill her grandfather," he answered. "Good-morning."

Mr. Quarendon noticed nothing unusual during the next few days. The young gentleman who came was very quiet, very well behaved, very unobtrusive, and made himself useful in little ways. Whether there were other young gentlemen about outside, Mr. Quarendon did not know. In fact, he knew nothing until he suddenly received a message from Wirlescombe bidding him meet him one evening at the Oxford Street end of Park Lane. When they met the detective took him down the lane to the doorway of a certain house, where they arrived just as an electric motor-brougham pulled up. Presently the door opened: a footman preceded a lady in elaborate evening toilet. And Wirlescombe felt his companion start as she passed. The motor-brougham passed away.

"Now then," said the detective, "who is that lady?"

Mr. Quarendon, from sheer force of habit, mopped his forehead.

"By the Lord!" he exclaimed. "Gemma Graffi!"

"Yes," said Wirlescombe. "Gemma Graffi. And also—Lady Wargrave!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE HOUSE-PARTY.

**A**DRIAN GRAYE, having once considered his friend Herbert's offer, and made up his mind upon it, though after only five minutes' thought, was quick to act on his decision. Before noon next day he was back in London. Before evening he had cancelled all his engagements, broken off all negotiations for taking a flat or bachelor apartments, and was on his way again to Ashendyke. And there he settled down to the humdrum existence of a country medical practitioner, taking a full share with Herbert in all that was going on. He worked hard, early and late, and was never so well satisfied as when he was at work. In their spare hours the two men talked long and much of all manner of subjects, from Graye's travels to the latest discoveries in medical science. But whatever subjects of other sorts they ever touched upon they never spoke of Lady Wargrave, and whenever Herbert saw his friend's eyes grow sombre, and his forehead ruffled, he made haste to lure him into the billiard-room, or to get him on to his doings in South America. Anything, he said to himself, to keep him off a matter which, truth to tell, was a mystery to himself.

But one day, several weeks after Graye's return to Ashendyke, Herbert, coming in from an afternoon's round of visits, and finding Graye lounging over the last number of the *British Medical Journal*, called him into the smoking-room, and commanded him into a chair.

"Look here, Adrian," he said as he filled his pipe, "We've got to have a talk. Got to, you understand. You know I'm not a gossip, but a country medico's got to listen to his patients now and then—can't help it. I've been at old Withers's, the estate steward's, this afternoon, and whether I would or not, I have to let the old chap gossip at his free will—I daresay it did him good. He, of course, knows everything that goes on in this blessed village—I don't believe that Mrs. Butters at the next cottage could run a needle into her thumb without his knowing of it within an hour!"

Graye made a half-audible growl within his moustache.

"Come to it!" he grunted. "Why all this prelude?"

"All right," said Herbert. "'Hurry no man's cattle,' all the same. Very well—here's the play, minus prelude. Lady Wargrave is back at the Manor."

Graye made no answer. But he was just then reclining for a match, and as he took it, Herbert, eyeing him keenly, saw his hand suddenly shake.

"Back at the Manor," continued Herbert, "and with her—a house-party. You know, or perhaps you didn't know, that the Manor is now thoroughly renovated from top to bottom, on the lines I suggested. Naturally, the trustees have done that first. The estate's being dealt with piecemeal. So perhaps Lady Wargrave is signalling the event. Anyway, she has come down here with a house-party—a small house-party."

Graye growled more audibly.

"What have I to do with this?" he asked defiantly. "I don't know why you tell me of it!"

"I tell you so that you mayn't have a sudden surprise, my son," answered Herbert. "I tell you out of consideration for yourself. You see, you might possibly meet Lady Wargrave face to face in the village."

"Well?" said Graye.

"I don't think that would be well. I think it might be very ill," said Herbert. "And I also thought that, perhaps, you'd like to be off—while they are here, for old Withers tells me they're not to stop long."

Graye looked up, and Herbert saw an expression in his eyes which made him begin thinking hard. With the quick look came a quicker laugh.

"If you think I'm going to run away because of a woman, Jack," he said, "you're a damned old fool! I'm not! Here I am, and here I stick. I suppose I can lift my hat to Lady Wargrave if I chance to encounter her on the green or in the village."

Herbert sat down and lighted his pipe.

"That's right, old chap," he said. "That's the way to take it. But—I think you ought to hear the rest of old Withers's gossip. After all, we're somewhat mixed up with the Manor."

Graye made a sound and a gesture expressive of impatient dissent.

"Oh, but we are!" continued Herbert. "And therefore I insist on your hearing. According to the steward, the people who have come down with Lady Wargrave are all her own compatriots."

"I see nothing surprising in that," said Graye. "Naturally, she prefers the society of her own compatriots."

"Quite so, but, when all's said and done, she's the widow of one English baronet and the mother

of another," said Herbert. "The idea of the trustees—eminently worthy, respectable, conventional English gentlemen both—is that Lady Wargrave should become anglicized."

"Is it? I wish 'em joy of the attempt to anglicize her!"

"So far, whatever attempt they have made has certainly been a good deal of a failure. I understand that they wished her to have a sort of duenna—English of course. Of course, she refused. Indeed, according to Withers, she has openly and defiantly told the trustees that she does not like English people, and that although she will remain on the estate for a certain portion of the year she means to spend most of her time in Italy. I learn from Withers that Lady Wargrave is in a very fortunate position—for herself. She has ——"

"It strikes me, Jack, that you're as big a gossip as Withers! What on earth have you got to do with Lady Wargrave's fortunate position?"

"She has five thousand a year to call herself absolute mistress of," continued Herbert, unmoved by Graye's exclamation. "And that's nothing to do with the provision made for the boy, and for the upkeep of the estate, and the town house. And in addition to that—just think of it, old chap!—Sir Robert left her a whole hundred thousand pounds, which is at her entire disposal. I mean, it's hers—her own. It isn't trust money. She can spend it all to-day if she likes. She can throw it away if she likes. She can make ducks and drakes of it if she likes. She can give five-pound notes to beggars and sovereigns to the village children wherewith to buy sweets, and nobody can say her nay. Ye gods!—fancy a young and beautiful woman, possessed of five thousand pounds a year, and a hundred thousand in ready money! What a fact in human life to—  
to contemplate!"

Graye sat up in his chair and, gripping the arms, stared Herbert long and hard in the eyes.

"What the devil are you driving at?" he growled at length.

"Driving at nothing. Merely mentioning a fact. I say—what a magnificent prize in the—marriage market. And—and what a rare chance for the needy and unscrupulous adventurer!"

Graye still kept his eyes fixed on Herbert.

"Look here!" he said. "I'm not good at mental gymnastics. And I say again—what the devil are you driving at? In other words, what is it you're waiting to say?"

Herbert groaned.

"You always were such a matter-of-fact chap, Adrian! I was only trying to intimate to you as delicately as possible that Lady Wargrave is fair game for fortune-hunters."

"Well?"

"And that the gentleman of whom you have heard something is one of the small house-party at the Manor."

Graye's face flushed.

"Di Spada?"

"The same. And, according to Withers, Di Spada is very much one of the house-party. In fact, the house-party consists of himself, his sisters, and his sister's husband. A—a sort of family affair, eh? And between you and me, Master Adrian, I should say that Lady Wargrave, poor innocent that I fear she is, is in—danger!"

For a moment Graye made no answer. Then he threw out his hands with a gesture of helplessness.

"What's the use in talking, Jack? What can I—what can we do? I called three times in Park Lane, and—of course, she didn't want to see me—why, God knows!" he exclaimed. "It's beyond me."

"Quite so," agreed Herbert. "But—I'm not sure



that it's beyond me, Adrian. Up to the time you saw her going off in that thick veil she'd been glad enough to see you, hadn't she?"

"I thought so. I believed so."

"Very well. Then, what's the obvious inference? Somebody's got some influence over her. Somebody's making her—*making* her, do you understand!—keep off what we may without exaggeration call her friends—old friends, if you like, and that's no exaggeration, either. Who can that somebody be but—Di Spada?"

"But—how do we know that?"

"How do we know that? Haven't we got brains, minds, intellects? Can't we infer things? Can't we deduce conclusions from obvious facts? Lady Wargrave ought to owe you a lifelong debt of gratitude for risking your own life to save her son's life—oh, yes, my dear fellow, it's all very well protesting and shaking your head, but she ought if she's a scrap of decent feeling left in her! And, for anything you or I know, she may have that feeling of gratitude as strongly as ever, and wish to show it as much as ever. But she refused you her presence in town, and I'll lay you a thousand pounds to a China orange that you're not asked up to the Manor while this house-party is on. Why? The inference is that she is being coerced. The Di Spada family have got hold of her. Now, why?"

Grave uttered a dismal groan.

"God knows! I don't," he said. "I can't understand it."

"Well, I've been trying to puzzle it out," continued Herbert. "I'll tell you what I think. I think Di Spada is probably blackmailing her, terrorising her. That's what I think, old chap. And I'm not quite a fool—at least, I hope not."

Grave clenched his fists.

"If I thought—if I was sure of that!" he growled.

"By God, I'd go up there just now and kick the fellow out!"

"Keep cool. That'll help her and everything best. But to me the thing is as plain as the proverbial pikestaff. Look here! didn't you ascertain that Di Spada was some assistant or pupil of old Graffi's?"

"Yes."

"Then, of course, Di Spada knew all about the murder of the old man. Now, then, do a little constructive reasoning. Di Spada, somehow or other, steps into old Graffi's shoes as regards the practice, or connection, or whatever it's called. He goes on with it. In time Gemma Graffi comes back to England as Lady Wargrave. Di Spada sees her picture in the papers—you know, it was in several cheap newspapers at the time of the home-coming. He recognises in Lady Wargrave Gemma Graffi. He makes enquiry; he finds out—easy enough to find it out, Adrian, my boy—that Lady Wargrave has one hundred thousand pounds and five thousand a year besides. He sees a magnificent opportunity. And he takes advantage of it. And so—Lady Wargrave visits Austerlitz Mansions, heavily veiled."

Graye listened to all this with set face and gloomy eyes. His pipe had long since gone out, but he still kept it between his teeth and bit hard on the stem.

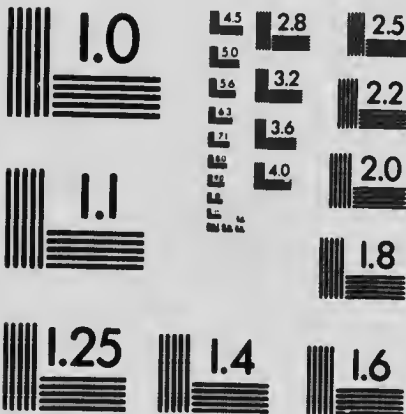
"After all, that's all theory, Jack," he said. "For anything we know, these people may be friends, even relations."

"Ladies don't go to see relations—gentlemen relatives—late at night, heavily veiled, and leaving their own residences by back or side entrances," observed Herbert grimly. "I don't deny that what I have put before you is theory, but I'll bet it's not far from the truth. Just think, man! Supposing this Di Spada is a clever and unscrupulous scoundrel, think how he could terrorise a woman who knows



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nothing of English law ! Theory or not, I say I'll bet any odds I'm not far off the truth. And you'll see that although she asked both you and me up to dine several times before she left the Manor, she'll not ask us now that she's returned."

In that prophecy Herbert proved himself correct. The two young doctors heard nothing of the people at Ashendyke Manor. Nor was Lady Wargrave seen in the village. Nor did any of her guests show themselves in the village. Around the big house and the great park there rested an air of mystery and silence as dark as the woods and trees which shut both in. Not even gossip, in full or thin stream, percolated to the thirsty soil of the village tea-tables. It was merely known that her ladyship and her friends were there, and all that the Ashendyke spinsters and the old men of the alehouse corners could say was that foreigners were, of course, vastly different to Christians, and must be allowed for accordingly.

And then, one night, as Herbert and Graye were smokin' a last pipe before turning in, their parlour-maid opened the door and admitted a lady who threw back her veil as she entered and revealed herself as Lady Wargrave.

## CHAPTER X.

### A CHILD'S LIFE.

TO John Herbert, detached from the feelings and emotions of the other two people who stood with him in his smoking-room, and therefore able in some sort to take a more or less disinterested and impartial view of matters, one pertinent fact made itself immediately evident as soon as Lady Wargrave had entered and the parlourmaid had closed the door upon her. She had not known that she was to find Adrian Graye there. At sight of him she paused, the colour flooded her face, she looked half in fear—a strange, vague fear which was indefinitely expressed in her features—half in appeal from him to Herbert. Before either man could move or speak, she herself spoke, or, rather, she unconsciously let the thought that sprang up in her voice itself.

"I did not know that Dr. Graye was here!" she said.

Herbert, recovered from his surprise, bustled into activity. He went forward, brushing Graye's arm as he passed.

"Clear out, Adrian!" he whispered. "Clear out!"

Graye turned away abruptly and went out by a

door which led into the surgery. Herbert took Lady Wargrave's hand and led her to the chair from which he himself had started at her entrance.

"Dr. Graye has been staying with me some little time," he said. "He is helping me. What can I do for you, Lady Wargrave?"

Then, seeing that she needed time to recover from the shock which Graye's unexpected presence had evidently given her, he added:

"I hope there is nothing wrong? And I hope you have not come down from the Manor alone? I would have come up at once if you had sent for me."

She shook her head, looking at him in a wistful, half-frightened fashion.

"Yes, I came alone," she answered. "It doesn't matter, Dr. Herbert—I know the way. I—I couldn't send for you. There are—reasons. I wanted to see you—very badly."

"You're not ill?" said Herbert quickly.

She shook her head, smiling in a fashion that indicated the nearness of tears, and Herbert felt thankful that Graye was out of the room.

"No," she answered, "I'm not. But I'm weary, unhappy, uncertain about my—boy. I want you to see him—somebody must see him!"

"Certainly," said Herbert. "I'll come up to the Manor first thing to-morrow morning. I'll go to-night—just now—if you like."

Watching her keenly as he was, he saw a look of something like terror come into her eyes, and she unconsciously laid her hand on his arm as if to stop him from moving.

"No, no!" she exclaimed. "I—I don't want you to come to the house. I want to—to arrange something."

"Not to come to the house?" said Herbert. "But—why?"

Lady Wargrave withdrew her hand from his

arm, and looking away remained silent for a moment. When she looked round again he knew that she was going to give him her confidence.

"I am engaged to be married," she said quietly, "to Signor di Spada, whom I have known a long time. Signor di Spada's brother, who is staying at the Manor, is a doctor. They would be very angry if I called in any other medical man. They say that is etiquette. Is it?"

Herbert gave her no immediate answer. There was something in her look, in even her attitude which seemed to suggest that she was asking for understanding and sympathy and help. And once again he was thankful that he had cleared Adrian Graye out of the room.

"Is it?" she repeated. "Ought I not to have come to you? No one knows—no one must know, please!—that I have come."

Herbert knew that he would have to speak, possibly have to act in a way which he did not yet foresee.

"If this gentleman is a medical man," he said slowly, "that you have already employed his services on behalf of your child, it would not be in accordance with the etiquette of the profession that you should come to me without consulting him. But—is he an English doctor?"

Lady Wargrave shook her head, looking her bewilderment at the question.

"I—do not know," she answered. "I know nothing. Lucien says he is a doctor."

"Wait a moment," said Herbert. He went across the room to a stand full of reference books, and took down a medical dictionary. "Di Spada is the name, eh, Lady Wargrave?" He turned over the pages, carefully searching. "He is not an English medical man," he said, replacing the book. "But he may,



of course, hold some foreign qualification. He has been treating the child, I suppose?"

Lady Wargrave bowed her head. Again Herbert saw in her eyes the dumb appeal—the searching for help against—what?

"Yes," she murmured. "Yes. But——"

She paused so long that Herbert felt he must prompt her.

"But you are not satisfied?" he suggested. "Well, can't you tell him so?"

Lady Wargrave began to twist her fingers together as they lay on her knee. She was obviously distressed and perplexed by something of which she dare not speak.

"They"—she used this term again, Herbert was quick to notice—"they would be so angry. Lucien and his sister say that Stefano is so clever. And Stefano says that nothing is the matter with the child except that English air does not suit him, and that he will be better when we return to Italy."

"You are going to Italy soon?" asked Herbert.

"Next month," she answered. "Next month."

Herbert considered matters a little.

"Perhaps Doctor di Spada is right," he said. "Have you any reason to think he isn't?"

"I don't know," she said. "I—I feel afraid, but I don't know of what I am afraid. He—my boy—seems to be—wasting. Oh! can't you see him?"

"But—how?" said Herbert. "How? Come, Lady Wargrave, can't you say to Doctor di Spada that you would like more advice, and suggest that you should call me in? That's the proper thing to do, and as a medical man he can't make any objection."

But Lady Wargrave shook her head.

"I daren't!" she whispered. "I—daren't! You—don't understand. But—if you could see

him—without their knowing? Couldn't you—please?"

"How could I?" asked Herbert.

"I thought of how," she answered. "You often drive across the low road in the Park, don't you?—I know you do, because I've seen you. Well, to-morrow Lucien and Stefano are going to town early. I will go out across the Park with the nurse—she knows I have come to you—and the child about noon and meet you there, by the Low Spinney. Then you could see him. Will you do this, please?"

"I will," said Herbert. "Be there at the Low Spinney as near noon as you can, Lady Wargrave. But—forgive me for asking you—is there any need for this secrecy? Remember—if your son's health, if his life, is in any danger, you ought to communicate with the trustees. If there is the slightest doubt about his health, you ought to have the very highest medical advice. The trustees would insist upon it."

"But—Stefano says there is nothing the matter with him but what I have said," she replied. "He says I am unduly anxious, simply because he is a little thin and doesn't seem to have any life in him. You will come to-morrow, won't you?" she broke off, turning to him almost passionately. "I seem so anxious—so anxious!"

"I shall be there to-morrow," said Herbert. "Now, about your going back. Let me walk back with you?"

But Lady Wargrave shook her head as she rose.

"Please not," she replied. "The nurse is waiting for me just within the Park—there is a private way into the house that we know. No one knows that I have come to you—no one must know."

"It is a pity," said Herbert quietly. "Is it absolutely necessary to have this secrecy?"

She made no answer, but gave him a significant

look as she held out her hand. Herbert took her out to the door; in the darkness without she spoke:

"Tell Dr. Graye that I am always grateful," she said in a low voice. "I—I did not know he was here. But I was forced to come to you. And you will be sure to meet me to-morrow?"

"To-morrow at noon," replied Herbert.

She glided away into the darkness, and Herbert, having waited until she had disappeared, turned back into the house. He stood in the smoking-room for a time, thinking. Then he went over and opened the surgery door. Graye, in his shirt sleeves, and with grim and set features, was engaged in making up various bottles of medicine.

"Come back!" said Herbert.

Graye finished what he was doing with great deliberation before he walked into the smoking-room. He sat down in his favourite chair, re-lighted the pipe which he had laid down when Lady Wargrave entered, and faced his friend. And Herbert, having given him one keen glance, nodded.

"Trouble," he said, laconically.

Graye spoke as abruptly.

"What?"

"Keep a tight grip on yourself, old chap! She's engaged to be married to the Di Spada man. And—I'll swear that she's been, or is being, forced into it!"

And he might have added, remembering Lady Wargrave's last words to him in the porch, "And I'll swear, too, that she's in love with you!" But he kept that to himself.

"Forced into it!" he repeated.

Graye gave no sign except for a tightening of the jaw, which, to Herbert, signified a good deal. For a moment or two he said nothing; when at last he spoke it was in a level and quiet tone.

"Why did she come here to-night?" he asked.

Herbert had already thought things out. Lady Wargrave had not asked for, nor had he given, any pledge of secrecy. There was no reason why he should not tell Graye all about the object of her visit. And so he told him of all she had said, briefly but fully.

Graye listened in silence. But when Herbert had finished he smote one hand upon the other.

"By God, there's foul play going on!" he exclaimed. "We must ——"

"Take your time," said Herbert. "We must—be cautious. There may be nothing in this. There may be a great deal in this. We can, at any rate, find out if this Stefano di Spada is a qualified practitioner."

"I'm not thinking of that," said Graye, calming down from his sudden outburst. "I'm thinking of—her. These people have got her under their influence. It's as you said, Jack, when I came back here. Di Spada's coercing her under threat of what. Exposure of the Austerlitz Mansions affair, of course! She'll be afraid for the child's sake. What one ought to do ——"

"Well, what ought one to do?" asked Herbert, as Graye paused. "What?"

"I suppose—have the whole thing re-opened and get her finally cleared," replied Graye. "I suppose so—I suppose so!"

"Would that be such an easy matter?" asked Herbert, pointedly. "In my opinion, it wouldn't."

Graye glared at him.

"All right, Adrian," said Herbert. "I say, in my opinion, it wouldn't. And you take my word, there's a lot more in this business than either you or I dream of. I wish I knew what would happen in the event of this child's death!"

"For God's sake, why?" exclaimed Graye.

"Never mind. But I wish I did," replied

Herbert. "I'll say more to-morrow, after I've seen the child."

He would talk no further on the matter that night, nor did he mention it next morning, and after he went out at ten o'clock Graye saw him no more until lunch-time, when he came into the surgery looking unusually grave. He drew Graye into the smoking-room.

"Now, Adrian," he said. "You remember what I said last night?—about what would happen in the event of the child's death. I've found out from old Withers that if that child dies, as there are no male relations and the entire estate is free from entail, everything will go, lock, stock, and barrel, to Lady Wargrave as her son's next of kin. She'd get everything. And—I've seen and examined the child."

"Well," said Graye. "Well? For God's sake, man, out with it!"

Herbert slowly drew off his driving gloves and threw them away.

"It's my opinion," he said, "that that child is being cleverly and devilishly—poisoned!"

## CHAPTER XI.

### WIRLESCOMBE HARKS BACK.

"**G**OD bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Quarendon. "God—bless—my—soul! This is what some folks would call—ah! now I come to think of it, I don't know what they would call it—I don't, indeed!"

"What do you call it?" asked Wirlescombe, as he led the proprietor of Austerlitz Mansions away up Park Lane. "I suppose you've got a name for it, haven't you?"

"I should call it about the limit in surprises," replied Mr. Quarendon. "I haven't got over it yet. Good Lord!—to think of little Gemma turning out a real, live lady. What do you say the name is—Lady Wargrave? Why ——"

"Hush!" said Wirlescombe. "Never mention names in public places—such as streets, squares, railway carriages, and the like. You never know who hears you. Come across Oxford Street. I know of what is commonly called a highly respectable hostelry where we can sit down in a real bar-parlour—none of your modern saloons, all gilt and glass and ginger-haired barmaids, but the good, old-fashioned sort, where you can be at peace in your

## THE KING VERSUS WARGRAVE.

own corner—and I'll stand you a drink and a cigar to revive you after your surprise."

"Surprise," observed Mr. Quarendon, as he followed the detective's lead. "Surprise is the right word. Only—it isn't strong enough."

In a quiet tavern and in an equally quiet parlour, Wirlescombe, having ministered to his companion and to himself, turned to Mr. Quarendon with a grave face.

"Now, Quarendon," he said. "This is an uncommonly serious matter. There isn't the slightest doubt that the lady we have just seen is Lady Wargrave, the young widow of the late Sir Robert Wargrave, the famous traveller, who died about eighteen months ago. Nor is there any doubt that she is Gemma Graffi also—no more doubt than that a coroner's jury returned a verdict of wilful murder against her in respect of her grandfather's death, and that I hold a warrant for her arrest."

Mr. Quarendon groaned.

"Good Lord!" he said. "You aren't going to execute it?"

"Not just now," replied Wirlescombe. "I want to know a bit more before I do that or anything else. I want, for example, to know more about your tenant, Signor di Spada."

"You haven't got to know much about him, then?" asked Mr. Quarendon. "Those young men of yours, now —"

"I haven't got to know as much as I want to know," replied Wirlescombe, interrupting his companion. "And I think you'll be very likely to help me to know more. There's no need to send my man any more to your office, but I fancy you'll be hearing something new about Di Spada in a day or two, and you must let me know at once. And, as to the lady—well, you'll keep that as quiet as the grave—not a word."

"Oh, trust me!" said Mr. Quarendon. "I'm—dumb."

He went away from the detective utterly mystified by what he had had revealed to him. And, before noon next day, he was down at the Yard, bursting with news. Wirlescombe, when he entered, was busily engaged with one of his subordinates. He was secretly amused to see Mr. Quarendon's impatience, and purposely kept him waiting in order to watch him.

"Well," he said, when they were at last alone, "so Mr. Quarendon has a lot of news to tell, eh?"

Mr. Quarendon stared as he mopped his forehead.

"How do you know that?" he demanded.

"Ah!" said Wirlescombe, winking. "That would be to reveal professional secrets, my dear sir. Well, of course, it's about Di Spada?"

"Yes," answered the proprietor of Austerlitz Mansions. "Of course, it is. I shouldn't have hurried down here fit to break my neck if it hadn't been! Perhaps you know what it is already?"

"I daresay I could make a good guess," replied Wirlescombe with a cheery laugh.

"Guess, then!" said Quarendon. "You chaps seem to be able to see through a stone wall."

"Scarcely that, but we do pride ourselves on being able to add two to two and three to five," answered the detective. "Well, I should guess that Di Spada is about to quit your mansions. Also that he's probably introduced a successor to you. Eh?"

Mr. Quarendon's jaw dropped.

"Oh, you do know, then?" he said. "Well, I needn't have come—I might have spared myself."

"I don't know anything," remarked Wirlescombe, nonchalantly. "Nothing at all, my dear sir. I merely made a guess from premises which seemed to be likely to warrant the guess. So he's going, and has introduced a successor, has he?"



Mr. Quarendon went through the mopping process again.

"He's going, and he's introduced his successor!" he repeated. "Successor! Two of 'em. One an Italian, like himself—t'other, a Frenchman."

"Excellent combination—for teaching European languages," said the detective. "Well, tell about it."

"It was this morning," said Mr. Quarendon. "I went to Austerlitz Mansions earlier than usual. Not long had I been there when in comes my lord di Spada dressed up like a Piccadilly duke—never saw him such a toff before! With him he brings two foreigners—Signor This and Monsieur That. I forget their names, though I've got them written down in my books. Mr. di Spada introduces them, and makes me a speech, after they'd all scraped and grimaced like a row of monkeys on a barrel-organ. Tells me that he has been smiled upon by the Goddess of Fortune and a lot more of poetical rot; that he's retiring, and that he's sold the goodwill of his teaching business to his friends the Signor and the Monsieur—more bowing and scraping then, Mr. Wirlescombe—whose characters, says he, are of the most honourable, whose talents are not to be denied, and whose financial status may be ascertained at the Crédit Lyonnais—which was the only really important matter he mentioned, you know, and turned out to be all right, as I've just personally made sure of on my way here. And then he proposes that to cement the new arrangement we shall ascend to his flat and crack the bottle. And uncommonly fine wine it was, too, I give you my word, Mr. Wirlescombe—Heidsieck, of one of the best years, and plenty of it—and extra good cigars. So there you are!"

"And did Mr. di Spada tell you anything of his plans?" asked Wirlescombe. "His future plans."

"Why, yes, he did. What are you going to

do with yourself now, then, signor?' says I. 'I suppose you'll want to enjoy those smiles that the goddess has been throwing about?' I says, humorous-like. 'Ah, yes!' says he, 'why not, my friend. For the present, I stay at the Carlton, while I make my little arrangements; then I go into the country on a little visit; then, as your grey and dull autumn approaches I go to my own country, where the sunshine is.' 'All right,' says I; 'but, dull or sunshiny, you won't get better champagne nor get better tobacco there than what you've managed to lay hold of here.' And then we all laughed, and I came away, to call at the Crédit, and to see you."

"So, it is evident Mr. di Spada is in clover," observed Wirlescombe. Mr. Quarendon winked.

"Up to the neck!" he replied tersely. "Up to the neck!"

That afternoon Wirlescombe, selecting the quietest hour, went round to the Café Aldobrandini. He had never been in it since the time of his visit in company with Adrian Graye; never seen Aldobrandini since the affair of the empty house and the finding of the unknown man's body. It struck him with a curious sense of the incongruous that when he opened the muslin-draped door and entered the unpretentious little restaurant, everything looked to be the same as when he and Graye had walked in that afternoon seven years before. Now, as then, the place was deserted, and the smell of the various meats and messes which had figured at the luncheon hour still clung about it. A half-asleep waiter lounged within the doorway nursing a napkin in one hand and an Italian newspaper in the other. Behind the little bar in the background, Madame, a little stouter, a shade older, was still reckoning up her accounts and her cash. And near her, reclining on one of his red plush-covered settees, his head reposing in a comfortable corner of the wall,

was the Signor Carlo Aldobrandini, taking forty winks after the coffee and *petit verve* and cigar with which he had comforted himself after the midday business of his establishment was over.

A sharp admonition from the lady brought Aldobrandini back to the contemplation of life. He started to his feet, rubbed his eyes, and after a keen glance at the detective recognised him and showed his white teeth. He, too, Wirlescombe perceived had grown a little in plumpness; also, he sported a fine gold watch-chain where, formerly, he wore a silver one. Wirlescombe gathered that the Café Aldobrandini was doing well. He lifted his hat to Madame with a polite bow and stretched out a genial hand to her lord and master.

"Well, Mr. Aldobrandini," he said. "You haven't forgotten me?"

"No, no, I have not forgotten!" exclaimed the Italian. "I have good memory for the face. It is Mr. Wirlescombe—oh, yes! What you take to drink, Mr. Wirlescombe, and you will join me in a cigar. Oh, yes—I have not forgotten that affair—no! All done with long since—eh? We sit down here and make ourselves comfortable, yes?"

Wirlescombe accepted Aldobrandini's hospitality, and sat down with him in a quiet corner. He lighted a cigar and sipped at the liqueur which he had chosen.

"I'm not so sure whether it is all done with," he said confidentially, in pursuance of his usual plan, which was to be as confidential as possible with people from whom help is possible. "Sometimes those things crop up again, you know."

"As your saying is, 'Murder will out,' eh?" said the Italian with a chuckle. "Yes—yes, it is a good saying!"

"Occasionally, it's true," agreed the detective. "More often it isn't. But I wanted to ask you a

question. You know, and have known a lot of your countrymen in London ? ”

Aldobrandini shrugged his shoulders.

“ A good many,” he answered. “ But—a good many that I don’t know, you understand.”

“ Why, of course,” said Wirlescombe. “ I was thinking, however, of people that would be likely to be known. Do you, for instance, know a man named Di Spada ? ”

“ Di Spada ? ” repeated Aldobrandini. “ What is he, this man, then ? ”

“ He is a teacher of languages,” replied the detective. “ A man of, I should say, thirty—good figure, but slight, black eyes and hair, moustache and pointed beard, smartly dressed.”

Aldobrandini shook his head.

“ There are a good many would fit that, eh ? ” he said. “ No, I do not know him by that name. But—you wait, and I speak to my wife. Like all the women, she know much more than the men, eh ? ”

Madame, having come to the end of her reckonings, had retired, with a bow and a smile to the detective, through the door which led into the hotel ; her husband followed her. He came back in a few minutes shaking his head and shrugging his shoulders.

“ No, well, that is one of the few things my wife does not know,” he said as he resumed his hat. “ Name of Di Spada—no!—though many black-eyed and black-haired ones come in here and wear moustaches and pointed beards, too ! But she suggest something, my wife—why not, she says, go to see Signor Carlatti, around the corner, who knows everybody—yes ! ”

“ And who is Signor Carlatti ? ” asked Wirlescombe.

“ Carlatti is an old fellow who keeps a book-shop where you can buy all sorts of Continental

literature," answered Aldobrandini. "All sorts—French, Italian, Spanish, Russian—everybody that isn't English, you understand—goes to Carlatti, so he know many. And if this man is a teacher of language, what so likely as that Carlatti knows about him, eh?"

"Just so," said Wirlescombe. "All right, I'll go round. Where is this place?"

"I go with you myself," said Aldobrandini. "I introduce you. You wait one moment while I prepare myself for this walk, eh?"

The proprietor of the Café Aldobrandini presently presented himself in a frock-coat and a silk hat, a pair of lemon-coloured kid gloves, and an exquisitely-rolled umbrella. He marshalled his companion with much state out of the restaurant and along the street, finally turning into a small alley, which seemed to be filled from end to end with heaps of ancient furniture. In the midst of all this confusion, he paused before a shop, the window of which, obviously uncleaned for years, were filled with rows of books and pamphlets in a more or less dusty and dirty condition. Piles of books, similarly neglected, almost filled up the doorway; it was with difficulty that Wirlescombe and his companion made their way to the gloom within. And the detective had to strain his eyes before he became aware that in the midst of the gloom and the untidiness stood as strange and as remarkable a figure as he had ever met in the strange world around him.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE BROTHERS DI SPADA.

THE figure which the detective contemplated, not without feeling a certain sense of uncanniness and mystery, was that of a very diminutive old man, thin and spare almost to the verge of emaciation, who was clad in a long, much-worn overcoat of the colour and shape affected by hunting men, and several sizes too large for its wearer, a butcher handkerchief swathed liberally about a bird-like and sinewy neck, and a black skull-cap, from beneath which peered out a face that was of the colour of old ivory, and seemed at first sight to be no more than a covering of wrinkled skin over an understructure of prominent bone. The teeth had disappeared from this living skull; the aggressive nose and the square chin nearly met, but the little old man wore no spectacles, and as Wirlescombe grew accustomed to the darkness of the place, he saw that the black eyes were as bright and active as those of a girl. He stood, staring and wondering, as the strange figure laid down a great folio and turned enquiringly to him and his companion.

Wirlescombe had given Aldobrandini permission to tell Carlatti who he was and what he wanted;

he stood by, listening without understanding, while the two Italians talked rapidly in their own language. And at last he caught the name "Di Spada," and saw the black eyes of the queer little man flash with a sudden comprehension and intelligence as they turned from the restaurant proprietor to himself. The next moment Carlatti had spoken softly to a curly-headed youth who was languorously sorting magazines into bundles in a corner of the much-cumbered shop, and had opened a door at the back of his counter. He stood aside, waving his visitors within with a polite, old-fashioned bow.

Wirlescombe walked inside, secretly wondering how it was that all men like Carlatti, whether dealers in books, curiosities, furniture, odds and ends, invariably live in the midst of apparently hopelessly-jumbled lumber. This parlour, or living room, or whatever its owner called it, reminded him of that other parlour in which, seven years before, Mr. Shipps, the second-hand clothes dealer, had received Adrian Graye and himself and had treated them to Schiedam and cigars—there was the same storing-up of all manner of things, the same dust, the same accumulation of objects which to Wirlescombe seemed worthless. And, apparently, the similarity was not to end there, for Carlatti had no sooner closed the door upon himself and his visitors than he took down a box of cigars from a shelf, silently offered it to the two men, and then, opening a cupboard, produced a tall, thin-necked bottle and three small glasses, which he proceeded to fill, also in silence. Aldobrandini, lighting his cigar, made expressive grimaces at the detective, winking at the yellow liquid which the old man was pouring out, and tapping his stomach with signs of supreme satisfaction at the prospect of tasting it. And Wirlescombe sipped what was given him, and took it to be one of those rare Italian wines which are

known little of in England, and he murmured some compliment to his host and wondered if this was how the old fellow kept up a connection between his spirit and what flesh he had left. For as Carlatti, himself having lighted a cigar and sat down facing his visitors, he looked more like the ghost of what had been a man than a living and breathing one.

And then Wirlescombe received a surprise. For the voice which came from the skull-like head was as clear and strong as it was low and sweet. And here, at any rate, was perfectly-spoken English and cultured English, as the detective was quick to observe. At the first words he became all attention, recognising that by sheer chance he had hit upon something out of the ordinary.

"And so, Mr. Wirlescombe, you are from New Scotland Yard?" said the bland and mellifluous voice.

"I am, Mr. Carlatti. Here is my card. I am much obliged to you for seeing me."

"And you want to ask some questions of me—about a man named Di Spada?"

"If you have no objection, Mr. Carlatti."

"None. But, I know, or, I should say, have known, two men named Di Spada. What is the Christian name of the Di Spada you are interested in?"

The detective pulled out his note-book and consulted a paper which he took from one of its pockets.

"Lucien."

"Just so. Lucien di Spada is a professor of languages. He lives at Austerlitz Mansions, in Maida Vale."

"That is the man, Mr. Carlatti. And—the other."

Carlatti smiled. He took up his glass and sipped thoughtfully at its amber contents.

"The other? The other is Stefano di Spada."

"And—who is he?"



"He is the brother of Lucien."

Wirlescombe paused in his questioning. He was not quite sure of his ground, and he did not know that he particularly wished for information outside the particular limits of his immediate needs.

"What I want," he said, after a moment's thought, "is any information I can get about Lucien di Spada."

"I am disposed to give you any information I can give, Mr. Wirlescombe," replied Carlatti. "I quite understand what you are, and I can make a shrewd guess why you want information."

"Do you remember the murder of Marco Graffi, at his flat in Austerlitz Mansions, seven years ago?" asked Wirlescombe, going bluntly to his point.

"I do. I remember everything about it. I have all the newspaper cuttings which concern it. I remember your name in connection with it."

"Did you know Lucien di Spada at that time?"

"I did."

"What was he doing then, Mr. Carlatti?"

"He was earning his living by giving lessons in French and Italian and in making translations for the publishers."

"A good living?"

"I should say he was just able to support himself."

"You know that he took over Marco Graffi's business or connection? Well, he had money, then. Can you account for that?"

Carlatti shrugged his attenuated shoulders.

"No! I heard of what he had done, and I was surprised. Up to then he had been very poor—very poor, indeed."

"Well, this brother—Stefano. What was, or is, he?"

"He was a medical man, practising amongst his poorer countryfolk, here in Soho."

"Where is he now?"

"That I do not know. I should like to know. He owes me money. He owes me for a set of valuable medical instruments which I obtained for him, and for a small library of medical works with which I supplied him. Therefore, I say, I should like to know where he is."

"But you know where his brother, Lucien, is. Haven't you asked him for information?"

Carlatti smiled.

"I have only seen Lucien di Spada once since he succeeded Marco Graffi. That is six years ago. I then asked him for news of his brother and reminded him of Stefano's debt to me. He replied that he had nothing to do with his brother's whereabouts or his affairs, and that Stefano's debts were not his. And that, of course, was true—and so I troubled Lucien no further."

"Then—this Stefano disappeared. How? Suddenly?"

"Suddenly. It was, now I come to think of it, about the time of the murder of Marco Graffi. He—just disappeared."

"And you have never heard of him since?"

"I have never heard of him since, and I can confidently assert that he has never been heard of again in the Italian quarter of London. I am in constant touch with people who would know if Stefano di Spada ever came back, and I have heard nothing."

Wirlescombe had no more to ask and he said so. The old man gave him a searching look.

"All this is, of course, between ourselves," he said. "I see you trust Mr. Aldobrandini; then, well, may I ask you a question? Then—is all this in any relation to the murder of Marco Graffi seven years ago?"

"It may have some bearing on it, eventually,"

replied Wirlescombe. "Why, have you any notions on that matter, Mr. Carlatti?"

Before replying to the detective's question, the old bookseller rose and refilled his visitors' glasses, greatly to the satisfaction of Aldobrandini, who smacked his lips with the gusto of the connoisseur and muttered praises of the wine in his own language.

"A great many notions," said Carlatti, resuming his seat. "A great many!"

"For example?" suggested Wirlescombe.

But the old man shook his head.

"To talk of notions," he said, "is to talk of air. We might waste much valuable time. But—I think, Mr. Wirlescombe, that if you found the murderer of the man who stayed with Aldobrandini here, the man whose body was discovered in the empty house round the corner, you would find the murderer of Marco Graffi."

Wirlescombe nodded. The idea was one which he himself had formed long before and had often thought over.

"Mr. Carlatti," he said. "Have you ever formed any conclusion as to what became of that girl?"

"Only that the running away of the girl had nothing to do with the murder."

"Where, then, do you suppose she escaped to?"

"Hundreds of young girls disappear in London, Mr. Wirlescombe. Disappear—for ever."

"Yes," said Wirlescombe. "And occasionally reappear when and where they are least expected," he said to himself. "Well, I am much obliged to you, Mr. Carlatti. I may call to see you again."

He went away with Aldobrandini, impressing the necessity of silence upon the restaurant keeper, and, returning to headquarters, interviewed two of his most trusted subordinates. To one of them he entrusted the task of keeping a strict watch upon Lucien di Spada, now quartered at the Carlton;

to the other he assigned the duty of observing the doings of Lady Wargrave. As to himself, he engaged in finding out everything that he could about the late Sir Robert Wargrave's marriage, the terms of his will, the financial position of the young widow. And for the hundredth time he took out his dossier of papers and documents relating to the Graffi affair, and for the thousandth time wished that he had been able to find out who the man was that he had seen lying dead in the empty house.

Ten days later old Carlatti walked into his room.

"I came to see you of my free will," said the strange old man. "I have news for you, Stefano di Spada has returned to London."

Wirlescombe's eyes asked for further information as he motioned his visitor to a chair.

"Yesterday," continued Carlatti, "Stefano entered my shop. He was evidently *en grande tenue*. He looked fat, sleek, prosperous. 'Ah, Carlatti, old friend!' said he, 'I come to pay you all that money I owe you! Confess, now, that you will be glad to see it.' 'You ought to pay me six years' interest on it, Dr. di Spada,' said I. 'That I will do with pleasure,' said he. 'I am in funds—I have prospered.' And therewith he made himself as good as his word."

"Good for you, Mr. Carlatti," remarked the detective.

"As I told you that he owed me money, I felt it due to him to tell you that he now owes me none," said the old bookseller.

"Just so," agreed Wirlescombe. "And—where has he been?"

"He did not tell me, except that he had been travelling about the world; also that he was quickly off again from London. And, further, that he and his brother Lucien had come into money."

"Ah!" said Wirlescombe. "That accounts."

But Wirlescombe did not tell Carlatti, nor Quarendon, nor anybody, that he was even then aware that Lucien di Spada, and Stefano, and Stefano's wife were quartered at Ashendyke Manor, and that every move of theirs was being faithfully watched and recorded and reported upon by his (Wirlescombe's) satellites. He remained patiently waiting, watching, investigating, until the right moment came, conscious that he was being posted in every movement. When the moment came, well, then—the world would know.

The moment came when, early one afternoon, a stylishly-attired young gentleman, who, from his appearance, might have been a simple-minded youth about town, came in and told Wirlescombe that the two brothers Di Spada had that day visited the Faculty Office at Doctors' Commons—where special marriages are obtainable by folk who have the wherewithal to pay for them.

Then Wirlescombe put the warrant for the arrest of Gemma Graffi in his pocket and set out for Ashendyke.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE TRUSTEES INTERVENE.

"**P**OISONED!" repeated Herbert, with emphasis. "Cleverly and devilishly poisoned! I'll stake all the professional reputation I've got on it."

Adrian Graye, watching his friend with sombre eyes, saw that Herbert was strangely moved. He wiped the perspiration off his forehead, yet this was a chilly September day, and his hand trembled as he put back his handkerchief.

"It's—hellish!" he said. "Hellish! And one's so—helpless."

Graye found his tongue. Up to then he had felt dumb.

"You didn't—didn't tell—her?" he asked.

"Tell—her! Not for the world—yet. But somebody's got to be told. It—it'll probably take a long time—that's the diabolical ingenuity of it. What devils!"

"You're sure of it, Jack?"

"Certain!"

Graye assumed a look of stern resolve.

"Shall I go up and have it out?" he said. "I will!"

"Not for the world! That would only make

matters worse. No! You must keep out of it. There's only one thing that I can see."

"Well?"

"The trustees. They've got the right to see this child, to know all about him. Now, if they would go to the house and take some big specialist with them—eh?"

"Yes. But—what about their reason for obstructing the big specialist?"

"A natural desire on their part to know how the young baronet really is."

Grave nodded.

"I see. That's good. But who are the trustees?"

"Old Withers told me that. There is some good in gossiping, after all, you see. A Mr. Cornelius Spilsbury, a London solicitor, is one; Sir Austin Wrexham is the other."

"Then—you'd better communicate with them at once, hadn't you?"

"I'll go up to town and see Spilsbury—yes, at once. There's nothing much to do to-day. You'll do it. Throw me that time-table, Adrian! Here we are, train at two-eighteen. I can catch that. They must intervene—they must see that child! Otherwise ——"

Thus it came about that at the very time that Wirlescombe left London with the warrant in his pocket, three elderly gentlemen got out of a train at Ashendyke Station and were met by Dr. Herbert, who had seen all three in town the previous day. The stationmaster and his satellites, who witnessed the meeting, could have told them that by the previous train Lucien and Stefano di Spada had arrived from London—but he could not have told them that by the next train Wirlescombe was coming as a consequence. Neither he nor they had any idea or foreknowledge of what that afternoon was to witness at Ashendyke Manor.

But, in plain truth, this particular September afternoon is full of events and of dramatic surprises. It is such a beautiful and calm September afternoon that no one, seeing and feeling it, would ever imagine that anything but peaceful things could happen upon it. And yet, to all the folk, the men and the woman who are being brought together on a small stage for an hour or two, it is anything but peaceful; it will be remembered for ever by all as a day on which many unpleasant matters came up to the surface of their life's sea, and insisted on being considered and—dealt with.

The three gentlemen from London go away with Dr. Herbert in his car; they are driven to his house in the corner of the green. He introduces them to Graye. One of them, who has heard of the affair from Herbert, congratulates Graye on what he did when the young Sir Robert Wargrave was attacked by diphtheria. And Graye blushes, and mumbles something to the great man; he has no desire to have that little affair recalled—it is of no importance. What is of importance is the urgent question of the moment.

"Now, how do we proceed, how do we proceed?" asks Sir Austin Wrexham, a nervous, excitable old gentleman, who may be choleric and a little hasty under provocation. "What do you suggest, Spilsbury, what do you suggest?"

Mr. Spilsbury, a portly, dignified man, who looks as if he ought to sit on the Woolsack instead of at his office in Lincoln's Inn Fields, waves a white hand.

"I have thought it all out, my dear Sir Austin," he replies blandly. "You and I and Sir Benjamin call on Lady Wargrave. We desire, as trustees under the will of the late Sir Robert, to assure ourselves as to the present state of health of his son, the present baronet. We have brought our friend,



the eminent physician, Sir Benjamin Broadstairs, to see little Sir Robert. And—Sir Benjamin sees him.”

Mr. Spilsbury pauses, clears his throat, looks round for approval. Finding no disapproval of his plans, he pursues the unfolding of them.

“Sir Benjamin—you can accomplish a little acting, Sir Benjamin?—sees, I say, the little baronet. He hums and he hahs—he hahs and he hums—in the correct fashion. He desires, then, to see the two medical gentlemen who attended the youthful Sir Robert in his recent illness, and begs they may be sent for. Your own car, Dr. Herbert, which we will ride up to the Manor in, and which will wait, will then fetch you and Dr. Graye.”

“Is that necessary?” asks Graye. “Do you really need me?”

“You must be there, sir!” replied Mr. Spilsbury. “I particularly desire you to be there. Let me resume. Dr. Herbert and Dr. Graye will come up to the Manor. They will consult with Sir Benjamin Broadstairs. And, upon the result of that consultation, gentlemen, will depend the ultimatum which Sir Austin Wrexham and myself will deliver to Lady Wargrave. I think that is all. Do you approve of my plans, gentlemen?”

Nobody disapproves; nobody has any suggestion to make. And so Sir Austin Wrexham and Sir Benjamin Broadstairs, and Mr. Spilsbury re-enter Herbert’s motor-car, and are whirled off to the Manor, all very solemn and dignified, and looking as if they were about to discharge some tremendous mission—as, indeed, they are, and one much more important than they know of. And, as they speed up the avenue of limes, they overtake a gentleman in clerical dress, who looks round upon them, and, recognising the solicitor, first nods to and then beckons him.

"The vicar," observes Mr. Spilsbury. "He wishes to speak to me. Stop the car, driver."

Mr. Spilsbury descends. He and the vicar greet each other.

"Let your car move slowly along," says the vicar. "I won't keep you a moment. So you are going up to the house? So am I. And perhaps you know why I am going?"

"Not in the slightest," says Mr. Spilsbury. "What is it?"

"I am going to marry Lady Wargrave to a Signor Lucien di Spada, who is staying there," answers the vicar. "By a special licence, got from the Faculty Office at Doctors' Commons this morning. Signor di Spada has shown it to me, an hour ago: it is all in order, and I can't help myself. But —"

The vicar broke off and shook his head.

"I don't like it!" he adds. "I don't like it!"

Mr. Spilsbury is silent from stupefaction. When he recovers his voice it shakes with many conflicting emotions and passions.

"God bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "What a disgraceful thing! And what a fortunate circumstance that I and my fellow-trustees have turned up in time. Here, Sir Austin, Sir Austin!—he must hear this. And there need be no secrets from Sir Benjamin Broadstairs, Vicar."

The other two gentlemen got out of the car. They, too, hear the vicar's story. Sir Austin becomes purple with fury.

"Outrageous! Scandalous! Highly improper!" he bursts out. "We must stop this, Spilsbury, at once!"

The vicar shakes his head.

"You can't!" he says. "Everything is in order. They can oblige me to marry them, at any time, in any place. That's the—law."

"The law be ——" begins Sir Austin. But Mr. Spilsbury checks him.

"Delay, my dear sir, delay is the thing! Vicar, you must on no account enter that house until I give you leave," he says. "We shall not be there very long—when we have done what we wish, there will, I think, be no marriage. We cannot be seen from the house here. Turn into the wood there, by that path, and wait. I'll take the consequences."

So the vicar turns into the wood, and the car goes on beyond it to the house, and the three gentlemen enter the satellites at the hall door knowing two of them to be what they are. And he takes their cards when he has ushered them into a morning-room, and they look at each other, and at the pictures on the walls, and at the sun-flecked lawns and deep plantations seen through the windows, as they wait for Lady Wargrave.

But Lady Wargrave is long in coming. Five, ten, fifteen minutes pass, and she does not come. And then Mr. Spilsbury, breaking the silence, says something under his breath, and is advancing to ring the bell, when the door opens, and in walks—a gentleman.

A foreign gentleman, this, obviously—and a very self-possessed one, who clicks his heels together as he makes a profound bow and smiles upon the visitors as he regards them alternately, with their cards held in his white hand.

"I am sorry, gentlemen, that Lady Wargrave cannot give herself the pleasure of seeing you to-day," he says suavely. "Lady Wargrave is engaged. Upon some other occasion—say to-morrow, or the next day."

Mr. Spilsbury, very majestic, appears on the front of his small army.

"Whom do I address, sir?" he demands.

The foreign gentleman exhibits that irritating smile once more.

"My name is Lucien di Spada, at your service, Mr. Spilsbury."

"Then, Mr. Lucien di Spada, be good enough—I don't know whether you are the new house-steward, or some new-fangled sort of butler, I'm sure; but, as you have brought a message, you can take a message—be good enough to tell Lady Wargrave that Sir Austin Wrexham and Mr. Cornelius Spilsbury, trustees under the will of her late husband, have called upon her, and desire to see her and Sir Robert Wargrave at once."

The other men, carefully observant, see a curious gleam flash into the Italian's eyes as Mr. Spilsbury rudely insults him. But the white teeth still smile under the black moustache.

"I shall not take your message," he says quietly.

"You will not, sir! By what right do you deny Lady Wargrave to me and my co-trustee?" demands Mr. Spilsbury.

"By a proper right. I am engaged to be married to Lady Wargrave. In fact, I am just about to be married to her. The clergyman"—he gives a sidelong glance at the window—"is on his way to perform the ceremony. It is all *en regle*, my dear Mr. Spilsbury. Lady Wargrave will not see you until she is—the Signorina di Spada. After that—at her husband's discretion. My discretion!"

Mr. Spilsbury looks at Sir Austin and at Sir Benjamin. He turns from them to the Italian. And, instead of bursting out into invective, he suddenly becomes very quiet in manner.

"Now, then, Mr. di Spada, let me be plain," he

says. "My co-trustee and I are going to see Lady Wargrave at once. At once, sir!"

"No!"

"Then let me tell you that there will be no marriage. I have already stopped that."

For a second Di Spada's face becomes livid. He looks as if he meant to spring, and Sir Austin (who has seen service) grips his walking-cane. But the next instant the smile re-asserts itself. Di Spada laughs.

"Impossible! It is, I tell you, all strictly *en regle*. I have your Archbishop of Canterbury's licence in my pocket. The clergyman has seen it; he will be here any minute. You cannot stop this marriage. Lady Wargrave is her own mistress, and independent of you."

"The clergyman will not be here, Mr. di Spada. I have stopped him. Ah! that makes you start. Now fetch Lady Wargrave and Sir Robert Wargrave—and at once!"

Di Spada is alarmed now. His eyes begin to shift from one face to another.

"Why do you wish to see the child?" he asks abruptly.

"In order that he may be seen by Sir Benjamin Broadstairs," answers Mr. Spilsbury. "We wish to have an eminent doctor's opinion on his health."

"He is being attended by my brother, who is in the house, and is an eminent doctor," says Di Spada sulkily. "And the child is quite well."

Mr. Spilsbury waves his hand.

"You will fetch Lady Wargrave and Sir Robert at once," he says. "At once, sir!"

Di Spada hesitates, considers, turns on his heel, goes.

"First round to us," mutters Mr. Spilsbury.

Sir Benjamin Broadstairs speaks—in his blandest tones.

"I think you may just as well send for the two young men now, Spilsbury," he observes. "They may be useful. And—tell the chauffeur to be quick."

So Mr. Spilsbury opens a window and sends the motor-car flying back to the village.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE LICENCE AND THE WARRANT.

ONCE more the two trustees and the famous Harley Street physician have, whether they like it or not, to resign themselves to waiting. They wait, indeed, so long for the appearance of Lady Wargrave and her son that the motor-car returns, bringing with it Herbert and Graye, who enter, looking as men look who expect to find themselves plunged into the midst of a scene. Nobody says anything much to them, but presently Spilsbury draws both aside.

"We were only just in time to stop something," he whispered. "Lady Wargrave and this man Di Spada were just about to be married by archbishop's licence. The vicar was on his way to perform the ceremony."

Herbert gives Graye a quick look. Graye tightens the muscles of his face and affects indifference.

"Then," says Herbert, "in my opinion, Lady Wargrave is being coerced. You are sure the marriage is not taking place elsewhere?"

Mr. Spilsbury starts at the mere notion of such a thing—surely the vicar will not disobey his injunction. And yet they have now been waiting more than a quarter of an hour and —

"I really think you ought to insist on knowing what is going forward, Spilsbury," says Sir Austin, who is growing restive. "As trustees we are not to be kept waiting in this ——"

But then the door opened. It opens to admit the elderly nurse, whom Graye had found bending over the little baronet on the night which saw him risk his own life. She has the child with her, in her arms; she looks from one doctor to the other with frightened, alarmed glances. But she is otherwise alone, and Mr. Spilsbury steps towards her in advance of the medical men.

"Where is your mistress?" he demands.

The woman stares at him.

"I don't know where Lady Wargrave is, sir," she answers. "I—I haven't seen her since morning."

"Who told you to bring this child here, then?" demands Mr. Spilsbury.

"Mr. di Spada, sir—Mr. Lucien."

Mr. Spilsbury turned to his co-trustee.

"Come with me, Sir Austin," he says. "We must find Lady Wargrave at once. While we are gone, will you medical gentlemen examine the child and question the nurse?"

Sir Benjamin Broadstairs and the two young doctors gather around the infant, who is fortunately unconscious of all the trouble and excitement his feeble existence is causing; the solicitor and Sir Austin Wrexham hurry out into the hall.

"This must be taken hold of in a firm fashion," declares Mr. Spilsbury. "We must insist—we must assert—we must be adamant. That there is foul play, or, at any rate, underhand work going on I am certain. Now, look at these fellows!"

The persons thus disparagingly alluded to are a man who is obviously a butler, and two youths, who are just as obviously footmen, and who are hanging about in the hall with appearances and looks which



signify as plainly as possible that they are very well aware that something unusual has occurred, is occurring, or is about to occur. Mr. Spilsbury knows none of them—they are all new servants, brought down from town with Lady Wargrave and her guests. To the butler, Mr. Spilsbury, sharp and authoritative in manner, addresses himself, noting his man as a sleek, smooth, shifty-eyed creature to whom he at once takes an instinctive dislike.

"Where is her ladyship?" demands Mr. Spilsbury.

The sleek and smooth one coughs deprecatingly.

"I'm sure I couldn't say where her ladyship is at this precise moment, sir," he says. "She might be in her boudoir, or in the south drawing-room, or in the east gallery, sir. Her ladyship often sits there of an afternoon, sir, with her fancy work."

"I don't want to know where her ladyship might be," snaps out Mr. Spilsbury. "I want to know where she is. You must find her at once—at once, and tell her Sir Austin Wrenham and Mr. Spilsbury wish to see her."

The sleek and smooth one turns languidly to one of his satellites.

"See if you can find my lady, Waters," he says.

"Send them both—and go yourself," says Mr. Spilsbury. "And be quick!"

The sleek and smooth person pays no attention to this. He nods at Waters, who moves away. He himself gazes abstractedly at a bust of Minerva which ornaments the capital of a green marble column. Waters's fellow-satellite gazes out of doors at the sun-flecked lawn.

"Did you hear me?" says Mr. Spilsbury, with rising wrath. "I said 'Send the other man, too, and go yourself!' Do you hear, man?"

The sleek and smooth one pulls himself up in solemn fashion. He looks Mr. Spilsbury up and down.

"I beg your pardon, sir, I did and do hear you! I also respectfully beg to observe, sir, that you have no right to give me orders. I am not your servant, sir. I am butler and house-steward to Lady Wargrave, and you have no right to order me, sir."

"Confound you, do you know who we are?" demands Mr. Spilsbury, stamping his foot. "Do you—do you?"

"Not in the least, sir, beyond your names," answers the sleek one, in a tone which implies that he is high above such matters.

"Then I'll pretty soon tell you!" vociferates the irate solicitor. "This gentleman is Sir Austin Wrexham, and I am Mr. Cornelius Spilsbury, and we are trustees under the will of the late Sir Robert Wargrave and guardians of the present Sir Robert, whose house this is. And now, you, sir, obey my orders at once, or it will be the worse for you!"

But the smooth and sleek one is cool as ever and imperturbable as ever.

"Excuse me, sir; but I shall do no such thing," he answers, quite unmoved by the angry solicitor's threats, which are accompanied by shakings and waggings of an admonitory forefinger. "I know my place, sir, and it is not to take your orders. You will excuse me, sir?"

"You—you ——" begins Mr. Spilsbury, half beside himself with anger. "I'll ——"

But the smooth person turns on his heel.

"Since you threaten me, sir," he says politely but firmly, "I shall retire."

And retire he does, down the hall, holding his head in the air and walking as if he were on velvet, while Sir Austin and his co-trustee look at each other in mighty surprise at his insolence. But then something happens that they do not expect—something that gives a new turn to events. For the remaining satellite, having watched the sleek and smooth

person carefully cut of sight, sidles up to the solicitor with an evident desire to speak. He even so far forgets his powdered head and his silk stockings as to smile—indeed, he almost winks.

"That's all bluff, sir!" he whispers. "It was Mr. di Spada's orders. Her ladyship isn't in the house."

"Not in the house!" exclaims Mr. Spilsbury.

"No, sir. Went off from the garden entrance with Mr. di Spada in a motor ten minutes since, sir," says the satellite. "Went down towards the village. Strikes me there's something up, sir, that's not quite right—struck me so for the last week, sir, and I'm going to leave."

Mr. Spilsbury thinks with the rapidity of lightning. Off with Di Spada—and Di Spada with an archbishop's marriage licence in his pocket! He knows what that means. And he clutches frantically at Sir Austin's sleeve.

"Come on, Wrexham!" he exclaims. "Come on—the motor! He'll do us yet—they're off, of course, to find a parson. Come on, quick!"

He bustles Sir Austin down the steps, bustles him into Dr. Herbert's automobile still waiting there, shouts—unnecessarily—to the chauffeur to hurry down to the vicarage, encourages him to speed with gesticulations. And, halfway down the drive, summons him to stop, seeing the anxious face of the vicar peering at them from behind a clump of glossy-leaved azaleas. Mr. Spilsbury springs out and rushes with astonishing agility over the turf in the clergyman's direction.

"Keep close—keep close!" he cries, motioning the startled cleric backward. "Keep close! Go right away into the woods. Hide yourself—lose yourself! Go away, go away!"

"B—but!" interjects the vicar. "B—but—they've gone away! I saw them."

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"Who? Who?" demands Mr. Spilsbury.

"Lady Wargrave and Di Spada," answers the vicar. "I saw them motor past here several minutes ago."

Mr. Spilsbury groans—a new thought occurs to him.

"You've a curate, haven't you? Yes? Where does he live?—quick!"

"Next house to Herbert's—green palings in front. Why?"

Mr. Spilsbury does not tarry to explain whys or wherefores. He motions the hiding clergyman to retire into the deeper shades behind his present ambuscade, and running back leaps into the car and bids the chauffeur to make a dash for the curate's.

"That's where they'll have made for," he says, explaining matters to Sir Austin Wrexham. "Heaven send the curate's got sufficient sense to delay matters until he has seen his vicar. But the devil of it is, Wrexham, that those licences require a clergyman to marry a couple at any time, in any place; on sight, in fact. Gad! I hope we can catch 'em."

So eager is Mr. Spilsbury to catch them that he darts out of the car the instant that it stops at the curate's door, and without ceremony opens the door and darts into the house, closely followed by Sir Austin. And they dart into a room in which are quite a number of people—Lady Wargrave, and Lucien di Spada, and a man who is uncommonly like Lucien di Spada, and is, most likely, his brother Stefano, and a lady who is very foreign in appearance, and is set down as Stefano di Spada's wife, and another lady, who looks much surprised, and must be the curate's wife, and the curate himself, a quiet-looking young man, who is obviously much disturbed and puzzled, and who is speaking as the two interrupters rush in.

"— And I should much prefer that you would see the vicar," says the curate. "This is so irregular that —"

"That it must go no further, sir!" vociferates Mr. Spilsbury. "I have just come from your vicar—I am one of Sir Robert Wargrave's trustees, and this is the other, Sir Austin Wrexham—and this must be stopped. Lady Wargrave, your arm? You must return with me to the Manor until the physicians have examined your son. After that," he continues, with a glance at Di Spada, "after that, you can marry this man—if you like. But—I think you won't like. Come, Lady Wargrave."

Sir Austin Wrexham, who has been watching Lady Wargrave keenly and closely, has come to the conclusion that she looks like a woman who scarcely knows what she is doing. Her face is almost vacant; her eyes stare from one to the other; she takes the old solicitor's arm mechanically. And Sir Austin suddenly pushes Di Spada aside and himself forward and takes her other arm in a firm hold.

"Come, Lady Wargrave!" he says in his old soldier tone. "Come!"

Di Spada tries to bar the way. His face is livid; his eyes glitter; the smile has become a scowl.

"This is an outrage!" he cried. "Lady Wargrave is being coerced. The law —"

"Mind the law doesn't put a finger on you, my man!" says Sir Austin. "Stand out of the way!"

And as Di Spada does not obey orders, Sir Austin calmly takes him by the collar and throws him aside. In another moment he and Mr. Spilsbury and Lady Wargrave are in Dr. Herbert's automobile and speeding back to the Manor. And the old lawyer, having recovered his breath, leans forward and lays a not unkindly hand on Lady Wargrave's arm.

"Lady Wargrave," he says, in fatherly fashion, "think of what you are doing."

She stares at him, wonderingly. At last she shakes her head.

"I—do—not—know—what—I—am—doing," she says. "I—am—confused."

And she still looks confused when the two gentlemen help her out of the car, and into the house, and into the room where the doctors await them. And so anxious are they about her that they do not notice a pleasant-faced, portly gentleman, who, with another gentleman, is standing in the hall—watching.

They lead Lady Wargrave into the room. She looks about her—she suddenly recognises Adrian Graye. And, with a sudden cry, Lady Wargrave faints, and it is Adrian Graye who catches her and lays her down. And then Herbert and he must bring her to—and while they are so engaged, Sir Benjamin Broadstairs approaches the two trustees.

"Doctor Herbert is right," he says, in a low voice. "The child was being slowly poisoned. But we shall save him. And ———"

He pauses as the door opens, to admit the two men whom Mr. Spilsbury had not perceived in the hall. Mr. Spilsbury looks round. And just then Adrian Graye chances to look up—and recognises Wirlescombe. And with a sure and certain intuition he knows why Wirlescombe is there.



*PART THE THIRD.*  
*FROM A LIVING TOMB.*

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CHAPTER I.

BOW STREET.

OUTSIDE the solid mass of the police-court in Bow Street an equally solid mass of men and women has waited all this grey, autumn afternoon—waited in spite of a light, drizzling rain which never becomes heavier, and yet shows no sign of stopping, will not stop, in fact, say the weather-wise, until the day is over. It is a crowd of all sorts and conditions of people: there are in its midst, crowded as near the substantial walls as they can get, taking up nooks and corners of doorways where the police will good-naturedly permit them, fine ladies who would cheerfully have paid the price of a box at the Opera across the way to be allowed to get even a cat's corner in the court itself. Some of them have escorts, idle as themselves; some have none—yet there are men of their own class in the crowd, loungers, men about town, who have been tempted from their usual haunts further west in the hope of getting admission or of hearing something that may whet their jaded



appetites for still greater sensation. There are units there, too, which represent another strata in the social face of things which these Bow Street affairs cut into so ruthlessly—middle-class ladies from Brixton and Peckham, Highbury and Maida Vale, who have read such taking reports in the papers which are not illustrated, and seen such pictures in those which are illustrated that they felt—household duties being over for the morning, and a good digestion following the midday dinner—that they must really draw near to the very centre of things and hear what there is to hear before linotype machines or compositors can set up the news for the press. And mingling with these, and just as anxious to pick up any stray scrap of information that filters out from the court, are many folk of another strata, lower in the scale, but sharing with their supposed betters an insatiable curiosity. There are ladies from the purlieus of Drury Lane and Endell Street, and from the barrack-like buildings raised high on the site of what was once Clare Market; they stand with arms akimbo and talk much in hoarse whispers; now and then they resort, as of one mind, to some neighbouring hostelry, and honour the good old London habit of drinking gin, as all their ancestors did before them. With them, and greatly favoured of them, are the male habitués of the district—the porters, the hangers-on, the nondescripts of Covent Garden. There are flower-girls there, large-hatted, much beshawled, who have been selling autumn flowers all the morning; there are youths who have been mixed up with the kindly fruits of the earth since before the sun rose over the London chimney-pots; they laugh, they jest; now and then, where there is room, they indulge in merry horse-play, but like the society dame from Mayfair and Mrs. Smith from Camberwell, they never forget their curiosity and their anxiety to

know what is going forward. It is not every day that a lady of title is charged with a particularly cruel and callous murder ; it is not once in a score of years that a murder is surrounded with such romantic circumstances. And this afternoon the proceedings before the magistrate must inevitably come to an end, and he must decide whether there is a *prima-facie* case against Lady Wargrave or not. Not that it would matter greatly if he thought that she might be dismissed from the charge which the police have brought against her, for there is always that verdict standing which twelve jurymen—men, let it be remembered, of probity and honour and all the rest of it—gave against her seven years ago in the coroner's court in the corner of Paddington Green.

Those in the crowd who have followed the case know exactly where it stands. They know that Lady Wargrave, widow of the famous traveller and explorer, and a very beautiful young woman, mother of the youngest baronet in the United Kingdom, rich and, but for the loss of her elderly husband, highly favoured by fortune, has been arrested on a double warrant—that originally granted to the police and that issued by the coroner—and charged with the murder of her grandfather, an old teacher of languages, named Marco Graffi, who resided at Austerlitz Mansions, in Maida Vale. They are aware of all and every circumstance that happened seven years ago. So absolutely *au courant* are they with the early history of the affair Graffi that they now pay little attention to it, and are much more interested in its recent developments. The arrest of Lady Wargrave at her—or her, in fact, son's—beautiful place in the country has made the great autumn sensation. Those modern productions of the newspaper press which provide oceans of pictorial representation and trickles of print have

catered well and generously for their patrons. There have been as many photographs of Lady Wargrave as sweating and striving photographers, snapshotters, and free-lances of the camera could manage to take. There have been pictures galore of Ashendyke Manor—never, surely, was country house so much sought after by photographers, never were park-keepers, butlers, housekeepers, domestics, male and female, so generously bribed, fee'd, tipped. Ashendyke Manor from the east, and the west, and the north, and the south. Ashendyke Manor—the Pleasure Gardens; Ashendyke Manor—the Dutch Gardens; Ashendyke Manor—Lady Wargrave's favourite corner of the lawn; Ashendyke Manor—Lady Wargrave's Boudoir; Ashendyke Manor—Lady Wargrave's Rustic Seat in the Woods overlooking the famous Water-Lily Pond; Ashendyke Manor—the Morning Room, where the arrest by Detective-Inspector Wirlescombe took place in the presence of Sir Benjamin Broadstairs, two doctors, and the family trustees. And as with Ashendyke, so with the other places with which the affair is concerned. Park Lane, London—the town residence of Lady Wargrave. Austerlitz Mansions, Maida Vale—exterior. Austerlitz Mansions, Maida Vale,—interior of flat sometime tenanted by Marco Graffi and the accused. Room in the flat in which the murder of Professor Graffi took place—the bed and the furniture still left as they were in the murdered man's time. And so on, and so on; and as with scenes, so with people. Portrait of the young Sir Robert Wargrave. Portraits of Sir Austin Wrexham, and of Mr. Spilsbury, Sir Robert's trustees. Portraits of all the principal witnesses in the magisterial investigation. Portraits—several—of Detective-Inspector Wirlescombe. Portraits of Dr. Adrian Graye, who is so romantically mixed up in the Wargrave mystery. Dr. Graye entering the court

Dr.[Graye leaving the court. Dr. Graye in a Norfolk jacket. Dr. Graye in a silk hat. Dr. Graye rolling up his umbrella. Nothing escapes the small army of press photographers ; they and their cousins, the reporters, and their relations, the free-lance contributors (successors to the gentlemen, who were popularly supposed to be paid a penny a line for whatever they were lucky enough to get into print), reap a good little harvest, and they and their public are on good terms.

But there are two strange features of this Wargrave affair which those who are most concerned with it cannot understand. To Adrian Graye ; in a lesser degree to John Herbert ; in a still lesser degree, taking the matter in a personal fashion, but in a much greater degree, taking it in a professional one, to Mr. Kenrick (of Kenrick, Baggs, Baggs and Kenrick, of Bedford Row, eminent solicitors retained by Graye to defend Lady Wargrave), and to Mr. Beddleston, K.C., M.P., very eminent counsel retained and instructed by Kenrick, Baggs, Baggs and Kenrick on behalf of their fair client, these features are of the most serious moment. They think of them all day : they are always thinking, wondering, speculating, about them. Beddleston says to Kenrick that something must be done ; Kenrick says the same thing to Graye ; they all say it to each other. But the question is—What is to be done ? And who is to do it, if, by any possible chance, it is found out what that which must be done really and truly is.

The first of these two serious matters is the utter and entire disappearance of the Di Spada tribe. On the surface of things it looks as if the Di Spada tribe—or the three members of it which have come into the affair—have nothing to do with the Graffi sensation, nor with Lady Wargrave's connection with it. But the newspaper men of to-day have

keen noses and sharp eyes where news is concerned, and village folk will talk, and servants, however well-regulated, and well-behaved, and well-disposed towards their masters and mistresses they may be, will talk, and some inquisitive individual finds out that when the trustees carried off Lady Wargrave from the residence of the Ashendyke curate, and left Lucien di Spada and Stefano and Mrs. Stefano di Spada behind them, the three Italians were left in another sense. At any rate, nothing has since been seen of them: they have vanished; they are, as it were, sunk into an obscurity from which they apparently do not purpose to emerge. According to Mr. and Mrs. Curate, the three Di Spadas, giving each other expressive glances after the trustees had carried off Lady Wargrave, went out to their motor-car (one of the several motor-cars belonging to Ashendyke, but on this occasion driven by Stefano) and drove off without as much as a farewell, even of the curtest description, to the lady and gentleman whose dwelling they had just vacated. Mr. and Mrs. Curate, simple folk to whom all these doings seemed fraught with exceeding mystery, watched them depart and observed that the automobile was directed towards the railway station; but enquiry showed that it never reached the railway station; further enquiry revealed the fact that at a point between Ashendyke village green and the railway station it was turned into a by-lane which communicated with a highway some two miles off; still further enquiry showed that the car was seen, later on, careering at a smart pace in the direction of the county town and, presumably, of London. No one, however, seemed to have particularly observed it in the county town; certainly no one had observed it in London. And there was no more to be heard of the two brothers and the lady who was with them—save one small fact which might or might not be

important and significant. On the morning after this retreat, Lucien di Spada had called, very early, at a bank wherein he had certain moneys lodged; these moneys he had withdrawn. And previously, according to the bankers, he had transferred a large sum from this bank to a bank in Paris. Beyond this, no news of Lucien, or of Stefano, or of Stefano's wife, came to hand. They had simply gone clear and clean away.

But—as Wirlescombe pointed out—there was no charge against any of the Di Spadas. There might have been. Sir Benjamin Broadstairs and the two young doctors were unanimously of opinion that the young Sir Robert had been and was being tampered with, and probably by some exceedingly subtle means of poisoning, but there was no evidence to show that the Di Spadas were administering that poison. According to the nurses, the young baronet was always most carefully and jealously watched by them; it was beyond them to conceive how anybody could tamper with him. Dr. Stefano di Spada had certainly been attending him, but he had never administered any drug, medicine, dose of any description to him, had never, emphatically declared the head nurse, been left alone with him. No, as Wirlescombe pointed out once more, there was no charge against the Italians. It was no crime on the part of Lucien to plot and scheme and contrive a hurried marriage with Lady Wargrave; no crime on the part of Stefano and his wife to aid and abet him.

And yet, why had the Di Spadas flown so suddenly, so abruptly? Why had they not awaited events? No exercise of speculation or ingenuity of thought could answer those questions. The pertinent fact was—they were gone. What was more, it appeared to be evident that they had no intention of returning. For in the by-lane down which their motor-car had

turned to reach the high road, one of the inquisitive newspaper men found some torn scraps of official-looking paper, and piecing these together, discovered them to be parts of the special marriage licence granted at Doctors' Commons to Lady Wargrave and Lucien di Spada.

So much for the first of the serious matters which trouble Lady's Wargrave's friends, and her solicitor, Mr. Kenrick (the younger of two Kenricks who, with one Baggs and another Baggs form the famous Bedford Row firm) and her counsel, Mr. Beddleston. It is serious, this disappearance, because everybody feels that there is some reason for it which is, must be, connected with the case. But it is not as serious as the second matter—not nearly so serious. And the second is that up to now Lady Wargrave will give no assistance to her solicitor, her counsel, her friends. They have talked, argued, cajolled, beseeched, explained the foolishness of silence; Lady Wargrave will say nothing. She maintains a dull, apathetic silence; Graye has wondered if she is bewitched, or hypnotised, or if the shock has affected her in some slight mental degree. She hears all that is said to her, and makes no more reply than a stare: she is like some child to whom a patient teacher explains a lesson over and over again and who shows neither interest nor understanding. They implore her to tell them her own version of the affairs of that night of the great fog; she only shakes her head. They beg her to tell them how she escaped, where she went, what she did between the time she left London, and the time of her marriage to Sir Robert Wargrave; she seems, in some strange fashion, unable to tell them anything. Only one thing has she told them; only one thing admitted to them. That is that although she was married to Sir Robert Wargrave in another name, she is, always was and has been, Gemma Graffi.

Through the waiting crowd in Bow Street, Dr. Herbert, specially armed with a pass, makes his way that grey autumn afternoon. He gets into the closely-packed court; he finds a corner near Adrian Graye; he looks round. The place is packed to suffocation; there are famous people on the bench with the magistrate; everywhere are faces, faces, faces. And in the dock is Lady Wargrave, and at this moment she is talking over its edge to Mr. Beddleston, who, in his turn, occasionally talks to Mr. Kenrick. Mr. Beddleston and Mr. Kenrick are plainly much perturbed; they shake their heads; they seem inordinately anxious that Lady Wargrave should not do something or should do something else; and Lady Wargrave, judging by her face and expression, seems determined to do what she pleases. And the whispered conversation lasts so long that at last the magistrate intervenes and wants to know what it is all about. Mr. Beddleston turns to the bench, much perturbed.

"My client, your worship, is disposed to take a course which I do not advise," he answers.

"Indeed, she is more than disposed; she is determined."

The magistrate glances benignly in the direction of the dock. His look is a question, and Lady Wargrave, up to then taciturn, suddenly appears feverishly desirous of speech.

"I want to tell all I know about it," she says eagerly. "I—I think I ought to—now."



## CHAPTER II.

### COMMITTED FOR TRIAL.

SO here is one of those curious, unforeseen, in certain ways, unfortunate situations which will arise in courts of law when ladies who of course know nothing whatever about law and less of legal procedure, suddenly take it into their heads to say or do something which is outside the fences of red tape and the usual run of things. In the minds of all the legal gentlemen present, from his worship on the bench and the learned counsel, and the equally accomplished solicitors below him, to the veriest messenger whose long experience has, in his own opinion, qualified him for the office of Lord Chancellor, there is but one thought—that at this stage of the proceedings it would be far better, far wiser, for Lady Wargrave to say nothing at all, to reserve her defence for that trial to which she will surely be committed. The magistrate looks at Mr. Beddleston: Mr. Beddleston hurriedly consults Mr. Kenrick; Mr. Kenrick and Mr. Beddleston engage in earnest conversation with Lady Wargrave. But Lady Wargrave, being of that feminine mind which, having decided upon a course of action, desires to enter upon it there and then and is not to be dissuaded by masculine argument, shakes her

head. Moreover, unlike her counsel and her solicitor she does not whisper ; she speaks up, clearly and without fear.

" I want to tell all about it," she repeats, looking at the magistrate. " At first I didn't, but now that I have heard all that everybody has had to say, I do. Let me tell you all I know about it, and then you will see that I did not kill my grandfather, and all this will be explained, and I can go away, and it will be all done with."

There are smiles in the crowded court ; most people think the beautiful prisoner in the dock is very ingenuous ; there are some, however, mean, suspicious people, who think (and whisper so to their next-door neighbours) that she is sly and designing. Mr. Beddleston twitches his gown in despair ; Mr. Kenrick groans and shrugs his shoulders ; all over the packed seats and benches there is a new and an exciting interest. The magistrate, having smiled indulgently, leans forward and lucidly explains to the prisoner that the explaining, the winding-up, the going-away, the getting-it-over-and-done-with process is not such an easy matter as she evidently supposes it to be ; there is a *primâ-facie* case against her, and as he sees the case at present it will be his duty to commit her for trial ; therefore she had better leave herself in the hands of her legal advisers. The legal advisers nod their heads solemnly and regard his worship with the reverence due to a veritable Daniel. But Lady Wargrave only stares at him as round-eyed children stare when somebody gives them advice which they have no mind to take.

" But you haven't heard what I have got to say," she says, with a refreshingly candid and strong emphasis on the personal pronoun. " I can tell you all about it. Because, of course, I had nothing to do with my grandfather's murder. Why cannot

I tell you what happened to me that night, and afterwards?"

Unconsciously, Lady Wargrave has here struck a note which rings keen and true on everybody in court—not excepting the legal gentlemen, perhaps, not even excepting the worshipful magistrate. For what are all those people here for but for curiosity, and what is but curiosity which lies behind the formalism of the law? Everybody begins to wonder what it is that Lady Wargrave wants to tell: the newspaper reporters prick up their ears and metaphorically put new points to their pencils; the great folk who have been accommodated with seats on the bench spur themselves to renewed mental activity; the habitués of Bow Street who have known how to get good seats in the public benches nudge each other and give it as their opinion that now they're a-going to hear something. And that they are seems very evident from Lady Wargrave's attitude. For she sticks to her point.

"Why cannot I speak?" she asks again, with still stronger emphasis on that essentially feminine personal pronoun. "I want to tell what I know. Because it is only I who do know it. And I can soon tell it, and then you will see that I ought to be released. It is ridiculous to say that I killed my grandfather."

It is obviously ridiculous to attempt any prevention of Lady Wargrave's right of speech—she brushes aside etiquette, the ideas and opinions of her sense of law, as unconcernedly as boys brush off the dust from a butterfly's wing. And so she presently speaks, and those—which means every man and woman there—who watch her quickly see that whoever and whatever the young widow of Sir Robert Wargrave is or has been, she is certainly little more than an ingenuous child who desires to tell the plain truth, and tells it simply and artlessly.

And three men in particular, Graye, Herbert, and Wirlescombe, know in listening to her that they are at last hearing the truth about a mystery which has puzzled them for seven long years.

"It is all true that Mr. Graye has told you about that very foggy night," says Lady Wargrave, facing the magistrate and speaking without nervousness or timidity. "It is all true—that is, as far as he knew about it. But then, there were things that he did not know. It is those things I want to tell you about. It is quite true that I told Mr. Graye that I was not happy in London, and that I asked him to speak to my grandfather to let me go back to Italy. But I did not tell him that I was already arranging, or rather had arranged, to go back—only I did not know when I should go. I had been arranging, plotting, you would call it, with a friend of mine to run away. And as it happened it was that very night—the night of the fog—that my friend came."

Lady Wargrave paused for a moment, and glanced at Adrian Graye, who, arms folded and head bent, is listening anxiously and nervously. As for the folk in the court, they are already all agog to know who this friend is of whom Lady Wargrave speaks, and Lady Wargrave goes on after that glance calmly as before:

"Mr. Graye said that I went into my room. Yes—I heard him and my grandfather talk for some little time; then the flat became quiet, and I knew that they had gone to their rooms. And I went to sleep, and slept soundly, and I heard nothing, no, no sound at all, until I suddenly awoke and found my friend Ottilia at my bedside. Now you will want to know who Ottilia Morro was. Well, she was an Italian girl of about my own age, who had come to my grandfather for lessons in English. She, too, was unhappy in London—in

England—like me. She wished to go back to Italy. Sometimes she used to come to see me ; sometimes I went to see her. She lived with her aunt and her aunt's husband in Camden Town. The man was a jeweller. But Ottilia had money of her own. With her money, she said, we could get away from England. So we used to plan and contrive things ; but Ottilia did most of the planning, because she had been two years in England, and knew people and how to go about. And in the end we arranged that when she had finished all the arrangements she was to come and fetch me some night when all was quiet—and then we were to go away together. That was how it was that she had the keys of the mansions and the flat that night. They were my keys—I gave them to her some days before, and pretended to my grandfather that I had lost them. And so, I say, that night Ottilia came—that very night of the big fog."

Lady Wargrave has got the audience now, and that audience is all intent. But she shows no consciousness of having aroused interest ; she goes on, as quietly as before, always addressing the magistrate. It is easy to see that she, in her innocence, believes that when she has made an end of her story, he will dismiss the charge against her.

"Ottilia woke me very quietly, and whispered that all was arranged, and that I was to come away with her at once—just then. I was not to lose a minute ; I was not to bring anything but the clothes I was wearing. So I got up quickly and dressed. We went out of my room ; the study was in darkness. Ottilia seemed afraid : I had noticed when she woke me that she seemed very nervous and agitated. We stole out of the flat and out of the mansions. We made our way into the Edgware Road and down to Oxford Street—the fog was lifting

then—and we went to the house of a friend of Ottilia's in Soho—I cannot remember exactly where, but in some small street. There was a woman there—I do not know who she was—who was going over to Paris. She and Ottilia and I left our clothes with the woman of the house and dressed ourselves like Sisters of Charity—the woman who was going to Paris was much older than ourselves, and they said people would think she was in charge of two young sisters. Then we went away by the earliest train and crossed over to France, and reached Paris. No one asked us any questions anywhere—it was quite easy to get away. In Paris we went to a house which the other woman knew of, and there Ottilia bought new clothes for us. And then she and I went on to Italy."

Inspector Wirlescombe unconsciously sighs—he is thinking how very easily certain things are managed, in spite of police networks. And he whispers to his neighbour that he believes every word of this story, and listens eagerly for the rest of it. But Lady Wargrave shows a gift of brevity.

"Now I shall tell you why Ottilia and I wanted to run away. We both possessed good voices—we wanted to sing on the vaudeville stage. And so we became the Sisters ———. We travelled much; we earned money—a good deal of money. I never heard anything about my grandfather's death—how should I have heard, when I never saw any English newspapers? Besides, we were too busy. We went here and there, always successful. And then, in Alexandria, Sir Robert Wargrave met me, and would marry me—and I married him. We went back to Italy: Ottilia went with us. She was taken ill in Naples; we left her there in a convent hospital, well provided for. But that was the last I heard of her, for my husband died, and my son was born,

and there was much trouble, and when at last I wrote to the convent, they said she had left. And after a time those gentlemen, the trustees, persuaded me to come to England—and I came, against my will, and then—all this! But, indeed, I have told you the truth—and that is all, all that I can tell you."

There may be a few cynical spirits in court who are not quite certain about Lady Wargrave's final protestation, and who regard her entire statement as a clever bit of special pleading—are, perhaps, not above believing that the whole incident is not a put-up job; but most folk there share Wirlescombe's opinion. And above a certain amount of whispering amongst the legal gentlemen, the magistrate's voice is heard.

"You say you have not heard anything of the friend Ottilia Morro since you left her at a hospital convent in Naples?" he asks, eyeing the prisoner with a kindly glance. "I should think she would prove a very valuable witness on your behalf."

Mr. Beddleston is on his feet at once.

"I need hardly assure your worship that, having heard my client's statement, we shall produce Ottilia Morro—if she is alive and we can find her," he says. "This, I am sorry to say, is the first time Lady Wargrave has mentioned her."

He gives his client a half-reproachful glance out of the corner of his spectacles. But Lady Wargrave regards him not at all. She is watching the magistrate, and her face is anxious and wondering.

"Is not that enough? Doesn't that explain everything—so far as I am concerned?" she asks, with transparent innocence. "Mayn't I—go away, now?"

Not yet. The worshipful magistrate explains, perhaps at greater length than he would explain in any other case. The slow processes of Law must go on. And so presently the word passes out to the big crowd in Bow Street :

"Committed for trial !"



### CHAPTER III.

#### THE QUEST.

“WE have exactly four weeks,” says Mr. Kenrick. “Four weeks. To be very exact, to be very precise; to be, in short, nice about a matter of exactitude and precision, we have four weeks and one day. That is to say, the next sitting of the Central Criminal Court begins at the New Bailey one lunar month the day after to-morrow. A brief period—soon to be gone!”

There is all the outward sign, all the exterior semblance of a regularly organised committee meeting in the partners' common room at Kenrick, Baggs, Baggs and Kenrick's, in Bedford Row. Each partner (as all litigants and folk foolishly fond of encouraging lawyers who go to Kenricks' are very well aware) has a special room of his own in that considerable establishment, but there is an apartment furnished with severity and boasting some steel plates of dead and gone judicial magnates, a copy of the “Encyclopædia Britannica,” in a solemn book-case, a leather-topped table, sundry chairs, and an ancient map of London, in which the partners assemble upon occasion in order to debate high matters with clients who are of the greatest importance. Here, then, on the morning following

Lady Wargrave's committal, are gathered various gentlemen who are deeply interested in her case. All the partners are there with the exception of Mr. Kenrick, Senior, who has retired to a villa at Forest Hill, and only looks in now and then to remind his nose of the smell of parchment and his eyes of the sight of law-books, red tape, and bundles of musty and fusty papers. Mr Kenrick, Junior, is very much there; Mr. Baggs, Senior, is there; Mr. Baggs, Junior, is there (they are brothers, these two, and the only difference between them in appearance is that one cultivates a desire to be taken for a highly-respectable undertaker, and the other shows a wish to be mistaken for a stud-groom); there is also there a youngish gentleman who is shortly to be taken into partnership and have his name added to the brass door-plate and printed on the letter-paper, and the rest of the stationery, of which the firm uses so much. Sir Austin Wrexham is there, and so is Mr. Cornelius Spilsbury; there, too, is Mr. Beddleston, K.C., who looks much more serious and solemn than he did in court, and conveys the impression of being greatly weighed down by responsibility. And there also are Adrian Graye and John Herbert, who, it is tacitly understood, are very particularly interested in the case, and are in some vague and mysterious fashion about the only personal friends the poor lady now awaiting her trial has to rely upon.

"A brief period—soon to be gone—to pass—to vanish!" repeats Mr. Kenrick, amplifying matters a little. "Whatever is to be done, must be done—at once."

"Seems to me," observed the horsy Mr. Baggs, who speaks as if he had a mouthful of plums; "seems to me that the great thing to do is to find that Italian girl—what do they call her?"

"Ottilia Morro," says Mr. Kenrick, pronouncing

the name in quite Italian fashion. "Ottilia Morro. Yes—Ottilia Morro should most certainly be found. If Ottilia Morro is alive. Do not let us forget that Ottilia may be—dead. Having been left in a hospital, in a state, as Lady Wargrave informed me last evening, of very indifferent health, Ottilia may be—dead."

"They said she had left the hospital," observes the Mr. Baggs who resembles an undertaker.

"Quite so," remarks Mr. Kenrick. "She might, however, leave it in much more indifferent health than when she entered it. On the other hand, she might not. My opinion is that Ottilia Morro should be sought for, enquired after, brought to light—if alive."

The horsy Mr. Baggs makes a *sotto-vocce* remark about the existence of an old print which affirms that it is poor work to look for a needle in a pottle of hay. Nobody contradicts him, but Mr. Beddleston coughs and throws out his arms—a trick of his which is often disconcerting to his neighbours of a tightly-packed bench.

"Supposing Ottilia Morro is found?" he suggests. "What is Ottilia Morro going to prove on behalf of our client?"

"Ottilia Morro," says Mr. Kenrick, "will corroborate Lady Wargrave's account of what happened to Lady Wargrave on the night of her disappearance."

Mr. Beddleston coughed again.

"Just so," he says drily. "But that won't prove that Lady Wargrave—Miss Gemma Graffi, as she then was—didn't murder her grandfather. She might have murdered him before Miss Ottilia arrived on the scene."

This suggestion appeals strongly to the horsy Mr. Baggs. He makes one or two inarticulate sounds of approval far down in his throat, and putting his thumbs in the armholes of his much-checked waist-

coat, nods several times at the table round which he and his *confreres* sit.

"To say that Ottilia Morro came to the flat, woke Gemma Graffi up, conducted her out, and got her away, proves nothing," continues Mr. Beddleston. "Nothing at all—except that—that she did so. It doesn't prove that old Graffi wasn't murdered when she came; it doesn't prove that his granddaughter hadn't already stuck that dagger into him: she might have done it in a sudden passion and gone to sleep after doing it. Italian women aren't like our women—don't forget that!"

Nobody says anything on this point, and after a proper silence, Mr. Kenrick, looking at Mr. Beddleston, says:

"Well?"

Mr. Beddleston jerks his arms again.

"Besides," he says, brightening up under the exciting influence of a brand-new thought, "Ottilia Morro might be an accessory after the fact, or even an accessory to the fact. She might enter the flat while Gemma Graffi was killing her grandfather, or just after Gemma Graffi had killed her grandfather. Eh? I don't see that Ottilia Morro's evidence can be of much use before a jury. What can she prove of Lady Wargrave's innocence? I say—nothing! Nothing!"

"What do you advise, then?" inquires Mr. Baggs of the undertaker resemblance.

Mr. Beddleston shakes his head oracularly.

"Oh, I advise that Ottilia Morro be found and produced, of course," he answers. "Of course!"

Sir Austin Wrexham coughs.

"To prove—nothing?" he enquires, mildly, and yet a little sarcastically.

Mr. Beddleston frowns.

"No, sir—certainly not!" he answers. "Ottilia Morro must—if she can be found—be called to

produce an effect, an effect, sir! Here are two orphan girls—it will be a good thing if Ottilia is an orphan, or was an orphan at that time—of another nationality, almost alone in London (grandfathers, uncles, aunts, don't count for much in the relation way) desirous of escaping to their own sunny clime, and being obliged to do so on the night of the most stupendous fog our metropolis has been visited with for years. You can imagine the plight of these two helpless girls, making their way through the fog-bound streets, gentlemen; you can imagine—and so on, and so on; no need to go into details just now. Certainly, we will have Ottilia Morro in the witness-box—if we can find her.”

Sir Austin, who had listened to Mr. Beddleston with a curling lip, snorts in distinctly military fashion.

“I should think you had far better find the actual murderer of the old man!” he exclaims. “Nobody seems to be looking for him!”

Mr. Kenrick interposes.

“My dear Sir Austin!” he says, as if beginning a letter. “It would indeed be a most fortunate thing if we or the police possessed some clue which would enable us to find the actual assassin of the late Signor Marco Graffi. Unfortunately, we have no such clue, neither do the police possess one. But, equally unfortunately, or, rather, more unfortunately—there is *prima-facie* evidence against our client, Lady Wargrave, and it is our duty to use what means we can avail ourselves of to clear her. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to endeavour to find the young woman, Ottilia Morro —”

“To prove nothing,” says Sir Austin with a grunt.

“To be used as a witness at Mr. Beddleston's discretion,” continues Mr. Kenrick, blandly disregarding Sir Austin's interruption. “Mr. Beddles-

ton will make the most of her. The immediate question is, How is Ottilia Morro to be found? "

Mr. Baggs, of the undertaker aspect, who, apparently, has been deep in thought wakes up and suggests great things in two words.

"Advertise. *Times*," he says.

Mr. Kenrick puts his head on one side.

"With great respect to you, Baggs," he says, "I fear—though I won't say that there isn't a good deal in your suggestion—but I fear that the *Times* newspaper is not read in those circles in Italy in which we may with some reason conclude that Ottilia Morro moves."

"*Times* goes everywhere," says Mr. Baggs. "Never heard of anybody who didn't read the *Times*. If she doesn't see it, somebody else is sure to see it and tell her about it—they always do. Besides," adds Mr. Baggs, struck with another brilliant notion, "besides, you can add that bit that they always put in those advertisements, don't you know? 'Italian papers, please copy.'"

"Good idea," says the other Mr. Baggs. "That ought to find her."

But Mr. Kenrick taps the table with the tips of his white fingers.

"A better idea would be to send somebody to seek her out," he says. "She might be traced from that hospital in Naples that Lady Wargrave spoke of."

Then, for the first time, Graye speaks. He has been listening to the talk of the legal men with every sign of disapproval and resentment on his face: he has begun to fidget; Herbert knows that he is on the very verge of some more or less angry outburst. For, in Graye's opinion, Mr. Beddleston and Mr. Kenrick are merely talking without doing anything. As for Mr. Baggs the undertaker, and Mr. Baggs the stud-groom, he sets them down as asses, and would much like to say so.

"Look here!" says this impetuous young man. "I don't know anything about law or legal procedure, and I don't want to. But I want to do something to get Lady Wargrave out of this hole, and I'm going to try at something. Let me go to Italy and look for this Ottilia Morro. I'm a pretty good hand at finding things. I could find a track with anybody when I went travelling; and I'll move heaven and earth—earth, anyhow—to find her, and I won't spare expense either. And maybe she'll be able to tell more than you think when we do get her. Let me go."

Mr. Kenrick twiddles the fingers which remain spread outside the armholes of his waistcoat and nods his head.

"A very generous offer, I'm sure, Dr. Graye," he says. "Er—perhaps a professional person—a private detective, you know—would be more—more—shall we say accustomed to the work, though, eh?"

"All right," says Graye. "Send one. All the same. I'm going myself. And I'm going at once. Come on, Jack."

The legal gentlemen seem a little astonished at the young medical man's impetuosity, and they stare or blink at him after their several fashions. Sir Austin Wrexham, however, nods emphatic approval.

"That's right, youngster," he says. "You go. You'll do in a week what one of these chaps won't do in a month. Why? Because you won't spare yourself, and you'll hurry things up, while they'd lengthen things and sit soft in their hotels. You go."

"In that case," remarks Mr. Kenrick, "there will be no need to employ professional assistance. Do I understand that you are really going to find Ottilia Morro, Dr. Gray?"

"I shall leave for Naples within three hours,"

answers Graye, glancing at his watch. "I know the name of the convent where Ottilia Morro was last seen by Lady Wargrave, and I'll track her from there—or, rather, I'll have a pretty stiff try at it. At any rate, if I don't find her between now and that trial, I'll wager that nobody can."

Then Graye and his friend Herbert go away from Kenrick, Baggs, Baggs, and Kenrick, and in Bedford Row Graye explodes.

"Jack!" he exclaims. "Did you ever hear or see such a pack of fossils, back numbers, antediluvian logs thrown up by—oh! I could have kicked all from out of the windows. Talk—talk—talk—and nothing done!"

"You've got something to do, old chap," remarks Dr. Herbert gravely. "More, perhaps, than you bargain for."

"I know. I'm not underestimating it. But—I'll do it. I've got an incentive; I've got determination; and, thank God, I've got money! If Ottilia is alive I'll find her. And you, Jack, do what you can here. Those Di Spadas—they ought to be traced. But—I must think of my own job—which is to find this girl. Now, I must pack some things, and go to the bank, and then I'll be off. After all, Italy, if Ottilia is in it, is not such a very big place."

So, when the two-twenty boat train ran out of Charing Cross that afternoon, it carried away Adrian Graye in search of one unit hidden amongst many millions.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE PHOTOGRAPH

**I**T was not until Adrian Graye found himself standing in the sparsely-furnished waiting-room of a hospital in Naples that he realised the difficulties of the task which he had taken upon himself. That task seemed all the greater when he turned to the window and looked out upon the widespreading city which lay at his feet. Immediately beneath him lay the little port and rocky promontory, crowned by its castle, of Santa Lucia; in the middle distance Naples stretched inland, a far-thrown town of palaces, churches, museums, hotels. Beyond it, ever flinging a volume of grey smoke to the blue sky, rose Vesuvius, over which, the previous evening, a canopy of bright flame had hung as he paced along the front of the harbour, watching and thinking and planning. It was almost inconceivable that he should find any trace of Ottilia Morro at this hospital. Had they not told Lady Wargrave, years before, that Ottilia had gone; how, then, should they remember her now—how, if they did, help him to find her? Once outside the walls and gates of the hospital Ottilia would mingle with the hundreds of thousands of other folk who make Naples one of the most densely populated cities of Europe. He thought instinctively of the

remark which Mr. Baggs had made about seeking the needle in the pottle of hay. And, yet, what he had undertaken was the only thing to be done and he seemed the only person who could do it. And the preliminary enquiry at a place where Ottilia was known to have been, though so many years had elapsed since her being there, was the first step to take.

Graye had spent every moment of his waking time since leaving London in learning as much colloquial Italian as he could get from two or three phrase and conversation books hastily picked up on his way to Charing Cross, and he had acquired sufficient knowledge of the language to be able to make himself understood by the porters at the hospital. Then, to his great joy, he had found that there were sisters there who spoke his own tongue. He was now waiting to see one of them. And when she came, a pleasant-faced, middle-aged woman, of whose nationality there could be small doubt, he felt as though many of his difficulties had been swept aside. He turned eagerly to her.

"You are English, sister?"

"I am English, Dr. Graye," she answered, glancing at the card which he had given to the porter. "But," she added with a smile, "it is many years since I saw England."

"You have been here long?"

"I have been here fifteen years."

Graye felt a new sense of relief. Fifteen years!—then she would, she must, remember events of six years previously.

"I am here to make some enquiries into a matter of six years ago," he said. "The reasons for making these enquiries are of the utmost seriousness, and I will go straight to the point. Do you remember a patient of this hospital, an inmate of about six years ago, who bore the name of Ottilia Morro!"

The sister's eyes suddenly sparkled. She nodded her head.

"Quite well. She was suffering from a curious form of general debility, but she left here perfectly cured—quite restored, Dr. Graye."

"You do not know where she went when she left?"

"I, personally, don't. Some of the sisters, or the superior, may know."

"It is Ottilia Morro that I am seeking. Do you remember that she was ever visited by any English friends?"

"Yes. There was an Englishman. I will think of his name in a minute. Yes, Sir Robert Wargrave, a middle-aged man and his young wife came to see Ottilia Morro several times. But the wife, Lady Wargrave, was an Italian."

"Yes. Now I must take you into my confidence, sister. Sir Robert Wargrave is dead—some time ago. And Lady Wargrave is at this moment being tried for murder."

The sister lifted her hands.

"Not—his murder!"

"No, but for the murder of her grandfather, an old Italian gentleman, with whom, as a girl, she lived in London. It is, of course, a wicked and absurd charge!" continued Graye, indignantly. "But, most unfortunately, there is some ground for it. And this Ottilia will be a valuable witness, if she can be found. You know nothing of her since she left the hospital?"

"Nothing. But I will make enquiries. Come again in an hour."

Graye left the hospital and wandered about the heights of St. Elmo, wondering what was to be done if he got no news of Ottilia. He had no idea where to turn or what to do. Ottilia might be dead; she might have gone far away; it was a strange thing, considering how close a bond there had been between

Gemma and himself that she had never corresponded with her old friend. He began to feel despondent, and his despondency increased when on rejoining the sister in the waiting-room she shook her head as a preliminary.

"I have not been able to hear anything of Ottilia Morro," she said. "No one knows anything about her. Many of the sisters remember her, but none of them have any recollection that she ever said anything as to where she was going. All that the superior knows is that when Ottilia left she made a handsome gift to the funds of the hospital. She was, therefore, apparently well-off as regards money. That is all we can tell you, Dr. Graye. But we will make further enquiry where we can—we may be able to come across some little news that will help."

Graye thanked her and went away, puzzled and almost despairing, in spite of the fact that he was at the very outset of his task, and that he had known it would be one of great difficulty. He went down to the heart of the city, wondering what to do next. Then remembering that there might be letters awaiting him at the post-office he went there and presented his card, and while he exercised his patience in waiting the pleasure of the clerk, who took it, continued to ponder on his next step. Surely there must be some means of tracing Ottilia Morro? The police—the hotels—the lodging-houses—the press! The press! He suddenly remembered the remark of Mr. Baggs as to the advisability of advertising in the *Times*. It had seemed fatuous enough, heard there in the prim and chilly atmosphere of the Bedford Row office; but was it as fatuous as it appeared? Certainly, it would do no good to advertise in the *Times*, but it might do much good to advertise in the principal Italian papers.

"I'll do that to-day," mused Graye, cheering up

at the thought of doing something definite and active. "I'll draft the advertisement at once, and get hold of a press list, if there is such a thing. And ——"

"A letter for the signor!"

Graye turned to the little wicket at which he had lingered, and took the missive which the clerk of the poste-restante handed to him. It was a packet of some size, containing something stiff and square, and was addressed in a handwriting obviously acquired under the tuition of some County Council instructor of Cockney youth. And on the back, in a lozenge-shaped shield, was the endorsed stamp of Kenrick, Baggs, Baggs, and Kenrick. Graye went aside to a quiet corner of the hall in which he stood, and cut the stout envelope open—to draw out a typewritten letter and a photograph. He looked first at the photograph, which, he was quick to observe, had been taken in Genoa, and was a little faded. It showed a girl's face—a typical Italian face with beautiful features, large, lustrous eyes, a wealth of dark hair coiled beneath a twisted kerchief, in which small coins and beads were intertwined. On the strip of blank cardboard beneath it was written in a delicate Italian hand the words *Gemma from Ottilia*.

Holding the letter in his hand, Graye looked at the photographed face long and earnestly. This, of course, was Ottilia Morro's portrait. Well, she was very beautiful—as beautiful, quite, as Gemma herself. But why was the expression so full of a haunting sadness, a strange wistfulness? He felt, as he looked, that had he come suddenly across this photograph anywhere, he would have said, "This is the portrait of a woman who has had a great sorrow, and who rarely, if ever, smiles." And he began to speculate on the reason why there was so much indication of sorrow about the mouth and the great eyes which, he knew, would long haunt him.

Putting the photograph back in the envelope, Graye turned his attention to the letter. Glancing at the signature he saw it to be that of Mr. Kenrick.

"DEAR SIR," wrote the solicitor,— "Since you left for Naples I have seen my client, Lady Wargrave, and have informed her of your mission. Lady Wargrave desires me to express her deep gratitude to you, and trusts to eventually be able to extend her personal thanks to you under more propitious conditions than those in which she is at present unfortunately placed.

"Before learning of your departure for Italy, Lady Wargrave at once caused to be procured from her residence in Park Lane and conveyed to my office the enclosed photograph of her friend, Ottilia Morro, which was taken at Genoa very soon after Miss Morro and Lady Wargrave left England. She thinks it may be of considerable use to you in prosecuting the search which you have so generously undertaken.

"Having duly considered all the information which I possess in respect to Miss Morro, namely, that she had followed the profession of a vocalist upon the public stage of places of amusement, corresponding, as I understand the matter, to our music-halls, I beg to suggest to you that you may obtain news of her from the managers or directorate of such places, it being, in my opinion, exceedingly probable that she returned to the practice of her profession upon leaving the hospital to which Lady Wargrave referred us.

"With my best wishes for the success of your endeavours.

"I am, dear sir,

"Yours truly,

"MATTHIAS P. KENRICK."

Graye put the letter into company with the photograph, and strode out into the sunshine, feeling much heartened.

"In spite of his primness and his circumlocutionary powers, Kenrick isn't by any means a fool," he said. "That's a good notion about the music-halls. Now what is an Italian music-hall? Anyhow, they'll know at the hotel."

As a result of his enquiries at the office of his hotel Graye set out into the city again, furnished with the names of the managers of half a dozen principal places of amusement. And at the very first he came to he struck a clue. He was, moreover, fortunate in that the manager into whose presence he was introduced spoke a smattering of English. This gentleman exclaimed loudly and spread his arms around when Graye laid the photograph before him.

"You know that, signor?" asked Graye.

"Know it! But quite well—yes! See, there, signor," and he pulled out a drawer and showed Graye half a dozen photographs of Ottilia, a dozen great and small, but every one of them possessing the same sense of wistful sorrow. "Ah, yes, here she is again, and again, and again—many, many times. She signs herself on your picture Ottilia signor—her stage name for the one short season she was here with me was Adelina di Bramante—what her real name is, was, who knows or cares? But see there, what a quietly sad face this is, signor—always was so in private life. Yet on the stage what life, vivacity, fire; it was as if she were transformed. Yes, one short season of a great triumph, and then—ah, she is gone like this puff of smoke from my cigar."

"You do not know where she is now, then, signor?"

"No more than I know the names of those who lie beneath Pompeii yonder. She finished her

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contract and—disappeared. Six years ago, that is. No, I do not even know where she went. She was a very quiet young woman, and lived like a hermit. But she lodged in this city with a woman to whom I can direct you—she may know of her whereabouts. But I recall what she said to me on the last night of her engagement. She said, 'Signor, I have sung my last song!' Corpetto!—what a pity. For that season I had paid her much more than a thousand pounds in your money, Signor Doctor."

Graye took the address, and went to the lodging indicated. There he found an elderly woman, who made out so little of his feeble Italian that he was obliged to procure the services of an interpreter. The woman listened gravely to all that Graye explained, and finally replied as gravely to the intermediary. And Graye, listening carefully, was able to make out her answer.

"Signor, there is but one person who knows where the signorina now is, and he is an old priest, who lives at the presbytery of San Lorenzo. He is called the Abbate Parenti."



## CHAPTER V.

### THE POCKET-BOOK.

**W**IRLESCOMBE went away from the proceedings at Bow Street in a state of sore perplexity. He had no belief in the guilt of Lady Wargrave. He did not even encourage a suspicion that she knew or ever had known anything about the murder of her grandfather. Having heard what she had said in court he was convinced that she had told a plain, straightforward, and entirely truthful story. It might seem strange to many people that in these days of close communication between one country and another, of newspapers, of the interchange of news between travellers, she should have remained ignorant of her grandfather's death ; but to him, Wirlescombe, a man of five-and-twenty years' experience and observation there was nothing strange in it. He found no difficulty in believing that a young woman going from city to city in foreign countries as she had admittedly done, moving in a sphere of life in which little else than professional matter was of interest, should hear little of anything that happened in the country she had left. It was not likely, indeed, that either she or her companion would waste five minutes on an English newspaper, even if they came across one.

From first to last Wirlescombe believed Lady Wargrave as innocent of the whole affair as he himself was.

But where, then, seek for the actual murderer? For a brief space, after he had heard of Lady Wargrave's visits to Lucien di Spada at the flat in Austerlitz Mansions, Wirlescombe had fancied that there might be some collusion between herself and the man she thus visited. That Di Spada had been mixed up in the murder of the old man, and that she had been a willing or unwilling accessory after the fact. But subsequent reflection convinced him that this was not a sound theory. With unerring instinct he put his finger on the true reason of Lady Wargrave's visits to Di Spada. She had gone there, he said, on carefully thinking out all the possibilities and probabilities of the case, believing that Marco Graffi still lived, and would be found there. Instead of finding him she had found his successor, Di Spada, and Di Spada had immediately commenced a system of blackmailing her by holding over her the fear of denunciation to the police. Of this Wirlescombe had become easily convinced by a simple fact—on arresting Lady Wargrave on the warrant originally issued by a magistrate on the day following the discovery of her flight, and since held by himself, he had searched the private desk which he found in her boudoir at Ashendyke Manor, and had there discovered the bundle of newspaper cuttings which she had carried away from Austerlitz Mansions on her first visit to Di Spada. Di Spada was evidently a man of great neatness and precision. The newspaper cuttings, extracted from many journals, were all neatly arranged in order and carefully pasted up in a book in such sequence that anyone reading through them would gain a full knowledge of the whole history of the affair Graffi from the time it made its appearance in the public prints to the time

when it dropped out of them, because there was literally nothing more to tell. And in this book, so pasted up, and so diligently arranged and tabulated, even to the presence of an index at the end, Di Spada's name appeared as owner. There was a simply designed book-plate of his within the front cover. There was his name and address embossed on the fly-leaf of the back cover. And Wirlescombe saw through the whole thing with rare intuition. Di Spada had given this collection of press-cuttings to Lady Wargrave for two reasons—first, to show her how black the case was against her ; second, to fully inform her of what might reasonably be expected to follow if he went to the police, and told them that the unsuspected chatelaine of Ashendyke Manor was the suspected and much-wanted Gemma Graffi.

But the question still remained unanswered. Who, then, killed Marco Graffi ? And behind, or alongside that question, was another, which Wirlescombe felt to be almost, if not quite as important as it. Who killed the unknown man who had lodged at the Café Aldobrandini ? Who had visited Marco Graffi on the night of the great fog ? Whose dead body had they found in the empty house in Soho ? And there was a third question—What relation did the murder of the unknown man bear to the murder of the old professor of languages ? Did it bear any relation at all ?

Thinking these matters over Wirlescombe remembered that he himself had taken charge of all the unknown man's belongings, and that he had them in careful keeping in a certain cupboard in his room at the Yard. They were safely locked away, and Wirlescombe had never examined them since he had brought them from the man's room at Aldobrandini's. Now, speculating on the chance of getting new light on the subject, he went straight to his room, and securing himself against interruption

took the various articles from the cupboard in which they were locked, and went carefully through them. There was comparatively little to examine—a suit of clothes, a certain amount of linen, a few books, a pair of shoes, a small valise, the lock of which Wirlescombe had forced seven years before at the café. A perfunctory examination of these things could have been made in a few moments; one to which most people would have applied the epithet careful within half an hour, but the detective proposed an investigation which was thorough in the last degree. He searched the lining and padding of the clothes, ripping each garment to pieces; he went through the books page by page, investigating the vacant spaces between the bindings and the stitching of the sheets; he took the soles and linings out of the shoes. He even satisfied himself that there was no hollow in the heels. And in these articles he found nothing. There now remained nothing but the valise. It was an old-fashioned article, about the size of a modern suit-case, designed to carry a man's bare necessities for a one-night visit, and was covered with much worn cow-hide leather. Wirlescombe eyed it narrowly when he had opened it. There was nothing to suggest that it contained and concealed any secret. He tapped it, sounded it, fingered it, and got no clue. But pursuing his thorough system of investigation the detective took from his desk a tape-measure, and began carefully to measure up the valise, inside and out. And as a result of his investigations he came to the conclusion that at one end of the valise, concealed behind the strong leather lining there was a secret receptacle, a hollow of at least an inch in depth. The problem, then, was to find out how this was rendered accessible. Wirlescombe spent ten minutes in pressing the many studs with which the valise was embellished, in twisting the handles, the lock, squeezing the

corners, all without avail. Then an accidental pressure, made and exercised he knew not how, sent the leather flying open at one end of the valise, and revealed an ingeniously contrived cavity in which lay a slender pocket-book, bound in black Russian leather, and fastened about by an ordinary band of elastic. Here, at any rate, was something that was probably worth searching for.

Wirlescombe's first thought was a natural one. How much would this discovery have helped him some years previously had he only made it then? But his second thought was of a more practical nature. How much was the finding of it going to help him now?

"And that all depends on what there is in it," he murmured as he stripped off the elastic band. "In the ordinary run of things there ought to be—nothing. But there may be—something."

Then, with his usual thoroughness, Wirlescombe examined his find. The pocket-book, a slim volume of some fifty or sixty pages of thin paper, was obviously new when placed in the secret receptacle. Within the front cover it bore the embossed stamp of a stationer's shop in the Corso, in Rome. On the front page was a name and an address, written in violet ink:

*Carlo Cafferata, Viá Nazionale, 200<sup>a</sup> Roma.*

"Now," mused Wirlescombe, contemplating this, "was this the name of the unknown man, or wasn't it? In all probability it was, and if it was, it's something to go by. Anyhow, there's a name and an address, and if Carlo Cafferata has disappeared, number 200<sup>a</sup>, Viá Nazionale, Rome, will still be there. Let's see what else there is."

But the virgin whiteness of the pocket-book's pages was practically unsullied. On the first page or two were entries, evidently of cash payments.

They were written in Italian, but Wirlescombe had little difficulty in making out what they meant. There was the cost of a through ticket from Rome to London. There was the entry of what he took to be expenses *en route*. The possessor of the pocket-book had evidently been a man of method and precision, and had entered up the smallest details, even to the purchase of cigarettes. There was the record of an hotel bill in Paris, and of the buying of what there. And then came entries which showed the detective that he was on the track of something. Entries of regular payments at the Café Aldobrandini. They followed each other in sequence, varied by entries of such small matters as bus fares and cab hire—the latter very infrequent. Yes, he said to himself, this was certainly the pocket-book of the man who had lived at the little restaurant in Soho, who had visited old Marco Graffi so mysteriously, whom they had found murdered in the empty house. So far, so good.

The rest of the pages in the book were blank. But in a slip pocket at the end Wirlescombe found a tightly-folded scrap of paper—thin, foreign-looking paper, creased up into small compass. He unfolded it with care, and finally smoothed it out on his blotting-pad. There was little written on it. What there was was in the same handwriting as that in which the name and address were written at the beginning of the book, and it was in Italian. Now Wirlescombe was a very good hand at French, and he had a comfortable and workable knowledge of German; but of Italian he knew next to nothing, and beyond recognising a word here and there he could make nothing out of the writing before him. He saw names which he recognised—names of men and of places, but of the full sense of the memorandum (for such his quick perception took the paper to be) he could get no accurate idea. And so he

put the sheet back into its place, and put the pocket-book in his pocket, and having safely locked up the valise, and the other articles in his cupboard, went round to the Café Aldobrandini.

The little restaurant was just beginning to wake up to the activity of the evening. Madame, in a smart toilette, was already at the receipt of custom. There were many waiters hustling and bustling between the white-clothed tables and the hatch which shut them off from the kitchen. There was an odour of hot soup and a fragrance of fish. There was Signor Carlo Aldobrandini in an irreproachable frock-coat, a fancy waistcoat, and a resplendent gold watch chain. His face was complacent and satisfied as he looked around him. Already in his mind's eye he saw himself migrating to more fashionable quarters, for his fame as a restaurateur was extending, and Madame possessed three silk gowns where formerly she had but one.

The Italian welcomed the detective with his usual friendliness, conducted him into his private sitting-room, and pressed refreshment upon him. Wirlescombe, having drunk his health, produced the scrap of paper from the pocket-book, and laid it on the table before Aldobrandini.

"There!" he said. "I'm ashamed to say I know next to nothing of your language. I've vowed over and over again that I'd set to and learn it, but somehow I've never been able to get to work at it. Do me the favour to translate that bit of writing. Put it down on paper, if you please. I shall get the hang of it better by seeing it in black and white than by hearing it."

"With the best of pleasure," said the restaurant-keeper. He picked up the paper, and ran his eyes over it. "This is a memorandum of some things to be remembered, to be done, eh? I see some names here that we know, eh, Mr. Wirlescombe?"

Di Spada—yes. Old Marco Graffi, also. Oh, yes—I write it all down for you, quick."

Within a few minutes Wirlescombe held in his fingers the sheet of notepaper, on which Aldobrandini had made the translation. He read out the various items slowly and aloud:

"To call in Paris on Stefano di Spada.

"To get from Stefano the address of Lucien in London.

"To find out from Lucien where Graffi is to be met.

"To give Graffi orders for the destruction of the papers relating to the affair called number one, and to see them destroyed.

"To bring from Graffi the papers relating to the affair called number two.

"The countersign from the Di Spadas is *Spalato*; from Graffi, *Lodi*."

Wirlescombe folded the original and the translation together, and put both back in the pocket-book. He glanced at Aldobrandini.

"That's between you and me," he remarked.

"Oh, of course, Mr. Wirlescombe," said the Italian. He smiled, showing his white teeth.

"Something to do with your murder case still again, eh?"

"Something," replied Wirlescombe. "Let's see—don't you hail from Rome. Yes!—well, I'm off to Rome. Now, I've never been there. How long does the run take?"

"Thirty-six hours—by the rapide," answered Aldobrandini. "Only—all rapide and trains-de-luxe are late in Italy."

"The more reason for me to be off, then," said Wirlescombe. And he buttoned up his coat and set out as if he were taking the first step of his journey.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE ETERNAL CITY.

FOR the second time within a hour, Adrian Graye found himself cooling his heels in a waiting-room. But the one in which he now stood was vastly different to any room in which he had ever been. The wooden floor, carpetless, rug-less, scrubbed to snowy whiteness, and smooth with the passage of many feet, seemed cold and bare even in that land of warmth and sunshine, where the comfortable furnishings and accessories of English houses would seem strangely unfitting and out of place. A wooden table, as plain as the planking on which it stood; a wooden chair, seated in rush; two or three religious pictures, crude of colour and still cruder in design, a realistic *pieta* in one corner, a crucifix depending from another, made all the furniture of the room—the cell of a Trappist, thought the visitor, could scarcely have been more barely supplied. And all around him was a deep silence—into those walls the murmur of Naples did not penetrate.

Adrian was puzzling himself as to his coming conversation with the priest to whom he had been directed. He had brought an interpreter with him to the door of the presbytery, but had left him

outside, wishing first to see what he could do unaided. In his hand he held his Italian phrase-book. He would try what he could do with such Italian as he had already picked up, and would get from the book, or he would try his French, if the priest understood that tongue. If the worst came to the worst, he would furbish up his Latin. Meanwhile, as he waited, he worked away at the phrase-book, conscious, all the time, that he was doing himself little good, for all his thoughts were concentrated on the absorbing question—Where was Ottilia Morro?

The almost noiseless opening of the door behind him caused Graye to rise from the rush-bottomed chair, and to face the entrant. He saw before him an old man, tall, thin, the tallness and thinness accentuated by his black soutane and biretta, who advanced with a benign smile and an outstretched hand, looking a polite interrogation through the big spectacles which were perched on the bridge of a big nose. He was a notable-looking old man of an ivory-white complexion, mild blue eyes, in which some sparks of life and fire still showed themselves, and the expression of his countenance was benevolent and gracious. Here, perhaps, was going to be help—good help.

Graye began in his stammering, halting Italian. He had got out the conventional salutations when the old man lifted his thin hand and smiled indulgently.

"I speak English," he said. "Your Italian promises to be good, but we shall understand each other better if we converse in your own language. Be seated, please, Dr. Graye."

Graye moved the one chair towards the old priest.

"I will sit on the edge of the table, father," he said. "I am much obliged to you for receiving me. And it is a great relief to find that you speak English."

I have only been learning Italian for two days, and I have travelled all that time."

"Then you seem to be making progress," said Father Parenti, sinking into the chair. "Yes, I speak English pretty well, I suppose. But then, I have lived in London—yes, ten years. I only returned to Naples—let me see, yes, eight years ago. You are from London?"

"From London on a most urgent business, sir. You have my card there in your hand—I have the best credentials here in my pocket. Perhaps ——"

He drew out his pocket-book as he spoke, but the old man waved his hand.

"That is not necessary. And the urgent business? Is it something in which I can be of use?"

"I believe you can be of the greatest use, Father. I am seeking a young woman named Ottilia Morro. She has, I know, gone by other names; but I am instructed that that is her real name. I had better tell you what I know of her. She was last heard of by her English friends as being in hospital here—that was six years ago. This morning I went to the hospital—there I ascertained that she had left on recovery, and that none of the staff there had seen her since. Then I found that she appeared at one of the music-halls in this city, under another name—that of Adelina di Bramante—for some time; she left there, according to the manager, never to appear again. The manager gave me the name and address of the woman with whom she had lodged. I went there and saw the woman. She told me that if anyone knew where Ottilia Morro was, it would be you. So, can you tell me where she is, Father? Do you know her? For—it is a matter of life and death!"

The old priest, who had listened with great attention, bowed his head.

"I can speak of Ottilia Morro," he said.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Graye, with genuine fervour, which the old man did not fail to notice.

"Ottilia Morro, my son, is dead ——"

Graye uttered an inarticulate sound of despair, which was as genuine as his exclamation of thankfulness.

"Dead!" he muttered. "Dead! Then ——"

The old man held up his hand.

"Dead to the world," he said. "Otherwise—she lives."

Graye made no answer. He folded his arms, and from his perch on the table looked enquiringly at the old man. And presently the old man looked enquiringly at him.

"You said, my son, that this was a question of life and death," he remarked. "Tell me all about it. What is a question of life and death? Let me understand plainly, if I am to be of help. Take your time—I am said to be a good listener."

"It is this, then," replied Graye. "The friend of Ottilia Morro, another Italian girl, named Gemma Graffi, but now the widow of a well-known Englishman, the late Sir Robert Wargrave, is charged with murder. She is as innocent as—as you or I, Father!—but there is certain evidence of a grave character against her. The evidence of Ottilia Morro ——"

Graye suddenly paused. The old priest had started violently at the mention of the name Graffi, and was now looking at him with eyes in which wonder, inquiry, and suspicion were mingled with a dawning horror.

"Murder!" he exclaimed. "Not—not with the murder of Marco Graffi, seven years ago?"

"Ah, you know of that, then, Father?" said Graye.

"I know of that. I have friends in London who send the English newspapers regularly. I know of it—yes. Gemma Graffi was the granddaughter. I

never knew her, but I knew Marco—quite well. Yes, I know of the murder. And she is charged with it—after all these years ! ”

“ After all these years—yes ! ”

The old priest clasped his hands, and shook his bent head from side to side. And while Graye watched him wonderingly, he looked up with some eagerness.

“ Tell me how she came to be charged,” he said. “ Tell me all about it, my son. I am getting an old man, and though I have a pretty good memory, I forget little details sometimes. Tell me everything.”

And Graye, taking pains to be clear and precise, told everything that he believed to be important, from his first connection with the Graffi mystery to the end of the proceedings before the magistrate. The old priest listened closely, nodding his head now and then ; now and then asking a question where he required more explanation or information.

“ And so you see, sir, that even if Ottilia Morro cannot prove who it was that murdered Marco Graffi,” Graye concluded, “ even if she cannot prove that Lady Wargrave had nothing to do with that murder, she can, at any rate, give the most valuable evidence on Lady Wargrave’s behalf. You agree with that ? ”

Father Parenti bowed his head.

“ I agree with that, Dr. Graye,” he answered.

“ Yes, I agree with that.”

“ Then, sir—help me to find her—to get speech with her, so that I can tell her of her old friend’s predicament. You say she is dead to the world.”

The old man again bowed his head.

“ Dead to the world ! ” he murmured. “ Dead—to the world.”

“ I take that to mean that she has left the world as we who are in it know it, and has embraced the religious life,” said Graye. “ I have thought of your

remark in connection with what the manager of the music-hall told me she had said to him—that she had sung her last song. Am I right in my supposition, Father ? ”

“ You are quite right, my son. Ottilia Morro forsook her profession and gave up the world six years ago. It was no sudden step on her part. She had contemplated the step for many years—I should imagine that Lady Wargrave is well aware of it. Indeed, Ottilia Morro would have entered religion long before she did but for two reasons, which are known to me. Of one of them I cannot speak ; of the other, I can. That of which I can speak is that she desired to accumulate a certain sum of money to be applied to religious purposes. Owing to unforeseen circumstances she accumulated that sum much earlier than she had foreseen. As soon as she had it she took the preliminary courses.”

“ She is, then, a nun ? ”

“ She is an enclosed nun, my son.”

“ Which means —— ”

“ That she is dead to the world, my son.”

“ As if she were—pardon me if I express myself badly—immured in a living tomb ? ”

“ As if she were immured in a living tomb,” murmured the old priest. “ Yes. But—— ” He looked up at Grave’s big figure, and his eyes sparkled.

“ Yes, Father ? ” said Grave eagerly. “ Yes ? ”

“ But there are times, occasions, needs, when even the dead—the dead to the world—should be called to life again. And—this is one.”

He lifted his worn hand and grasped the sleeve of the young Englishman’s Norfolk jacket, holding it with tremulous fingers.

“ Listen ! ” he said. “ Perhaps—you understand me, my son ?—perhaps I know more of all this matter than you would think. We must not see an innocent person suffer —— ”

Graye started. A sudden suspicion, which was almost a conviction, shot across his mind. He looked searchingly at the old priest.

"Ah—you know Gemma to be innocent!" he could not refrain from exclaiming.

But Father Parenti lifted his hand again.

"Do not ask me what I know or do not know, my son!" he replied with emphasis. "What I say is sufficient—we must not allow an innocent person to suffer. Now, it was through me—but, of course, by her own desire, at her own suggestion—that Ottilia Morro entered the convent in which she now is, in Rome. I have influence with the authorities, and with the convent, and with her. And—under these circumstances, I will use it with all three."

Adrian was about to express his gratitude, but the old man went on:

"You will have to go to Rome. You will have to see many people. There will be some little difficulty, but I shall endeavour to make everything as easy for you as I can. Come to me to-morrow at noon—I shall write letters in the meantime. You can catch the afternoon train to Rome—the sooner you are there the better. Let me think a moment. Yes. Is there not such a thing as taking the evidence of a witness on commission?"

"I believe there is, sir—but it would be much more efficacious to put Ottilia in a witness-box."

"True—true! Well, we will see what can be done. Come, then, to-morrow at noon."

Graye went back to his hotel cheered and encouraged. At last he was on the way to something tangible. Ottilia Morro, at any rate, was alive and discovered. He would move heaven and earth to get her to London, and if need be he would go to the Sovereign Pontiff himself—if he could only get at him.

In the hotel he found a telegram awaiting him.

Tearing it open he saw Wirlescombe's name at the foot. He read the message over wonderingly.

"Leaving for Rome in consequence of new discovery and development in Graffi case. Communicate with me at Grand Hotel Continental.—  
WIRLESCOMBE."

Later on the next evening, Graye, bearing in his breast pocket several letters written by the old priest, crossed from the station in Rome to the Hotel Continental, and asked for Wirlescombe. And at that moment the detective approached from behind, and clapped him on the shoulder.



## CHAPTER VII.

### FORESTALLED.

WITH a mutual instinct actuating each, Graye and the detective walked into the lounge of the hotel and sought out a quiet corner. Wirlescombe turned to his companion with a smile.

"This is another proof of the truth of the saying that all roads lead to Rome," he said. "Yours has led you here, anyway."

"And yours, evidently," answered Graye. "And now that our two roads converge ——"

"You want to know how mine got here?" said Wirlescombe. "Well, maybe we are come to the same point. You are here, of course, after Ottilia Morro. Let's be plain and brief, to start with. You, first. You've found out where Ottilia Morro is?"

"I have. She is a nun—she lives in a convent here in Rome. It is a convent of one of the very strictest of the enclosed orders. All the same, I have letters of introduction in my pocket that I believe will bring her to light, even if she were buried a hundred feet deep beneath the floor of the Catacombs. Listen!"

And he gave the detective a brief resumé of all he had done and heard, and laid special emphasis

on the fact that the old priest had said, three times over, that the innocent must not suffer.

"It struck me, then, and it has been striking me more than ever all the way in the train between Naples and Rome, that the old gentleman knows more of this matter than he told me," concluded Graye. "I think that Ottilia Morro told him a great deal under the seal of confession, for he was obviously startled and shocked, not to say greatly upset, when I said that Lady Wargrave was accused of her grandfather's murder."

"Yes, but you'll get no more out of him than out of this table," said Wirlescombe. "The only hope for Lady Wargrave is that Ottilia may be moved to tell in public what she has probably told to this old priest. And that leads me to think that you and I are coming to a more definite point than I had fancied. Haven't I said all along that I was sure that if we could find the murderer of the unknown man we should find the murderer of Marco Graffi?"

"Well?"

"Well, I have at any rate found out who the unknown man was. Or at any rate, I am morally certain who he was. His name was Carlo Cafferata, and he had some connection with a residence numbered 200 in the Via Nazionale here in Rome."

"How did you find out that?"

"You have told me your tale—now I will tell mine," said Wirlescombe. And he proceeded to unfold the story of the pocket-book, and of what he had found in it. "At last," he concluded, "I believe I am on the right track. It seems to me that this Cafferata went from here to Paris and London, seeing Stefano di Spada in one place, seeking—and probably finding without difficulty—Lucien di Spada in the other. He certainly saw old Marco Graffi on the night on which Marco met his death. According to your account, during the interview



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which took place between Marco and Cafferata, while you were in the flat, Marco fetched papers from his bedroom, and there is strong presumption, from what I remember of my examination of the fire-grate in the sitting-room in which the interview took place, that those papers were burnt by the two men. Now, this man, Cafferata, then left, and during the night Marco Graffi was murdered. And the whole problem seems to me to lie in an answer to the question—What was the connection between Cafferata, the Di Spadas, and Graffi, and were the Di Spada and Cafferata in league together to get rid of Graffi and why?"

"That's surely not one question, but three questions, which seem to be only a part of a series of questions," said Graye. "And I don't see how you're going to get answers to any of the particular three. Now let me suggest something. So far as my remembrance goes—and it's pretty keen—there was not much doubt that the weapon produced by the workman at the coroner's inquest was the one used on the old man, the stiletto that was certainly Gemma's—Lady Wargrave's?"

"No—not much doubt about that," agreed Wirlescombe, having thought for a moment. "No—I remember that, now."

"And the caretaker's wife, Mrs. —"

"Acock."

"Mrs. Acock—yes—didn't she say that the stiletto had disappeared for some time previous to the murder?"

"She said that she hadn't seen it lying on Miss Gemma's dressing-table, where she had usually observed it."

"Well—how came the murderer, whoever he or she was—for it might just as well have been a woman as a man—to get possession of that stiletto? There's a lot in that, Wirlescombe!"

The detective meditated for a time. At last he shook his head.

"I don't attach much importance to that," he remarked. "Mrs. Acock said that she hadn't seen the stiletto for some time, but what does that amount to? You know, and I know, that the room which old Graffi used as a study—the one you had supper in—and his bedroom were littered with books, papers, instruments, and all sorts of odds and ends. The stiletto might have been placed or misplaced amongst these matters, and the murderer might snatch it up at the critical moment."

But Graye, in his turn, shook his head, and he smiled.

"No!" he said, with decision. "You're wrong there, Wirlescombe. Because that would prove that the murder was done as a sudden thing, done on the spur of the moment. But it wasn't. It was surely the work of careful arrangement, of pre-meditation. Whoever killed Marco Graffi carried that stiletto on him, or on her."

"Yes," said Wirlescombe. "I think you're right. I hadn't quite considered that point. But—you say 'him or her.' You think a woman might be the guilty party?"

"Why not? I have always believed that the murder of Marco Graffi was the work of some secret society. Why should they not employ the hand of a woman? A woman can move about more noiselessly than a man. You never went into the history of the various tenants of Austerlitz Mansions, you know. There may have been some Italian woman there who had reason for killing Marco Graffi for anything we know to the contrary."

Wirlescombe paid no apparent heed to this suggestion. He sat thinking for a time.

"Well, there's one thing we can do at once in reference to all that," he said. "I'll wire just now

to Kenrick and get him to find out first thing to-morrow morning from Lady Wargrave what she did with that stiletto. We ought to have thought of that before. I'll send the wire now ; in the meantime, consider how we can work together and what we can do."

When he returned from despatching the telegram, Wirlescombe found Graye evidently determined on a course of action. He looked at the detective with the eyes of a man who sees an object, and is resolved to make for it.

"There's only one thing that ought to be done at first," he said, "and I must do it, whatever you may do. I must see Ottilia Morro."

"Yes," said Wirlescombe. "I suppose so. But—she won't tell you anything. Don't flatter yourself that she will, because she won't. If all is as I suspect, Ottilia Morro won't tell anything except in a witness-box and on oath."

Graye gave his companion a sharp look.

"Suspect!—as you suspect!" he said. "Why—what do you suspect?"

"Nothing definite. But when a young woman who is enjoying a public career as a cantatrice, who is in the heyday of youth, who is flourishing at the height of her beauty, forsakes the world and buries herself in the living tomb of a strictly-enclosed religious order, she doesn't do it for nothing, Dr. Graye! She has a reason. And Ottilia Morro is Italian."

Graye looked at the detective wonderingly, doubtfully.

"I believe you are beginning to fancy that Ottilia Morro had something to do with the murder of old Graffi!" he exclaimed. "Do you?"

Wirlescombe laughed.

"It's conceivable that I might," he answered. "Perhaps I can tell you more definitely in the morning. Now, I'm going to bed."

But next morning, when Graye proceeded from his bedroom, Wirlescombe was not to be found. The forenoon was half way through, and the young doctor waxing highly impatient, when the detective appeared. As he approached Graye, he waved a telegram.

"Well, here's news that seems pertinent," he said. "This is from Kenrick. He evidently posted off to see Lady Wargrave as soon as he reached his office. Read it."

Graye ran his eyes over the brief message.

"Lady Wargrave perfectly remembers the stiletto, and also that she made a present of it to Ottilia Morro, who had taken a fancy to it."

"What do you think of that?" asked Wirlescombe.

Graye shook his head. The detective stifled a yawn.

"Sorry, but I'm sleepy," he said. "I've been up since before six. Well, you see, Ottilia may have been concerned. And by the by, I have finished my business for this morning, and if you are beginning your search for Ottilia I'll go with you, if you'll let me—I may be useful."

"Yes," replied Graye. He pulled out his pocket-book, and produced the letters which the old priest at Naples had furnished him with. "You'll observe," he said, showing them to Wirlescombe, "that these are numbered in the order in which I'm to present them. Therefore, we'll go to this gentleman first. Father Parenti said that if I only found him at home he would probably procure me access to Ottilia at once."

Wirlescombe exclaimed at sight of the name of the high ecclesiastical dignitary that appeared on the envelope which Graye held out.

"Your old priest seems to have friends in high



places," he said. "Will they let us in to so great a man—a couple of Englishmen in tweed suits?"

"They excuse much to Englishmen," replied Graye, laughing. "Moreover, his Eminence is, I understand, half-English himself, and has the advantage of speaking our language. So come on—I daresay there's nothing to terrify us."

So half an hour later they were ushered into the presence of a benevolent-faced old gentleman, who, if he had worn pink, and disported himself in breeches and top-boots, instead of wearing a scarlet-edged cassock, a scarlet sash, and a little scarlet skull-cap on top of his white hair, would have looked much more like an English fox-hunting squire than a great Prince of the Church. And he courteously bade them be seated, and took a pinch of snuff out of a beautiful snuff-box, which he carried in his left hand, and he picked up the letter which Graye had sent in and re-read it, slowly and carefully, finally looking at his visitors over his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"This is a very serious matter that Father Parenti writes to me about," he observed.

"It is a matter of life and death, your Eminence," replied Graye.

His Eminence took another pinch of snuff.

"The innocent must not be allowed to suffer, no matter how many rules and observances should be broken," he said reflectively. "I will write what Father Parenti asks me to write."

And he drew pen and paper towards him and wrote and folded a short note, which he presently handed to Graye, who took it gratefully, and tried to express his thanks.

"It is a small thing to do, and I am glad to do it," said the old man. He regarded his visitors with an interest that was almost wistful.

"Now, like all Englishmen, you will want to do what you have to do at once. I hope you will be

successful—one must not see the innocent suffer.” And he bowed them out with a smile that was as good as a benediction.

“There you are!” exclaimed Graye, when they were outside. “Same remark, you see—‘The innocent must not suffer.’ How comes Father Parenti, and through him this old Cardinal, to know that Lady Wargrave is innocent? However—we shall see. Now for this convent, and the chaplain to whom this letter is addressed.”

They had to wait longer for the chaplain than they had waited for the high dignitary whom they had just quitted. He came at last—a characteristic type of the ascetic, whose keen eyes looked at them with wonder, and from them to the letter which Graye had sent in, and from the letter to them.

“You wish to see her who in the world was called Ottilia Morro?” he said, evidently amazed. “But, gentlemen, she is not here—she is gone.”

“Gone!” exclaimed Graye. “Gone!”

“She left Rome last night,” answered the priest. “For London. And in company with a lady and gentleman whose mission appears to have been exactly the same as your own.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### KIDNAPPED.

THE astonishment shown by his two visitors on hearing this announcement was so patent and so genuine that the priest, having looked from one to the other, and again at the Cardinal's letter several times, shook his head and manifested signs of uneasiness.

"I hope there is nothing wrong, gentlemen," he said. "But this is surely a strange affair. It is quite evident that your credentials must have been of the highest, or you would not have brought this letter from His Eminence Cardinal M——, or this from Father Parenti. But—these others, the lady and gentleman. Their credentials were also unimpeachable."

Graye looked at Wirlescombe: Wirlescombe nodded to Graye as a sign that he should do the talking.

"Who were these people, Father?" Graye asked.

The priest fumbled in his cassock and presently bringing out some papers sought for and found two visiting cards, which he handed over to his callers. Graye and Wirlescombe looked at them together.

"Mr. John Stephenson, Mrs. John Stephenson, The Acacias, St. John's Wood, N.W.," read out

Graye. He glanced at his companion. "Who on earth are these people, Wirlescombe?" he muttered. "Did you ever hear of them?"

"Never!" replied the detective. "And I never heard of The Acacias, either, though I believe I know the Wood as well as any man who, like myself, has lived in it for thirty years. Indeed, I'd take my oath there isn't such an address."

He turned to the priest, who was watching them anxiously.

"Can your reverence describe these two?" he asked. "I suppose you saw them?"

"They sat yesterday morning where you and your friend are sitting now," answered the priest. "Oh, yes, I can describe them. The man, tall, dark, sallow-complexioned, black eyes, clean-shaven; the woman, handsome, over medium height, also dark in the eyes and hair. Both well dressed and of very good manners—I suspected nothing."

"Did they strike your reverence as being English?" enquired Wirlescombe. "Was their English good?"

The priest smiled.

"Oh, quite good!" he replied. "I know good English. I, like Father Parenti, have lived—some years—in England. But I, as you notice, speak English with some accent. They did not. From appearance, however, I should not have taken them to be English. I should rather have said they were Italian."

Again the two visitors looked at each other. The same suspicion was in the minds of each.

"What story did they tell, Father?" asked Graye. "I suppose you heard it?"

"In effect, precisely the same as your own," answered the priest. "Oh, yes, I heard everything, and I acted as intermediary between them and her whom we will at present call Ottilia Morro. Well,

they announced that they were friends of this Lady Wargrave, and that she had sent them to Ottilia, and in proof of that they produced a certain ring, which Ottilia instantly recognised. They said that Lady Wargrave was charged with the murder of her grandfather, and that only Ottilia could prove her innocence. And, as I previously mentioned to you, they produced credentials which were eminently satisfactory. They certainly did not bring a letter from one so highly placed as His Eminence the Cardinal, whose note you brought to me, but what they did bring was amply sufficient—oh, quite sufficient! And the authorities here agreed that Ottilia must go. And so—she accompanied them last night."

Again Graye and Wirlescombe looked at each other. Each was wondering the same thing—was it possible that these people could be friends of Lady Wargrave?—that, unknown to anyone else, she had despatched them to Italy? And each, simultaneously, arrived at the same conclusion. No, Lady Wargrave knew nothing about this matter. The man and woman calling themselves Mr. and Mrs. John Stephenson were impostors. Why did they want Ottilia Morro?"

"Well?" said Graye, addressing Wirlescombe.

The detective understood the interrogation to mean that he should take the lead in whatever was done. He turned to the priest, who was obviously as curious as he was concerned about this mystery.

"Your reverence will let me ask a few questions?" he said.

"As many as you like," replied the priest readily.

"Did these people see Ottilia Morro before she left the convent?"

"Oh, yes! She saw them as soon as the authorities had conferred on the matter."

"Were you present, sir?"

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"I was—all the time; so was the Reverend Mother Superior of the order."

"Did Ottilia Morro know them?"

"No, she did not. That I saw at once."

"Then they were taken at their word?"

"They were taken—that is to say, their story was accepted—on the strength of their credentials, and on the ring which they produced to Ottilia Morro, which she immediately recognised as having belonged to Lady Wargrave when they were friends. They had with them a copy of a London newspaper in which appeared the account of the proceedings before the magistrate. There, of course, as you probably know, Lady Wargrave mentioned Ottilia."

"We know—we heard what she said—both Dr. Graye and I. Well, your reverence, did Ottilia make any objection to accompanying them?"

"None. On the contrary, she said that she must certainly save her old friend if word of hers could save her."

"Was she agitated?"

"Very. And impatient to go, distasteful as it was to her to re-enter the world which she had left."

"And so they all three went off together."

"Well, not together from here. Ottilia joined Mr. and Mrs. Stephenson at the station last night. I caught the mail for Paris. I saw them off."

Wirlescombe shook his head.

"Then, sir, I am afraid Ottilia went away with a couple of impostors," he said. "Neither I nor Dr. Graye here know who these people are, and I am sure Lady Wargrave never sent them, whatever credentials they may have. I should say that the credentials are forgeries and that the ring was stolen. Now, I will prove to you that at half-past ten o'clock this very morning Lady Wargrave, who is in prison awaiting her trial, and who was seen at that hour

by her solicitor, Mr. Kenrick, in consequence of a telegram which I despatched to him last night from Rome, knew nothing of these people whom she is supposed here to have sent to you. Look at that, your reverence!"

And Wirlescombe pulled out Kenrick's telegram and handed it over to the priest, who read it wonderingly.

"Your reverence will readily perceive," continued the detective, "that if Lady Wargrave, or anybody acting on her behalf, had sent somebody to Italy in search for Ottilia Morro other than Dr. Graye, whom her solicitors did send and whose credentials cannot be disputed, the fact would have been mentioned in that telegram. But it is not. And I have not the least doubt that if you, or I, wired to London, to the owners of the eminent names which appear on the credentials these two people produced to you, we should find that they know nothing about the credentials. I am not a betting man, but I would lay a thousand pounds to a penny those credentials are—forged."

The priest looked his amazement.

"But—what, then, did these people want with Ottilia?" he asked.

"Yes," said Graye, "that is what I want to know. What's your explanation, Wirlescombe?"

The detective smiled grimly.

"I have a clergyman on one side of me, and a doctor on the other," he said. "If I only had a lawyer in front, I should be surrounded by the three men who are held to know pretty well all that can be known by man about man. Does nothing suggest itself to you, gentlemen? Well, then, it does to me. I think that these people are anxious, deeply, earnestly anxious, to suppress whatever evidence Ottilia Morro can give."

Graye let a sharp exclamation escape him. He

suddenly saw what Wirlescombe meant. And the priest started.

"Then—Ottilia Morro is—in danger?" he said quickly.

"Probably," replied Wirlescombe, quietly. "Indeed, I should say—certainly."

"Then," said the priest, "what is to be done? She went with such confidence in these people that she will follow their orders blindly."

Graye started up.

"Let's do something, Wirlescombe!" he exclaimed. "Let's act."

But Wirlescombe remained seated. He turned to the chaplain again, and pulled out a notebook.

"Now, your reverence," he said. "Just tell me a few things. I suppose Ottilia was in her religious dress when she left?"

"No," answered the priest. "She was not. She was in lay attire—it was thought much more advisable that she should be."

"Oh!" said Wirlescombe. He looked at the ecclesiastic and smiled whimsically. "I'm afraid your reverence can't describe that?" he added.

The priest smiled, too.

"Well, but perhaps I can," he said. "I am supposed to have a faculty of observation—I was a journalist before I took orders. Well, now it was a very plain travelling dress of blue serge and with it was worn an equally plain black hat, in which was a single black and white feather. How will that suit your purposes?"

"An inconspicuous attire," replied Wirlescombe. "But with it, and the photographs Dr. Graye collected at Naples, we may do something. Now, her companions. You perhaps noted their attire, sir?"

"To a certain extent," answered the priest. "The man wore a heavy brown travelling ulster, with a hood depending from the collar. The woman was



in a dark fur coat, which may have been very deep brown or black. It was hard to tell in the electric light of the station."

"And they travelled—what class?"

"They travelled by the *wagon-lits*—it seemed to me, from what I observed, that the man was in command of considerable funds."

"Naturally, he would be, coming from such a wealthy woman as Lady Wargrave," observed Wirlescombe sardonically, as he closed his note book and rose. "Very well, your reverence—now I will get to work on the wires. I must ascertain where that train stopped, and telegraph to every station at which it did stop; I must communicate also with a trusted agent of mine in Paris, who will be there to meet it when it arrives this evening. But my impression is that when that train does land in Paris, it won't be carrying Ottilia Morroni nor the two people in whose company you saw her leave Rome."

"You suspect foul play?" said the priest as he too, rose.

"I suspect foul play," answered Wirlescombe. "And the sooner we get to work to stop it the better. Come, doctor."

Outside the convent, Graye turned eagerly to his companion.

"In heaven's name, Wirlescombe, what do you suspect?" he demanded. "What do you make of all this?"

Wirlescombe lighted a cigar and smoked for a little time before he answered.

"I was putting a theory together while we talked with his reverence in there," he answered at last.

"And that theory is this—I think that there are people existing who are as much interested in the affair as we are; that they heard Lady Wargrave's statement at Bow Street; that they immediately

concluded that Ottilia Morro would be sought for on Lady Wargrave's behalf; that they knew it was against their interests if Ottilia were produced, and that they at once determined to forestall any attempt to produce her. Now, can you think of any persons who fit in with that theory?"

Graye started. The idea that had occurred to him in the chaplain's room came to him again.

"You mean—the Di Spadas!" he exclaimed.

"I mean the Di Spadas—all three of them. It is probably Stefano di Spada and his wife who have carried off Ottilia; in that case, it is certain that they knew quite well where Ottilia was, while you had to look for her. Accordingly, all the more reason why we should be on Ottilia's track and theirs. Let me get to the telegraph, and be ready to leave Rome at a moment's notice."

"But—but your investigation here?" said Graye.

"My investigations here," replied the detective, "were completed early this morning."

## CHAPTER IX.

### VENDETTA ?

**D**URING the next two hours Graye witnessed an exhibition of his companion's powers of resource and of thoroughness. Once having made up his mind on the right course to pursue, Wirlescombe quickly showed what may be done when one knows how to do what is to be done, and can spend money in one's pleasure at doing it. The detective interviewed the principal police authorities, the railway authorities; he procured the services of an official interpreter; he raced from the Prefecture to the station in the swiftest automobile he could procure; he tore from the station to the telegraph office and despatched messages here and there, regardless of cost, and much to the admiration of the clerks. And, at last, dismissing the interpreter for the time being, he slipped a hand into his companion's arm and led him out of the telegraph office into the sunny streets.

"There, that's enough for the morning, doctor," he said. "Now, let's find a quiet restaurant down here in the middle of the city. My English stomach is beginning to feel empty after all that work on a cup of coffee and a roll at half-past six. And I had done a good deal before I came back to you."

"In relation to—is it Cafferata, the unknown man's name?" asked Graye.

"Just so. I'll tell you all about it when we've eaten our lunch or breakfast, or whatever these people mean by *déjeuner*. Here's a promising place, and you can air your Italian."

In a quiet corner of the restaurant which they entered, Wirlescombe, over the cigars and coffee, told Graye what he had done that morning.

"The place in the *Viá Nazionale*—one of the very new-looking streets coming down from the station," he said, "to which I found a reference in the pocket-book that I mentioned to you, proved to be, as to the ground floor, a shop given up to the sale of newspapers, small articles of stationery, and picture postcards—especially the latter, and very improper and most shameless the majority of them are, considering that they are under the very shadow of St. Peter himself! And, as to the upper floor, let off in rooms to families or bachelors. The proprietor of the *cartolina* shop was a pleasant and merry gentleman, who, if he had been picturesquely arrayed, instead of being in a much-stained cheap suit of tweed and in his shirt sleeves, would have looked like one of the brigands that you see in operas, and he turned out to be landlord of the rooms above; he also turned out to be a very fair speaker of French, which language, doctor, I fortunately can speak as well as my own. It was not too early to treat him to coffee, to a little glass, and a cigar at a small *ristoranti* across the street, and when I had explained a few things to him he became quite communicative. Yes—he remembered the man Carlo Cafferata quite well—was he not Carlo's landlord for a period?—yes, for some two months—and though it was now seven years since Carlo had crossed the threshold for the last time he remembered him as if it were but yesterday. And then he told

me what I had suspected. Which was, doctor, that Carlo Cafferata was a Corsican."

"What made you suspect that?" asked Graye, wonderingly.

"Never mind. I will tell you later. A Corsican. He came to Rome—that is, according to what he told my Catolina friend—direct from Ajaccio to attend certain law lectures. He was a man of simple life and tastes, much given to study. When he left Rome on that fatal journey to London, he left a lot of law books in his landlord's keeping, saying that he should be back in three weeks. The landlord recognised this pocket-book, in which you see, there is the gilt-embossed stamp of a stationer in the Corso, round the corner. This stationer had a big clearance sale; my informant bought up a job lot of odds and ends, and was able to sell pocket-books like this for two lira. Cafferata bought this one. I have no doubt that the man whom you saw at Graffi's that night of the fog, who lodged in Soho with Aldobrandini, whom we saw lying shot in the upper room of that empty house, was the man of whom my man of the *Venezia Nazionale* told me. Not a doubt!—nor that he was lured into that empty house and murdered. And that is why I had a notion, a strong suspicion, that he hailed from Corsica."

"I am a slow-thinking chap," said Graye. "I want to know about this Corsican theory. How did it come to you, and what has it to do with the case?"

Wirlescombe smiled.

"What little I read, doctor," he answered, "is chiefly in the literature and history of my own profession. I have a pretty good library of that sort of thing—you shall see it some day. Now it has puzzled my brains a good deal to get an idea as to the murder of the man whom we now know by

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name of Carlo Cafferata. And it suddenly struck me—may not this be the result of a vendetta?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Graye. "I know what you mean, but I'm afraid I'm not much up in the true facts of the vendetta."

"Then let me give you a bit of elementary instruction," said Wirlescombe. "I'm only repeating to you, of course, what I've learnt from books. Principally because of the hereditary influence which gave to the true Corsican an individuality of his own which was quite distinct from that of his nearest neighbours of the Mediterranean or Italy, the real law of Corsica was an unwritten code of honour which centred round the family honour. No Government law was even as strong as this. Let the member of any one family ever receive the least injury or slight, even a fancied one, from the member of another, and immediately a blood feud arose between the two families which exercised its influence to the most distant relations. Now, the most awful fact about this blood feud, the vendetta, was that nothing but total extinction of every branch of the two families could possibly stamp it out. The original principals would die; their descendants would die; generation after generation would disappear, but as long as the remotest collateral relation remained, the vendetta remained. And you must bear in mind that it was an obligation which was regarded as sacred. The Corsican who from cowardice—a thing almost unbelievable in a Corsican!—or from natural shrinking—which would by them be regarded as the same thing as cowardice—or from sentiment, or pity, or from any cause whatever, refrained from vengeance on the enemy of his family or party, was regarded with a loathing and contempt which we cannot understand. In short, the true Corsican was always on the *qui vive*—it was his *métier* to be ever ready for attack

or for defence. If you had been the sixteenth cousin removed of the man who had slighted one of another family, the most distant relative of that family would have shot you on sight if he had done his strict duty in accordance with the unwritten laws of the vendetta. In fact," concluded the detective, "in my bit of reading I've come across cases in which at last, out of two flourishing and widespread families, only one man was left of one of them, he having, in the end, managed to kill the last survivor of the other before he himself was killed by him."

"And you think that Cafferata's murder in London may have been the result of a vendetta?" said Graye.

"I do—taking all the circumstances into consideration. He was, according to our informant, a peaceable young man, a studious one, of quiet habits; he led a sober life here, and in London, too, during the short time he lodged with Aldobrandini. Then he is suddenly found assassinated in circumstances which go to prove that he was lured into the empty house, for, otherwise, why should he go there? Yes, I think a vendetta might explain all that; but to get a full history of it I'm afraid we should have to journey across to Corsica. And it wouldn't surprise me, either, to find that old Marco Graffi's murder arose from a vendetta, too."

"The same vendetta?" exclaimed Graye.

"Why not? There are certain matters of which I've never been able to get the slightest information. When did Cafferata first call on Marco Graffi? How often did he come to the flat in Austerlitz Mansions? According to Lady Wargrave—you see, I did get a few scraps of information from her—she only saw Cafferata at the flat once before the night of the fog, but I have no doubt that he frequently visited the old man."

after midnight. He certainly possessed keys to the building and to old Graffi's flat."

"So, too, did Ottilia Morro," remarked Graye, reflectively. "Lady Wargrave told me that at Bow Street."

"I am hoping to get a good deal of information out of Ottilia Morro—if we find her, and find her alive," said Wirlescombe. "And it is time now that we had some replies to those wires. Let's go and see if anything has come."

But before they could leave the restaurant, there appeared the official whom Wirlescombe had secured as interpreter, accompanied by a police functionary, who seemed, from his demeanour, to be the bearer of important news. Wirlescombe invited them to seats and to refreshments, knowing that there is no objection to doing business in Rome any more than there is in London or in New York or in Timbuctoo over a glass and a cigar.

"You have news?" he asked, when the polite ceremonies had been duly gone through. "You have heard—what?"

The police functionary, with a bow which was of the nature of a salute, made a communication to the interpreter which sounded pretty much like the finding of a court-martial, read out in stiff and formal sentences by its presiding officer.

"He says,"—said the interpreter—"that it is reported from Genoa that three persons, answering the descriptions forwarded on information supplied by you, arrived at that city in the early hours of this morning by the rapide from here, and having only personal baggage."

"Good," said Wirlescombe. "Continue."

"But he also says," went on the interpreter, "that it seems doubtful if these are the three persons you are in search of, because, according to your information, those persons whom you want took



tickets for Paris at the station here in Rome, whereas the persons who arrived in Genoa gave up tickets from Rome to that place."

"Oh, indeed!" said Wirlescombe. "That was a highly ingenious trick on their part, and shows that his reverence up there at the convent was right in supposing them to have had plenty of money about them. The man took good care to book twice, you see, doctor," he continued, turning to Graye. He looked at the police functionary and nodded as with satisfaction.

"Tell the gentleman," he went on, addressing the interpreter, "that I have no doubt the three persons who alighted at Genoa are the three persons upon whom I wish to lay hands, and that I hope he is able to tell me what became of them."

The police functionary once more delivered himself of formal sentences.

"He says," continued the interpreter, "that these three persons on arrival at Genoa, proceeded to an hotel, and that they there registered their name as Mr., Mrs. and Miss Smith of London. Mr. Smith being of the rank of gentleman."

"Very good," said Wirlescombe. "Has the signor anything else to tell, or to ask?"

"He desires to know if you wish the police at Genoa to keep observation on this Mr. Smith and his accompanying ladies," replied the interpreter.

"It must at the same time be understood that unless good reason be shown, nothing can be done in the way of detention or arrest—they, so far, being apparently innocent and inoffensive travellers."

"Tell him that it will certainly be of advantage to me if the authorities at Genoa can keep an eye—several eyes—on these three people," replied the detective. "Tell him to tell the Genoa police that I leave for their city as soon as I can get a train from here, and that I shall be glad if they will

watch the hotel until I come, and if the three persons leave it, ascertain where they go.

Then the gathering broke up, and Wirlescombe and Graye, having returned to their hotel, paid their accounts and made their arrangements, crossed to the station, and took the next train for Genoa, where, after a dismal journey in which both anathematised the Italian ideas of comfort and of speed, they arrived about midnight, to be accosted by a little man in a large fur-collared coat, who made a ceremonious bow and introduced himself as a police agent, and remarked, incidentally, that he spoke the English very good.

"I have the news for you," he continued, drawing his English *confrere* aside into a shadow. "The three people, they have gone. Departed from the hotel where they was until they were not there before—eh?"

Wirlescombe uttered an exclamation which signified angry disappointment. The little man wagged two fingers.

"But—*ma foi!*" he said, consolingly. "I myself—Pasci—I watch them. They have gone to the private establishment of the Doctor Moreno. There—they went!"

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SECRET APPEAL.

**W**IRLESCOMBE, excusing himself for the moment to the police-agent, led Graye aside.

"At any rate, we know they are here," he said. "Now, to-night we will put up at the hotel at which they stayed—we may learn something there. But it will not do to take this Signor Pasci there: yet I want to ask him a few questions and give him some instructions. Come—we will offer him a drink in the restaurant yonder."

The little Genoese had no objection to joining the Englishmen in a drink—far from it. And in a quiet corner of the refreshment-room Wirlescombe got to work, keen on finding out as much as he could without delay.

"So, signor, you watched these three—Mr., Mrs. and Miss Smith—to the private establishment of—how do you call him?—Dr. Moreno. What is it—a nursing home?"

"It is where he receives private patients who are what you call a little ——" Here Pasci, finding no suitable word in his limited vocabulary, tapped his forehead. "A little—you know?"

"Mentally afflicted—weak of head," said the detective. "Ah! just so. Well, now, first of

all—is anybody watching that place? Keeping as strict a watch as I said in my wire from Rome must be kept on the hotel?"

Pasci nodded his head and smiled with apparent self-satisfaction.

"You may trust me, signor. Although I did myself the honour of coming personally to greet so distinguished a foreign colleague at the station, I entrusted the task of watching to men under my supervision who are almost as keen-eyed as I am myself. In fact, not as much as a mouse could cross the threshold of Dr. Moreno's establishment to-night without my knowledge of it. I go back there, personally, when Signor Wirlescombe—I do not pronounce the name well, but you will excuse, signor—is pleased to dismiss me."

"It is all right," said Wirlescombe. "I'm greatly obliged to you, signor. Understand, there need be no, there is to be no, question of expense. Let your men know that everybody who does his duty will be handsomely rewarded. I am employed by people who do not care what money is spent, and this gentleman is a rich English milord who will compensate everybody as all English milords do to whom sovereigns are no more than scudi and five-pounds notes than lira. So, watch like cats at the hole of a mouse, my friend. Now, this gentleman and I will go to the hotel where these three people stayed, just as if we were ordinary travellers, of course; but, perhaps, I may learn something there. There is, of course, a night-porter at that hotel?"

"Oh, of a certainty, signor!"

"Then, if anything happens during the night, come instantly and rouse me. You must understand that there are two things of which I am afraid, or, rather, against which I wish to guard. One is lest these people should go away by train; the other, lest they should board one of the sea-going

steamers. They could get off from here to several ports, could they not ? ”

“ It is true,” said the little agent, “ and there are two boats departing to-night, or, rather, this morning— one to America, calling at Gibraltar ; one for Egypt and India, calling at Naples and Messina. But I give you my word, signor—again a thousand pardons for the inability to pronounce your name !—that Mr. Smith and his ladies shall not leave by boat nor train nor by anything—unless they fly of their own accord.”

“ Excellent ! ” said Wirlescombe. “ Then my friend and I will drive to the hotel and go to bed. But—two questions. You have seen this Mr. Smith ? ”

“ Oh, yes, I saw him —I saw them all.”

“ Did you recognise him —had you ever seen him before ? ”

“ Not to my knowledge. But—I should not have taken him for an Englishman. I should have said that he was a Corsican.”

Wirlescombe started and glanced at Graye.

“ Why a Corsican, Signor Pasci ? ” he enquired.

Signor Pasci shrugged his shoulders, smiled, and pointed a finger towards a far corner of the restaurant.

“ A fancy, an idea, a suggestion, signor,” he replied. “ And, then—Corsica is only a little way across the Gulf of Spezzia there, and I have seen much of it and of its people.”

“ Just so. Well, the other question. Do you know anything of this Dr. Moreno ? ”

“ But very little. He is one of those gentlemen who keep within their own houses and are seen little abroad.”

“ I see. Well, perhaps we shall manage to see him. Now, good-night, signor, and remember the strict observation and the handsome reward that is to be gained. Watch—watch ! ”

Then Wirlescombe and Graye went off to the hotel which the police-agent had mentioned as being that at which Mr., Mrs. and Miss Smith had stayed, and the detective retired to bed immediately, refusing to discuss what he called business any longer. And, getting to bed, he slept soundly until seven o'clock in the morning, and at eight went down to the saloon to find Graye idling over his coffee. The young doctor looked up as Wirlescombe, bustling and fresh after his bath and a vigorously-performed toilette, came along, and he cocked an eye towards a man, obviously the head waiter, who stood at the end of the room watching both of them with interest.

"See that fellow down there?" said Graye. "He's never stopped staring at me since I came down. And now he's staring at you, or at both."

Wirlescombe affected to take no notice, but he watched the man out of his eye-corners, and saw that he was taking the interest in Graye or himself to which the young doctor alluded. He drank his coffee and ate his roll and chatted with his companion. The head-waiter, moving about the room as if in superintendence of his satellites, drew nearer and nearer to their table. And at last he came up to it with a mysterious air, and bent, napkin in hand, towards Wirlescombe, probably picking him out as obviously the elder of the two.

"The gentlemen are English?" he said meaningly.

"We are English," answered Wirlescombe. "Both. Well?"

"I heard the gentleman speak English. I—there is something I should like to say to messieurs." He glanced about him as other early risers came into the room. "If I might come to messieurs in the little smoking-saloon, outside there—in how long?"

"When we go in there," answered Wirlescombe, calmly.

The man bowed and withdrew in silence, and the detective looked at Graye.

"More mystery for you," he observed.

"What can he want?" said Graye. "He looks secret enough for a part in a melodrama."

"He is probably a prince or nobleman kept out of his patrimony or his lawful estates and anxious to enlist the services of the powerful British Government," replied Wirlescombe, as he drank off his coffee. "Come on, doctor, we'll light a cigar and hear what he has to reveal."

The head-waiter followed them into the little smoking-room which he had indicated, and after glancing about him in a fashion which suggested still further need of precaution, closed the door and advanced upon them with another bow.

"It is because messieurs are English that I venture to speak to them," he said. "Messieurs, yesterday there were in the hotel some other English. Now they come seldom, the English, the season being but beginning for the two Rivièras. As I say, yesterday there were three here—a gentleman, two ladies—three."

"Yes," said Wirlescombe.

"My wife," continued the head-waiter, "is a *femme-de-chambre* in this hotel—according, she wait upon these ladies. The gentlemen, he have one room; the ladies, they have another room. One lady is younger than the others—much. She—the young one—is never left alone; that we observe, my wife and I—she upstairs, I downstairs. Also we observe that the young lady seems what you call—disturbed, upset in her mind. The others, they are always with her somewhere. All the same, just before the three depart, the young lady she manage to slip to my wife this, with a little gratuity,

messieurs, and a look that means—silence. See then, messieurs."

And from his breast pocket the man drew out a much-crumpled envelope, from which he produced a scrap of paper wrapped about another envelope, folded in two. He smoothed the paper out before the Englishmen, and for their benefit translated the one line, hastily scrawled in pencil, which appeared upon it.

*"Please give the enclosed to the first English people who come here."*

Wirlescombe glanced at Graye, and then looked at the head waiter, who gave him the folded envelope, always watching him intently.

"So my wife, messieurs," he went on, "she give this to me—and as messieurs are English I hand it to them. It is just as my wife receive it from the young lady—we lock it up until some English gentleman or lady arrive."

"You have done well," said Wirlescombe. "I shall not forget you. Now, a question or two. These three people left here yesterday?"

"In the afternoon, monsieur."

"Do you know where they went?"

The head-waiter spread his hands. He did not know. Not to the station, for then they would have had the hotel omnibus. They went away in a carriage, a *fiacre*, luggage and all—what they had of it, which was little: only three handbags. But the driver of the carriage could be found, if monsieur so desires."

"It is not necessary," replied Wirlescombe. "Very well. Say nothing of this to anyone—either you or your wife."

"Monsieur may rely on our discretion."

And the head-waiter withdrew, and Wirlescombe



took out a penknife and ripped open the folded envelope.

"What is this going to tell us?" he said. "The writing, of course, must be Ottilia Morro's. Now for it."

All that the envelope contained was a crumpled scrap of paper, similar to that on which the message to the *femme-de-chambre* had been hastily scribbled. A few lines in English appeared on it:

"I beg the first English people into whose hands this comes to help me. I am Ottilia Morro: in religion Sister Mary Ignatius of the Incarnation. I have been brought from Rome by two people, calling themselves Mr. and Mrs. Stephenson, who claim to have been sent for me by a friend of mine in London who is in great trouble and in need of me. Certain matters have made me suspicious that they are not what they profess to be, and I am much alarmed. They have broken the journey here to see a Doctor Moreno, whose evidence they say is necessary, and we are going to him now. But ——"

Here the letter broke off, and Wirlescombe, seeing that Graye had read all of it, folded and placed it in his pocket-book.

"Now, let us go out and meet Pasci," he said quietly. "I bade him meet us at the Café Vittoria Emmanuele, wherever it may be, at ten o'clock. We have plenty of time, and we will take a look round the city on our way. You may be sure that Pasci will keep or cause to be kept a strict watch on the Moreno establishment. Did you see his eyes gleam when I spoke of the handsome reward he would get? Come along. I think we have great doings before us."

"You still think the Di Spadas are in this?"

asked Graye an hour later as they were on their way to the café.

"I do. And, by the by, have you ever seen either of these Di Spadas? But, of course, I suppose you saw them at Ashendyke."

"I never saw them," replied Graye. "I have never seen either—either in London or at Ashendyke."

"Well, unfortunately, I, too, have never set eyes on either," said Wirlescombe. "I wish I had my man here who kept an eye on them in London. However, here's the café, and there's our Italian coadjutor."

The little police-agent welcomed the famous London detective with effusion, and led the way into the café, where he insisted on returning the hospitality of the previous night. No—there was nothing to report; certainly, the three persons in whom they were interested were still under Dr. Moreno's roof, on which a strict watch was being kept. And his—Pasci's—men knew where to find him.

"Very good; then we will rest for half an hour," said Wirlescombe, accepting a cigar. "And we can spend it in discussing ——"

He stopped short, his attention being suddenly attracted by the entrance of three men who turned into a shaded alcove near the door. Wirlescombe bent to Graye.

"I know two of those men," he whispered. "One is Monsieur Delpine, of the Paris detective force; the other is Mellish, one of Pinkerton's men from New York. And I would like much to know what they are after!"

## CHAPTER XI.

### RUN TO EARTH.

AT that moment, Wirlescombe, bending sidewise to Graye, felt a hand, eager and tremulous, laid on his sleeve. He turned, to find Pasci gazing at the one man of the three whom he did not know. The little man whispered to him in tones which were almost emotional with reverence.

"Signor—you see that gentleman who has just come in with the other two—strangers to me? It is the great Donato—famous in our secret-service force here. Ah! I did not know he was returned. He has been absent on business on the French Riviera. Later, I must make you known to him, signor. His fame has, of course, reached your ears?"

"Oh, of course!" replied Wirlescombe, who, to tell truth, had never heard of the great Donato before. "Of course. And you do not know the other two?"

"I do not, signor. Friends of Signor Donato's, without doubt."

"Well, I know them," said Wirlescombe, as he rose from his seat, "and I'll go across and have a word with them. Perhaps you and Signor Pasci can entertain each other for a few minutes by improving your knowledge of each other's language."

doctor?" he added, turning to Graye with a wink. Then he bent down and whispered:

"I'll lay you a pound to a penny that the presence of these chaps has something to do with our own, but I'll tell you in a minute. Keep the little man here."

The Frenchman and the American looked up in amazement as Wirlescombe's burly form and genial smile were presented to them round the corner of their alcove. They welcomed him with enthusiasm, introduced Signor Donato to him, and made room for him amongst them.

"And what brings Mr. Wirlescombe here to Genoa?" asked the Frenchman. "Business or pleasure? A little holiday after a long spell of work, eh?"

"Business," announced Wirlescombe promptly. "I might ask you both what brings you here, one from Paris, the other from New York, only I'm sure it is business. And, my dear *confreres*—Signor Donato, I drink your good health and to our better acquaintance—I should not be surprised if I found that my business was—yours."

The man from New York and the man from Paris looked at each other. Then they looked at the Italian.

"Well," said Mellish, after a silence, "and what is your business, Wirlescombe?"

"What's yours?" asked Wirlescombe.

"No," replied the American. "As you suppose yours is ours, it's up to you to tell us what yours is."

"All right," said Wirlescombe. "No objection, all's among friends. Well, I'm here because I want to see a man whom I've tracked from Rome. He was called Mr. Stephenson, of St. John's Wood, London, when he left there. He registered here in this city as Mr. Smith. But I believe that

his name—perhaps one of his names is Di Spada—eh?”

The three men glanced at each other. Wirlescombe laughed.

“Well, boys?” he said.

The detective from Paris bent forward.

“What charge have you against him?” he asked.

“None, I want to get hold of somebody who is in his charge—a young lady,” replied Wirlescombe. “Now, then—what have you got against him? Come, let’s be candid with each other. I felt sure we were after the same man.”

The three looked at each other, exchanging their thoughts by glances. Then the Frenchman and the Italian nodded at the American, and Mellish smiled and turned to the Englishman.

“It’s not a man, but two men that we want, Wir,” he said. “And their names, or some of their names, are surely Di Spada. A couple of brothers, Lucien and Stefano.”

“And you think one of them’s here?” asked Wirlescombe.

“We know that Lucien’s here. He’s been here a good ten days. And we’re living in hopes that Stefano’s either just arrived to meet Lucien, or is about to arrive. And, since you spoke, I’ve been figuring that the man you’ve mentioned is Stefano.”

“What do you want ’em for?” said Wirlescombe.

“Fraud,” answered Mellish. “Fraud—big and particular and ingenious. Carried out in New York, for which reason I am here—and in Paris, for which reason friend Delpine is here.”

“And Signor Donato?” asked Wirlescombe. “Where does he come in?”

“As friend of both parties—our parties,” answered Mellish. “Donato has been looking for Lucien di Spada in the neighbourhood of Nice, and only found out by accident that Lucien is here in Genoa. Now,

if it is true that Stefano has joined Lucien in this city, then I reckon we'll get both of 'em. I also reckon that some of the elegant furnishings of this establishment will get spoiled in the getting 'em, too."

"Fight, eh?" said Wirlescombe.

"Desperate sorts, both," replied Mellish. "And supposed to be handy with their guns."

"Why take them here, then?" asked Wirlescombe. "Why spoil the plate glass and the mahogany fittings?"

"For two simple reasons, my son. The first is that we understand, from information received, as the newspapers say, that Lucien di Spada, during his short residence in this city—of which, let me inform your British ignorance, Christopher Columbus was a worthy native—has formed the habit of visiting this café every morning at eleven o'clock to take an apéritif, to smoke a cigarette, and to read the newspaper—eh?"

"My British ignorance has taken that in. Well, and the second reason?"

"The second reason is that, so far as we know—so far as we know, I say—neither Lucien nor Stefano know us. Now, if Stefano accompanies Lucien hither, Master Wirlescombe, as it seems likely he will, we shall presume upon that fact to fall on them unobtrusively and gently, but none the less firmly. All the same, I say, look out for a mess."

"Maybe I can suggest something better than that," remarked Wirlescombe. "Only—I fear the gentlemen may know me, and, for all you know, they may know you. Are they expecting this?"

"So far as we are aware, no. Every'ing has been done most quietly. But we believe—also from information received—that their intention in coming here is to sail from this port to South America. There is a ship due out to-morrow."

"I suppose you fellows know them," said Wirlescombe.

"We know them very well," answered Mellish. "All three of us. And, you see those two hefty men lounging at the bar, there, drinking syrups? They are Donato's men—waiting developments."

"I have a hefty man here, too," said Wirlescombe, glancing at the loungers. "He'd break those two over his knee. Come over to that corner and be introduced, and we'll make a plan of campaign that will save a mess. I'm all for peace and quietness in these matters."

"Sure!" agreed Mellish. "So'm I. We'll step across."

But before the three men could rise in response to Wirlescombe's invitation, the detective, looking round, saw Graye beckoning to him from the alcove in which he still sat with little Pasci.

"Excuse me," he said, and went across the room. Graye, rising, met him, and motioned him to come further down the floor.

"What is it?" asked Wirlescombe. "Anything happened?"

Graye pulled him aside into another alcove.

"Have you looked at the man standing at that bar?" he said.

"Not particularly," replied Wirlescombe. "Why?"

"Sit down here where you can see along it. Behind where you were sitting with your friends there is a man standing who is dressed in a grey tweed suit and wearing a Homburg hat. Don't look purposely, but take a glance at him presently. Now, if you like; his face is partly turned this way."

Wirlescombe slowly turned his head in the direction indicated. And it was with difficulty that he repressed a sharp exclamation.

"Well?" said Graye.

Wirlescombe turned an astonished face upon him.

"God bless me!" he exclaimed. "I should have said that was the man we found lying dead in that empty house—Cafferata!"

"And so should I," said Graye. "And ——"

Wirlescombe suddenly stopped him. Through the swing doors leading from the street came two men: tall, dark, clean-shaven, evidently brothers. And by a glance at the three detectives who were watching them, he knew that the expected quarry had arrived—before time. He leaned towards Graye.

"Look! The Di Spadas! Be silent—watch!"

It was very evident to Wirlescombe's practised eye that Lucien and Stefano di Spada believed themselves secure of any espionage or unusual observation. They sat down at a small table in the centre of the restaurant, between the long bar at which several men were lounging and the corner in which sat Mellish, Delpine, and Donato. They ordered drinks from the white-aproned waiter, who came hovering around them. They lighted cigars; one of them pulled out a pocket-book and drew out certain matters which he exhibited to the other. And Wirlescombe nudged Graye and whispered.

"Steamboat tickets!"

Then, keenly observant, he stole a glance at the three detectives in the opposite alcove. A sort of telegraphic communication was going on between him and the two plain-clothes men who were standing at the bar; the latter edged down the room, making pretence of examining something on the counter, until they were immediately behind the two brothers and in such a position that by turning they could grip them by the elbow; Mellish and his companion seemed to be preparing for a sudden rush. Wirlescombe braced himself ——



"Look out!" suddenly exclaimed Graye. "Look out!"

But even as he spoke the affair had begun and was over. The man in the grey suit and the Homburg hat suddenly wheeled round, drawing a revolver as he turned, and had fired, once, twice before his nearest neighbour could lay a hand on his wrist. And at the first shot one of the brothers leaped in his chair and sank heavily to the floor; at the second, the other crashed down across the table before him.

In the grim silence that followed, the man in the Homburg hat calmly jerked two cartridges out of his revolver and slipped the still smoking weapon back to its place in his hip-pocket. He faced the excited men who had risen to their feet on all sides.

"Vendetta!" he said quietly. "They killed my brother. Now, I have killed them. Oh, you may look at them—they are dead."

The detectives bustled around the dead and the living; the assassin again spoke calmly.

"I am Ugo Cafferata," he said. "I am at your disposal. These men are Lucien and Stefano di Spada—they murdered my brother, Carlo, in London, seven years ago; it is only lately that I discovered that, and I have been seeking them ever since. Now I have got them. Turn them over as you like—they are dead. A bullet through the brain of that—through the heart of this. I remain here—at your disposal. I am not afraid. I shall be acquitted. Vendetta!"

"Here is a doctor," said Wirlescombe, and pushed Graye forward. "See if they are dead," he whispered.

Stefano di Spada was dead enough when they raised him up from the table across which he had fallen. But Lucien still breathed, and opened his

eyes as they laid him on a lounge. Graye saw, however, that he would be gone in a few minutes; he also saw that the dying man recognised him. And mindful of Gemma's interests he put his lips to his ear.

"You are dying fast," he said. "I see you know me. Tell me, quick—is there anything you want to say about the Graffi affair? Speak, if you can."

And he moistened the man's lips with brandy and raised his head. Lucien made an effort.

"Ottilia Morro," he faltered. "At—Doctor Moreno's here—Ottilia Morro knows everything."

Then his eyes closed and Graye laid him back—dead.

\* \* \* \* \*

An hour later, in Doctor Moreno's parlour, Graye, having explained his mission, handed to Ottilia Morro the letter which the old priest of Naples had entrusted to him. She read it through, carefully, before she turned to Graye and Wirlescombe.

"So I am to go to London with you?" she said.

Graye bowed.

"Very well. I will go with you. This letter counsels me to go. And—you tell me that Lucien di Spada is dead?"

"He is dead. And Stefano also."

"I am not concerned with Stefano, except that he brought me here by a trick. But Lucien—that is another matter. Did he—did he say anything—confess anything before he died?"

"No," replied Graye. "He said that you know everything."

Ottilia looked at the two men calmly and meditatively.

"Yes," she said after a brief pause. "Yes, I know

everything. But I shall say nothing until the time comes for me to speak."

And all the way to England she kept silence on the matter that filled the minds of her companions to the exclusion of all other subjects.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE TRUTH.

**W**ITHIN and without the Central Criminal Court there is, on this December day, a gathering of people such as the folk of the neighbourhood have not known since the last grey stones of Newgate disappeared before the picks and hammers of the men who dismantled it. It is a cold day, a raw, uncomfortable day; one of the last of the sessions, and also one of the last of autumn; a light drizzling rain has fallen ever since morning and a keen east wind accompanies it. Yet outside, in the Old Bailey, and at the corner of Newgate Street, and even along the pavement of Holborn Viaduct, hundreds of people linger on, waiting for any fragment of news that escapes to them from a court which they know to have been packed since its public galleries were opened in the morning. For this is the second day of the Wargrave trial, and it has been asserted that the verdict will be given before evening, and these people are so anxious, so impatient, to know the result, that they are willing to brave all the elements of heaven if only they can hear it a minute or two before the special editions of the newspapers would give it to them.

For there is a new feature in this case. With the case for the prosecution everybody is familiar,

because of the reports of the proceedings before the magistrate at Bow Street. That case has been put forward again, practically with no addition or amplification, during yesterday and this morning. Adrian Graye has once more, tersely and unwillingly, told his story of his adventures on the night of the great fog seven years ago. All the other witnesses have told their stories. The man in the street knows exactly what the case against Lady Wargrave really amounts to. Many—perhaps most—of the representatives of the man in the street are disposed to think about this affair exactly as the majority of the jurymen at the coroner's inquest thought about it. They consider Lady Wargrave guilty. "Knifed the old man so's she could git away to where the Heyetialians comes from, see?—that's what she done," is the popular opinion. To the man in the street the supreme attraction of this trial lies not in speculation as to what the verdict will be, but in a comfortable gloating over the sensation of hearing that a young and beautiful and rich woman is to have her neck broken by the latest successor of Jack Ketch. Few criminals are rich and beautiful and young and titled; to hear of such a one swinging like Bill Stringer or Maria Mudge will be a *bonne bouche* to the folk who love crime as cats love cream.

But there is an element, a spice of uncertainty in the dish which lends added flavour to it. It is remembered that in the little speech which Lady Wargrave insisted on making at Bow Street she spoke of having run away with a certain Ottilia Morro. Well, this Ottilia Morro has been found, under the most dramatic and romantic circumstances, by the young doctor, Adrian Graye, who has figured so largely and so strangely in the case. He discovered her in a convent—dragged her out by main force, in the very presence of the Pope himself, as the man in the street—or his womankind—

and had to slay several people in the accomplishment of the doughty deed. Moreover, this Ottilia has been brought to England, and she is to give evidence for Lady Wargrave, and that evidence, it is said, will be startling and surprising—naturally it must be, coming from such a creature of romance. So says the man in the street.

But what the better informed—the Grayes, the Kenrickses, the Wirlescombes, the Herberts, the Chrisenburys of this case—know is that nobody knows—nobody—what Ottilia Morro can or will tell. She has been as obstinate since her arrival in England as Lady Wargrave was until that moment in Bow Street, when she suddenly felt moved to speak. Graye and Wirlescombe talked to her en route from Genoa to London, and got nothing out of her. Mr. Kenrick interviewed her in his private room, and was equally disappointed. Mr. Chrisenbury, eloquent, persuasive, almost pathetically pleading and nearly tearful, was let loose upon her when Mr. Kenrick had retired discomfited. Mr. Chrisenbury had no better fortune. Ottilia acknowledges that she knows everything. What is more, she steadfastly promises to tell everything at the right moment, but she will not say a word until that moment comes. It is quite useless to point out to her, as Mr. Kenrick points out, as Mr. Chrisenbury also points out, that it is usual to take a note of the evidence of witnesses before they ever come near giving it. Ottilia is profoundly ignorant of legal matters, and absolutely indifferent to their grave character. When the right moment comes she will speak—until then she desires to be left alone, in order that she may prepare herself to speak the truth. And having found a sheltering convent, Ottilia retires to it, and dons her nun's clothing again. She will emerge, she says, when the hour strikes in which she is to enter the witness-box.

This hour has at last struck. To the crowded court it seems as if there was little more to be said as regards the Graffi murder case—unless, indeed, this mysterious witness had got something very remarkable to say. All else is over. Lady Wargrave has been into the box, and has repeated what she said at Bow Street. Everybody has admired her beauty, and some folk have believed her artless story. But now is the moment in which something ought to happen. Will it?

“Call Ottilia Morro!”

There is what the newspaper reporters call a sensation in court as the witness is escorted through a tight pack of people from the room in which she has been kept. There is something very severe and ascetic about the peculiarly sombre attire of the strict order to which she belongs. Something still more ascetic in the very pale face which she presently lifts, with an attempt at bravery and courage, as she faces the court. The keen-eyed think that her face is thin and wan; certainly those are wan and thin fingers which nervously clasp the religious emblem which hangs at her breast. Nervous—yes, she is very nervous, the critical spectators decide. They argue, accordingly, that what she has to say is highly important.

Mr. Crisenbury, rising to examine this witness, also betrays signs of, perhaps not nervousness, but of uncertainty. He glances, somewhat diffidently, at the judge.

“I am in something of a curious position about this witness, my lord,” says Mr. Crisenbury. “We believe her to be a most valuable witness for the defence, but the fact is that we do not know what her evidence amounts to. For some strange reason, the witness has steadily refused to tell us what the evidence is which she can give. She has only promised to give it. She affirms that she knows every-

thing about this matter—that she can clear it up. As I say, my lord, I do not know what it is she can tell. Perhaps your lordship ——”

His lordship quickly settles this point.

“Let the witness’s identity be settled, and then let her tell us as clearly as she can—I observe that she speaks English quite perfectly—all that she knows of the matter, in her own way.”

So Mr. Chrisenbury plucks at his gown, and turns to his witness, having glanced at a few meagre notes which lie before him on a half-sheet of paper.

“You are a nun of the Order of the Incarnation, at their house or convent in Rome, and your religious name is Sister Mary Ignatius?”

“Yes.”

“But your real name is Ottilia Morro?”

“No.”

“No! What is it, then?”

“I have been known by that name, and by a stage name—two stage names. But my real name is Ottilia di Spada.”

“Are you a relation of the two men, Lucien and Stefano di Spada, whose names have figured in this case?”

“Yes—their cousin. But I never saw Stefano di Spada in my life to know him until I was shown his dead body in Genoa three weeks ago.”

“But you knew Lucien?”

“Lucien brought me to London—nine years ago.”

“Yes? May I ask why he brought you, and from where?”

The nun’s thin fingers take a closer hold on the emblem at her breast.

“He brought me from Corsica—we are Corsicans. I came with him—as his mistress.”

Amidst the slight murmur which this admission arouses, Mr. Chrisenbury whispers to Mr. Kenrick. Mr. Kenrick responds. And Mr. Chrisenbury now



looks rather more at ease, and his manner becomes more confident.

"Then you would naturally be familiar with Lucien di Spada's secrets, if he had any. Did he give you his full confidence?"

"He caused me to think that he did."

Mr. Chrisenbury pauses. He seems to be considering grave matters. When he looks at his witness again his manner is persuasive and inviting.

"Now, will you act on his lordship's suggestion, and tell us plainly what you know of this affair? You have admitted that you know something about the murder of Marco Graffi. Do you?"

"I believe I know everything about it—and about the murder of the man called Carlo Cafferata, in Soho, also."

There is no repressing the murmur, no keeping down the thrill which follows this. But his lordship's voice is heard quite plainly as he turns to the witness.

"Tell your story in your own way;"

The nun braces herself. Her voice trembles. But the silence in court is so deep that everything she says is clearly heard in the furthest corners.

"It was after I had been eighteen months in London that I came to know the Graffis. I became very fond of Gemma. She was unhappy—she wished to return to Italy; she disliked London. I, too, wished to leave London. I found that Lucien was not—not what I had believed him to be. And Gemma and I began to plan our escape. She was not aware of my relationship to Lucien. She did not even know that we were cousins. I had some light work in Soho. She believed that I supported myself. Our idea was to escape to the Continent, and to earn our living by singing. We both possessed good voices. We used to meet and talk it over.

"One day, a day or two, I think, before the time of the big fog, Lucien di Spada came to me in a state of great excitement. Before he would tell me anything he reminded me that he, Stefano, and myself were the last of the Di Spadas, and he forced me to swear on the crucifix that I would not divulge what he was going to tell me, and that I would aid him and Stefano, as a Di Spada like themselves, in what must be done. He had such power over me that I took the oath. Then he told me that he had discovered that the real name of Marco Graffi and his granddaughter was not Graffi but Cafferata; that they came from Corsica; that a relation of theirs, another Cafferata, Carlo, a law student, was in London; that between the Di Spadas and the Cafferatas there was a blood feud, a vendetta, and that he and Stefano must avenge the family honour. They meant to go to the flat at night and to kill Signor Marco and Gemma; the relation, Carlo, they intended to lure to some quiet place.

"I knew that it was useless to plead for Gemma, for Lucien was a true Corsican. About the two men I did not care, then—for they were the enemies, or the descendants of enemies, of my family. But I made up my mind to break my oath, and to save Gemma. I found out from Lucien when the fatal night was to be—it was that night of the great fog. I arranged the last details for our escape, then I contrived to get into the flat at Austerlitz Mansions. I was, as a matter of fact, hidden in Gemma's room, when she and her grandfather and Mr. Graye came in. And as soon as she came to her room I told her of my plans, saying nothing, of course, of Lucien. As soon as the place was quiet we slipped out and went to the house of a friend. There we adopted a disguise, and so off to the Continent. We went from place to place, earning our own living, until Gemma met Sir Robert Wargrave and married him.

And then—when I had saved more money, which I wished to devote to the order I had long thought of joining, I left the world."

The nun paused, looked timidly around her, and bowed her head to the judge.

"That is all," she said.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are certain juries whose members are not slow in making up their minds as to the merits of a case. And Ottilia Morro had not long vanished from the eyes of the excited folk in court before the no less excited people outside heard that Lady Wargrave had been found not guilty, and saw her drive away westward in company with Adrian Graye.

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