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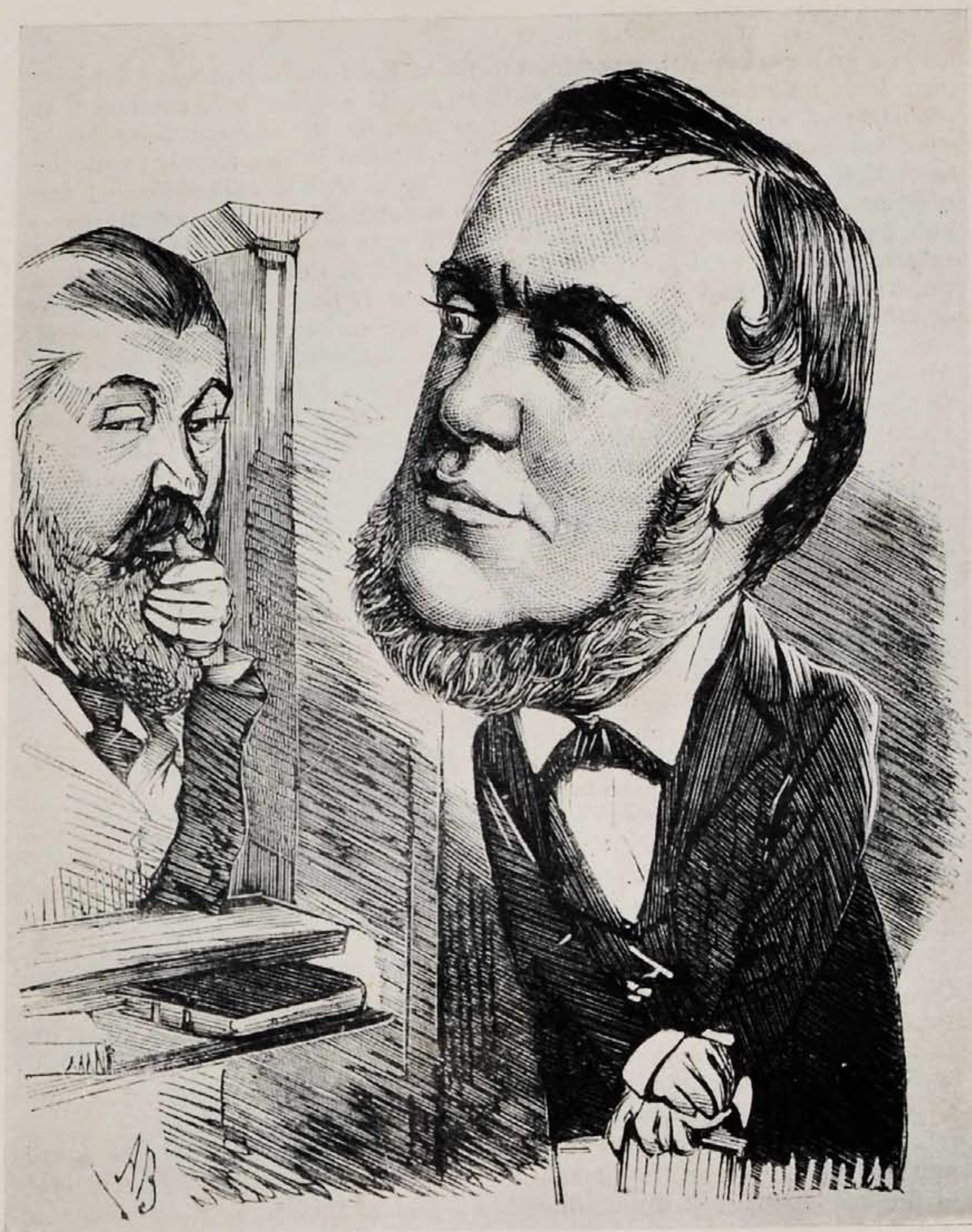

SUPERINTENDENT WILLIAMSON BEING CROSS-EXAMINED BY MR. BESLEY DURING TRIAL OF THE SCOTLAND YARD DETECTIVES

(From the caricature by Alfred Bryan)

[To face page 224

THE BENCH AND THE DOCK

BY

CHARLES KINGSTON

Author of "Dramatic Days at the Old Bailey," "Famous Judges and Famous Trials," "A Gallery of Rogues," etc.

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THE BENCH AND THE DOCK

CHAPTER I

The Old Bailey

(1)

Few visitors to the Black Museum at Scotland Yard give more than a passing glance at a formidable-looking set of iron chains which, labelled "*Flowery Land* pirates," usually fails to recall to their minds one of the most sensational dramas of the sea and the Old Bailey the world has ever known.

The beginning of the trouble was the indiscriminating recruiting of a polyglot crew, for to man a ship with Spaniards, Greeks, Turks, Chinamen, a Frenchman, a Norwegian and a negro—all of them "hard cases"—was simply inviting mutiny. There was scarcely a member of this precious collection who had not in his time committed murder, and the officers quickly realised that the only way to ensure a command being obeyed was to accompany it with clenched fist or shining revolver. But to such scum discipline was more repellent than death, and after some days at sea they formed a plot to murder their superiors and take possession of the ship.

Then followed a melodrama of the sea which reads like an extract from a novel by Clark Russell. The conspirators having agreed on their plans, four of them entered the captain's cabin on the stroke of midnight and shot him dead, and simultaneously another quartette of ruffians seized the first mate, who was the captain's brother, and threw him overboard. A council of war was then held to decide the fate of

the second mate, and that officer's throat was not cut simply because the crew were so ignorant that none of them could navigate the ship to port. Consequently, the second mate was given this task, a mutineer standing over him day and night with a loaded revolver to see that he did not steer them into a trap.

To the unfortunate mate it must have seemed like a voyage through hell itself. For weeks the ship crawled on, the mutineers indifferent to the slow passage of time because they found forgetfulness and what they considered happiness in broaching the numerous cases of champagne which constituted the cargo. These drinking orgies lasted until they came in sight of the River Plate, and then, having scuttled the vessel, they took to the boats and disappeared. The mate, however, in spite of a strict surveillance, succeeded in conveying information to the Brazilian government, and shortly afterwards seven of the mutineers were captured and sent home to England for trial.

The dock at the Old Bailey has never harboured such a collection of villianous-looking cut-throats as the seven murderers when they stood in a double row to have their fate settled by a judge and jury. Whatever signs of terror they had evinced on their arrest the journey from South America had removed and they seemed completely indifferent to their fate. But any observant person in the crowded court could not have failed to read in this callous attitude their contempt for human life, and there were moments when, as the prisoners muttered to one another in undertones, one could almost fancy they had the bloodstained knives still in their hands.

After a very careful trial all seven were found guilty and sentenced to death, and then the Home Secretary held another investigation with a view to ascertaining if any of the convicts were less culpable than the others. Eventually he reprieved two, and to the

Governor of Newgate, in whose custody the condemned were, was assigned the delicate task of acquainting the fortunate couple with the news which meant death to the remaining five.

The first of the reprieved yawned when told that he was not to be executed.

"It's nothing," he said, carelessly, and resumed his blank stare at the wall of the condemned cell.

"I am not to die! Good!" exclaimed the second man, "then I can have Antonio's shoes. They fit me exactly."

It was an extraordinary insight into the workings of the human mind. It would be impossible to imagine a man under sentence of death hoping that he alone would be reprieved so that he could inherit the shoes belonging to one of his comrades in crime. But that is exactly what happened in the case of the *Flowery Land* pirates. When they heard of the efforts being made on their behalf to reduce the number of executions it was Antonio's shoes which was the attraction to one of them—the reprieve was a secondary consideration—and the light of joy in the eyes of the villain snatched from the scaffold at the last moment was not due to relief but to a belief that a certain worn pair of shoes must soon be his. It had not occurred to him that a benevolent British government would provide him in penal servitude with better footgear than the wretched Antonio could bequeath to him and that food and warm clothing would be his until he had served the regulation number of years which, in the jargon of the law, represents "penal servitude for life."

But the callousness of the criminal with death staring him in the face has been a cause of wonderment from the beginning of the Old Bailey down to the present day. "Don't blubber—get it over," shouted a murderer when Mr. Justice Day's emotion made

him falter as he was delivering the dread sentence of the law. "Now we shan't be long," shouted another murderer in the year when that vacuous phrase was enjoying a nation-wide popularity.

"I'm afraid it's very cold," said a highly-strung chaplain to a ruffian who was due to expiate his offences on the scaffold thirty minutes later one freezing January morning. "Don't you worry about that," was the reply, accompanied by boisterous laughter, "for if what you say is true I'll be warm enough in half-an-hour."

To the sensitive and imaginative person death must always appear more terrible than it is. That is not cowardice; it is nervousness created by fear of the unknown. The brute who murders cruelly and in cold blood is almost without exception a coward, but it is the physical violence preceding death which he dreads. It is a significant fact that the woman murderer invariably collapses in the dock on hearing her fate, whereas the author of an unpremeditated crime involving the death penalty calmly listens to the verdict. There have been exceptions, of course, but the cowardly murderer is a coward to the end, and the dock at the Old Bailey could tell many a story proving that statement.

Who of those present at the trial of the Pole, Klowoski, who called himself George Chapman, can forget the final scenes? It was a full dress trial in every respect, but the mean personality in the dock gave the whole affair a disproportionate appearance. Mr. Justice Grantham on the bench looked the part of stern and unbending justice, and with Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P., and Solicitor-General, leading for the prosecution and Mr. George Elliott, K.C., for the defence, the best brains and talents of the Bar were well represented. It seemed as though all the battalions of the law had been mobilised to deal with

this wretched alien who had murdered four women with as little compunction as though they had been dogs, but the authorities considered it necessary that no risk should be run of Chapman escaping. He was a poisoner, and, officially at any rate, the poisoner is regarded as unworthy of mercy.

Shortly before his death the late Mr. Justice Grantham told me that he considered Chapman the most loathsome villain he had ever seen, and I reminded the judge then that at the trial he had expressed his satisfaction that the convict was not an Englishman. Certainly it was a fact worthy of emphasis, for if we have plenty of criminals of our own it is very seldom, indeed, that the Chapman type is found amongst them

The marvellous thing about it all is that Chapman should have committed his crimes with such impunity. His victims were women with plenty of friends and relations and he did not drag them into the lonely country to dispose of them. All his crimes were committed in crowded London, and the business that he followed, that of publican, indicates that publicity was part of his life. He lured women to their destruction by promising them lives of ease and luxury, and he administered poison with a smile and kissed their foreheads as they lay writhing in agony. Four of them went to their graves before his sins found him out, and though he had a lengthy innings, his victims were amply revenged that day at the Old Bailey in 1903 when, quivering like a jelly between the two warders who held him by the arms, he listened to the words from the bench which meant death.

During Sir Edward Carson's closing speech for the crown that eminent counsel occasionally paused to allow a point to get home, and then those of acute hearing could detect the quick intaken breath of the man in the dock who, with glittering eyes like those

of a starving animal, sat in a crouching attitude, one arm half raised as if attempting to ward off death itself. One ought to have pitied the wretch, I suppose, but it was simply impossible after hearing the story of his crimes. Chapman was one of society's mad dogs, and we know the only remedy for them.

The convict, completely robbed of the use of his limbs by terror, had to be carried from the dock by the warders, a limp mass of undiluted fear, and the last seen of him by those in court was a nerveless hand convulsively plucking at his throat as though he felt already the rope which less than three weeks later was to add another subject to the kingdom of Satan.

(2)

There are many jokes illustrating the readiness with which women will accept proposals of marriage from men of whom they know nothing. One of the best concerns a girl who, when proposed to over the telephone, answered "Yes," and then asked, "Who is it speaking?" Ridiculous, of course, and a pure invention! And yet the annals of the Old Bailey prove that even experienced women of the world can be more careless and unwise than the young lady of the telephone. I will give a case in point.

One morning a middle-aged lady and her daughter were walking on the front at Brighton when a good-looking man of about thirty raised his hat to them. The two ladies involuntarily stopped, although certain that the gentleman was a complete stranger to them.

"I'm sure I've met your daughter before, madam," he said, with a glance of approval at the very pretty girl, who was not altogether uninterested in his personality; "it may have been at a ball in London or, perhaps, at the house of a friend."

Mrs. Dash shook her head, and the girl was about to

acquaint him with the fact that they could not possibly have been acquainted previously when, influenced by what she considered the romantic nature of their encounter, she turned the conversation into another channel. After that what more natural than that Captain McDonald should escort the ladies up and down the parade or that he should tell them something about himself? He won their sympathy readily by means of a story of a hard-hearted parent who would not allow him to marry his daughter because he, McDonald, spent so much of his time at sea, his occupation being that of ship's captain. His voice shook when he tried to describe how he had felt when, on returning from a long voyage, he had found that the girl he had been engaged to had married in his absence.

There is scarcely any need to indicate the course of McDonald's courtship of Emma Dash. He took her heart by storm and had not the slightest difficulty in obtaining a complete influence over her mother. Within forty-eight hours he had proposed and was accepted, and exactly a week after that first meeting on the front, Emma Dash and McDonald were man and wife, in spite of the fact that she knew absolutely nothing about him and that her mother was equally ignorant. This was a whirlwind courtship with a vengeance and a romance which foreshadowed something dramatic. The drama promptly came when, after a honeymoon lasting from Saturday to Monday, they parted at her mother's house, for the bridegroom vanished, and when Emma next saw him he was in a police-station and she was wrathfully identifying him as the husband who had basely deserted her.

Between these two events, however, there was one of those remarkable coincidences which the most imaginative of novelists dare not invent. At the wedding breakfast of Captain and Mrs. McDonald

there had been only two guests, and one of these, a Mr. Osborne, was some months later invited by the Butchers' Company to a garden party at Fulham. Now Mr. Osborne had been greatly distressed by the cruelty of "Captain McDonald" towards the daughter of his old friend, and he was, therefore, as angry as astonished when amongst the company assembled in the garden he saw a man dressed in highland costume and recognised him at once as the missing bridegroom.

"Good afternoon, Captain McDonald," he said, in a tone which left no doubt as to its hostility.

"Excuse me, sir," answered the highlander "but my name is James Malcolm."

Mr. Osborne, not desirous of creating a scene, consulted an influential gentleman present, who at once took the Scotsman on one side and questioned him closely. The result of the enquiry was to establish beyond a doubt that the highlander's real name was James Malcolm, and that so far from being a sailor he was engaged in the humble if useful calling of meat-salesman.

Mr. Justice Stephen presided at the trial of James Malcolm, alias Captain McDonald, at the Old Bailey, on a charge of bigamy—the prisoner had gone through a ceremony of marriage years before the one he was alleged to have participated in with Emma Dash—and his lordship was amazed when he heard of the readiness of a well-educated young woman of good family to marry a stranger who might have been, for all she had known, a professional criminal. He was even more astonished at the hard swearing on both sides, for the prisoner's defence was that at the time of the Brighton marriage he was in London at his work, and he produced half-a-dozen witnesses of good character to confirm his statement. On the other hand, Miss Emma Dash was positive that Malcolm was her

husband, and her mother and others who had been introduced to him during the brief courtship ridiculed the notion that they could be mistaken.

"All men are liars," quoted Mr. Justice Stephen, wearily, and added, "but one side at least has put a few super-liars into the witness-box to-day."

The result of the trial was a disagreement on the part of the jury, ten voting for conviction, and in view of the contradictory evidence I do not think anyone was surprised that they failed to agree. However, the crown decided to put Malcolm on trial again, and this time no mistake was made. The verdict was guilty and the sentence seven years' penal servitude, and when the convict was taken away it was revealed that bigamy was his hobby and that he had gone through ceremonies of marriage at least three times after his first and only legal marriage.

It reminds me inevitably of the story of the impenitent bigamist who was severely admonished by an Old Bailey judge who rather spoilt an impressive lecture by winding up with the question in a plaintive voice, "Why did you marry so many women?"

"I was looking for a good one, your lordship," answered the convict, with an insolent laugh.

When Lord Russell of Killowen was a practising barrister and as Charles Russell took part in many Old Bailey battles he exercised a pretty wit which he carefully concealed when he became a judge.

"I say, Russell, what is the heaviest penalty for bigamy?" asked a colleague sitting next to him in the Recorder's Court.

"Two mothers-in-law," answered the Irishman, with a grave face.

If men and women made no mistakes about their love affairs what an immense amount of work would be spared judges and juries! Most crimes of violence are due to jealousy, for there is nearly always a woman

in the case, and generally the woman is the innocent victim. Women are less prone to committing crime than men, but when one does turn criminal she goes the whole hog with a vengeance.

It is not, however, of the female criminal I am writing now. I have just mentioned a famous bigamy trial arising out of a seaside courtship and I will relate the details of another courtship by the sea, which had a sequel at the Old Bailey, although it was not for bigamy but for murder that one of the principals stood in the dock.

When the late Sir Douglas Straight retired from the Indian Bench and came home to London to edit an evening paper I was often brought into contact with him. He was by no means a talkative man in his later years, but occasionally he would speak of the days when he had been a leading practitioner at the Old Bailey. I shall not soon forget his description of his feelings on a certain morning when one of his clients was executed. He was then, of course, Mr. Douglas Straight, and it so befell that he had an engagement in the country which necessitated catching an early train. He, therefore, came down to breakfast at five minutes to eight and he was about to take up his cup of coffee when the clock on the mantelpiece began to record the hour. On hearing the first stroke the barrister recollected that at that very moment his client was being hanged and the effect on him was such that he neither touched food that morning nor for twenty-four hours afterwards. He assured me that he had been haunted by a feeling that he had not done his best for the unfortunate convict and that if he had only been a little more skilful or persuasive or appealing he might have at least gained a reprieve for him.

The executed man was Marks, the London picture-frame-maker, who shot dead in the city the brother

of the girl he had jilted. The case is forgotten now, but it was once the sensation of the hour and it packed the Central Criminal Court. Few trials are melodramatic, for British justice is administered as calmly and unemotionally as possible, but there is often stark tragedy, pregnant with a pathos and a pity which tear at the heart-strings, which only those present in court can appreciate. It is not easy to reproduce in print the atmosphere of an Old Bailey murder trial. Who has ever heard sentence of death pronounced without experiencing a suffocating sensation as though the heart has ceased to beat and the brain refused to act? Even the most hardened are worked up to a pitch of excitement which makes them breathless and nervous, and those who have fought hard to obtain admission are glad to slink silently into the open when all is over.

The trial of Marks was one which ought to have excited little pity for the accused, but his cowardly crime could not kill all sympathy. Sir Douglas Straight, his counsel, threw himself heart and soul into the defence, maintaining from the first that the prisoner was not sane. There was, however, too much method in the accused's madness to save him, the story outlined by the prosecution proving that he had been animated all the time by a spirit of greed and commercialism and that even when he was courting his victim's sister he had been thinking chiefly of her money just as he had been thinking of his own when he had committed murder.

Marks was having a holiday at Margate when, by one of those devices beloved of young men at the seaside, he got into conversation with Miss Barnard, the daughter of a well-to-do umbrella maker. They were mutually attracted, and the girl sought the permission of her parents to introduce him at their lodgings. Now in the case of Miss Emma Dash she had no father

to safeguard her interests, but Miss Barnard had, and Mr. Barnard insisted, before the friendship went much further, on Marks giving a complete account of himself and naming persons of respectability as guarantors of his *bona-fides*. Thus all the usual precautions were taken. The references proving satisfactory no obstacles were placed in the way of the lovers, who spent the remainder of their holiday in each other's company, patronising the theatre and the pier and going for long walks.

They were engaged to be married when they returned to their respective homes in London, and to all outward appearances Marks was delighted with his good fortune. He owned a picture-framing establishment off Oxford Street, but he was not doing so well as he would have liked, and his marriage with Miss Barnard promised that additional capital which he considered necessary before he could prosper. But Miss Barnard was not destined to become his financial backer, a fire which destroyed his premises and stock completely altering his views of matrimony. It was one of those fires which puzzle insurance companies because their origin are so mysterious and doubtful, but after Marks' claim had been investigated the company handed him a considerable sum and the impecunious picture-framer thereby became well-to-do. The first effect of the acquisition of so much ready cash was to make him reconsider his engagement. As a poor man he had been good enough for Miss Barnard; now that he was a rich man she was not good enough for him. That was his decision, and he announced it to the Barnard family in a manner which was both unmannerly and insulting.

The jilting was the signal for a series of legal contests, Marks leading off with an action claiming the recovery of the presents he had given to his fiancée, and the lady retaliating with a breach of promise suit.

The faithless lover lost all along the line, but when the jury awarded Miss Barnard damages because of his failure to keep his promise to marry her he declined to pay even the costs. This put the fat in the fire, and the Barnards had a conference to consider the position, and as a result the elder brother of Miss Barnard informed Marks that unless he paid up in accordance with the judgment of the court he would inform the insurance company that the fire which had destroyed the shop and stock in Newman Street was the work of its proprietor. This was a threat Marks dare not ignore, but at the thought of parting from some hundreds of pounds he became frantic, and eventually made an appointment with Frederick Barnard in the city and shot him dead in cold blood.

I am certain that Marks would have been reprieved had it not been for the prominence money played in the whole affair from start to finish. He jilted Miss Barnard because he wished to marry a girl with more money and he murdered her brother because he was afraid that if he did not he would have to draw a cheque for the considerable sum owing to her as a result of the breach of promise case. Sir Douglas Straight pleaded for a verdict which would save his client from the scaffold, and when the wretched man lay under sentence of death his counsel haunted the Home Office until he became a nuisance to the officials. It was all in vain, however, and the romance which began with the young man throwing stones into the sea at Margate with a pretty girl glancing at him shyly from her dark eyes, ended with the faithless lover's execution one January morning.

CHAPTER II

Some Remarkable Criminals

(1)

Before Sir Robert Peel created something of a sensation by insisting that all candidates for the police force must be men of good character, it was the custom to employ thieves to catch thieves. The hunting of criminals was considered a task unworthy of honest men and, besides that, it was not expected that respectable persons could cope with the craft and unscrupulousness of the average crook.

That wretched and unsatisfactory system had long since been discarded when memories of it were revived at the Old Bailey by the reading of a letter addressed to the governor of Newgate. There was a very ordinary trial in progress, one of those conventional cases which end inevitably in the conviction of the accused, and it would have been quickly forgotten had it not been for the letter to which I have referred. The accused was of the shop-assistant type and his offence was forging a cheque. Now by some mysterious means a convict of the name of Cherwood, who had been sent to penal servitude at the previous sessions, got to hear of this trial and he promptly wrote to the governor outlining a system which, he declared, would result in a total suppression of forgery in a year or two.

Cherwood was undoubtedly a master in his peculiar profession. It was said of him that he could forge anything from a Bank of England note to an order for a night's lodging, and when the curtain was rung

down on his trial at the Old Bailey the city of London must have been pleased to know that he could do no more damage for at least seven years. It was because of his known skill that the governor of Newgate handed the letter to counsel, who read it in open court. In it Cherwood explained that he knew all the professional forgers in the world and that not more than ten of them really mattered.

"Give me a pardon and my liberty and make me chief of a small detective department," he wrote, "and I will guarantee to lay by the heels every forger who has a following. Let me put the leaders under lock and key and the others will be too frightened to commit forgery again."

The offer excited a good deal of mirth, but Cherwood was perfectly serious, and he was bitterly disappointed when he was informed that it was rejected. They might have told him that he was nearly a hundred years too late. Had he lived in the eighteenth century he might have found himself in charge of such a department as he visualised in his letter. In that dark age there was really nothing to distinguished the policeman from the criminal except the fact that he was in the pay of the state. The so-called guardian of the law indulged in crime whenever he saw fit and he betrayed his colleagues without the slightest compunction.

Nowadays it is, of course, very exceptional to hear of a policeman going wrong. There have been a proportion of failures, but on the whole the modern police have a splendid record. The three Scotland Yard inspectors who were sent to prison in the seventies were, happily, unique. There has never been a case like that one before or since, although there was a sensational trial at the Old Bailey years ago which might not have taken place had the murderer never served in a regular police force.

I am referring to James Mullins, the murderer of Mrs. Elmsley, a miserly widow who lived in Stepney. Previous to turning plasterer Mullins had been in the Royal Irish Constabulary, but he had not been a success and it was on the advice of a good-natured superior that he had resigned and had come to London. The Irishman was handicapped by an inability to speak the truth, a partiality for the property of other persons and a cunning unscrupulousness which made enemies for him wherever he went. And in London he climbed the ladder of criminality step by step until he was a murderer. He began as a liar, took to thieving, dabbled in forgery, and finally committed murder. Mrs. Elmsley employed him to do a little plastering only because he was cheap and he struck her down with a hammer in her room for the sake of a few pounds.

The crime, committed in the very midst of a densely populated district, staggered London. Thousands of people congregated in the streets adjoining the scene of the tragedy, and it was said that on the Sunday after the body had been discovered the churches in the east end were deserted, everybody being anxious to discuss the tragedy.

No one suspected Mullins and his name was never coupled with the murder, and the distracted and worried police, after exhausting every clue, could do little beyond offering a reward of three hundred pounds for information. But Mullins' greed was excited by the amount, which presented a fortune to him, and it was a fortunate move on their part. Of course, the Irishman could not very well earn it by speaking the truth, but he was determined to get that three hundred pounds by hook or by crook, and, convinced that his inside knowledge of the police force must guarantee the success of any little plot he conceived, he quickly invented a scheme to hang an innocent man

and put three hundred pounds into his own pocket.

His plan was to make up a parcel containing certain articles belonging to the dead woman, conceal it under a stone near the residence of Mrs. Elmsley's agent, a shoemaker of the name of Emms, and then denounce him as the murderer. He anticipated a sympathetic reception and hearing by the police when he told them that he had once been a constable himself, and he was equally certain that they would accept anything he said with respect, because as an ex-policeman he must know something about the tracking of criminals and the law of evidence.

Everything went well with his plot at first. The police welcomed him eagerly and treated him as a colleague. They had been worried by the mass of false information pressed on them and the ridiculous clues they had been compelled to examine, but Mullins, as a former member of the Royal Irish Constabulary, struck them as being something different from the amateur detective who is anxious to make himself prominent, and they not only thanked him for his assistance but agreed to obey his orders and thereby—so he assured them—leave no loophole for the murderer to escape through.

At the time appointed Mullins duly lead them to the disused brickfield near Emms' little shop where, of course, the parcel was found containing Mrs. Elmsley's property. The shoemaker was arrested and taken to the station and formally charged, but the inspector was a sharp-eyed cockney and he thought it peculiar that the parcel should have been held together with an old shoe string which matched exactly that in Mullins' right boot. That in the left was new, and the coincidence gave the inspector much food for thought.

"I will detain you, too, Mullins," he said suddenly, and the change in the spy's face must have convinced

him there and then that he was addressing the murderer of the old widow.

That was how James Mullins found his way into the dock at the Old Bailey instead of pocketing three hundred pounds and living in luxury for a few months. The evidence against him was clear and his condemnation just and swift.

"It was just my carelessness—my Irish carelessness," he muttered, when in the condemned cell he was visited by a Roman Catholic clergyman.

And there can be no doubt that it was his carelessness that hanged him. The clue of the old shoelace proved that he had made the parcel up himself, but if he had taken the trouble to look for a piece of string instead of using the lace he might have escaped conviction, for with a cunning born of an intimate acquaintance with the police and with courts he had prepared a trap which might have brought about the death of an innocent man. But, fortunately for justice, Mullins fell into the trap himself, and a cunning villain met with the fate he deserved.

I think I ought to mention as evidence of the thoroughness with which the authorities prepared their case, that in order to prove beyond a doubt that Mullins had made up the parcel found in the brickfield they produced the shoe from which he had removed the lace. He had flung it out of the window of the tenement and it had lain on a rubbish-heap for days until a couple of detectives entered the backyard and recovered it.

Forty years later another murderer was convicted at the Old Bailey with the aid of a shoelace. That was Bennett, who strangled his wife on Yarmouth Sands, and on behalf of whom Sir Edward Marshall Hall made one of the greatest speeches an Old Bailey audience has ever listened to. A pathetic feature of the trial was the presence of Bennett's parents, and I

remember hearing his father explain how he had tried to save his son from associating with a woman who could not but have an evil influence on him. I do not wish to insinuate that Bennett, junior, was a man of spotless reputation before his marriage. Personally, I think he would have become a notorious criminal in any event, but he fell in love with the very worst woman in the circumstances, and his father, realising this, went to the extreme length of forbidding the banns when they were called in a Woolwich church. The lovers, however, were not to be thwarted, and in spite of parental opposition they were married, and the result I have already indicated. Had his father's intervention been successful, two lives would have been saved and an incalculable amount of misery spared those innocent persons who had the misfortune to be connected by ties of blood with the principals in that tragedy of Yarmouth in September, 1900. For the weakness of earthly justice is that it invariably inflicts more pain on the innocent than the guilty.

(2)

Everybody by now must have heard at least once about the crime of the Mannings, a story which will never be forgotten because of the personality of the woman of French-Swiss birth who dominated practically every man with whom she came in contact, although she was by no means beautiful. For some strange reason men succumbed to her hard blue eyes and strong, almost masculine lips, and they saw nothing of the evil in an expression which revealed not a little of the creature's vile soul.

Charles Dickens, who often went to the Old Bailey in search of material for his novels, was fascinated by what the papers of the day called " The Crime of the

Mannings," and he was a regular attendant throughout the trial before the Lord Chief Justice. There was never really any doubt as to the guilt of husband and wife, or that it was the woman who had actually shot down her guest, O'Connor, a former lover she had rejected because she had not considered him her social equal. Instead of marrying O'Connor, she gave her hand to Manning, who was a publican with a very shady past, and to a proud, ambitious and greedy woman it must have been a terrific blow when, unexpectedly resuming her acquaintance with O'Connor, she learnt from him that he was now worth several thousands of pounds. It was for his money she murdered him, and when the police became suspicious about the house in Miniver Place, Bermondsey, which was his grave, she fled to Edinburgh with a bagful of stocks and shares belonging to her victim.

When the accused had been convicted and sentenced to death, Dickens often discussed the trial, and it is on his authority that I give the details of an amazing sequel to the arrest of Maria Manning in Edinburgh. I have referred to the magnetism of the murderess, and, if the great novelist's statement was correct, she utilised it to the full during the journey from Edinburgh to London in charge of an elderly Scottish detective, for she worked to such an extent on his feelings that he expressed his bitter regret at having taken part in the " persecution " of a lady, and when he had handed her over to the police he returned home to brood over what he considered the terrible wrong he had done. The strain proved too much for the old officer and before the Mannings appeared at the Old Bailey he committed suicide in remorse.

In the course of her long reign Queen Victoria took a very personal interest in at least two trials, those of the murderers of Lord William Russell and O'Connor.

Lord William Russell had been an acquaintance of hers, and certain of his near relations were her great friends, and the fate of the humble and obscure Irishman evoked her pity because the queen had often seen his murderess when that person was acting as maid to one of her favourites. It is a fact that Maria Manning was often in the same room as Queen Victoria, for the young monarch and Lady Blantyre, Maria's mistress, were very intimate, and whenever her ladyship was on a visit to her Majesty they were constantly in and out of each other's rooms.

It was this intimacy between her employer and the queen that caused the murderess to believe her conviction was impossible, and it also accounts for her serene confidence in the condemned cell. When, however, the reprieve was refused, she exclaimed, "Then the queen is no lady," and carefully dressing in black satin went genteelly to her death, facing a depraved and demoralised mob with a contemptuous expression, and meeting her fate with a courage which not one of the howling scoundrels could have shown. Dickens, interested in her to the last, witnessed her execution and wrote that memorable letter to the *Times* which everybody thought would result in the instant abolition of public executions, but the only immediate effect of the hanging of the Mannings was the sudden and lasting unpopularity of black satin. It took nearly twenty years to effect the humanitarian reform.

I lately came across an incident arising out of the Manning case which, because of its association with great names and another, if less serious tragedy, is worth recording. A couple of years after the execution of husband and wife, a very prominent clergyman of the Church of England, whose name was Henry Edward Manning, startled the complacent public by going over to the Church of Rome. That lead, of

course, to a sudden revival of the public interest in the name of Manning, and many old women of both sexes decided that there must be some connection between the clergyman and the murderers. It was not a common name and it was well known that every family has its skeleton, and that no one can be held responsible for the misdeeds of his or her relations. Dr. Manning—it was some years later that he was created a cardinal—was chaffed by the knowing ones, and annoyed by the ignorance of the blunderers, who clumsily expressed their sympathy with him because of the disgrace brought on his name and family by the murder of O'Connor. It reminds me of the old lady who, in an endeavour to ingratiate herself with Earl Beauchamp when he was governor of one of our colonies, solemnly assured him that she always bought his pills!

Now amongst those who chaffed Manning was an old friend of the family, a wealthy banker of the name of Bevan, whose estate adjoined that of the clergyman's father in the north of London.

"What a dreadful thing it must be to have a criminal in the family!" exclaimed Mr. Bevan, in mock dismay. But he rests better in his grave because he does not know that had he accepted the peerage offered him because of his services to the state, the present holder of it would be a convict, for the Bevan who was sentenced at the Old Bailey three years ago to seven years' penal servitude, is a grandson of Cardinal Manning's old friend!

I have more than once emphasised the fascination the Old Bailey has always had for the great men of every generation, and I will not labour the point further, but I cannot omit a weird story which was inspired by a visit of the greatest actor the English stage has produced to the most famous criminal court in the world. Edmund Kean had a comparatively

short but excessively brilliant career, and the successes he scored were due to his habit of taking those pains which Carlyle declared constituted real genius. Thus when Kean was about to play Richard II. he studied hunchbacks at close quarters so that he might carry himself as they do. Most stage hunchbacks convey the impression that they are running about with a pack on their shoulders. Edmund Kean was the disfigured king to the life, and no one has surpassed his Richard.

It was this passion for accuracy that lead him to spend several days at the Old Bailey watching murder trials, for he was due to produce the following season a play in which he took the part of a man wrongfully accused of murder, and the actor wished to find the correct answer to the question, " How does an innocent man behave when for the first time an accusation of murder is flung at him ? "

His friends disagreed on the subject and gave confusing and unilluminating replies. One would have it that the accused man must laugh derisively and decline to treat the charge seriously. Another maintained that the gravity of the accusation would cause the most blameless of men to appear terrified and behave in such a manner as to suggest guilt. A third declared that he would take his accuser by the throat, and a fourth talked of kicking the detective out of his house.

Kean went down to the Old Bailey to study the subject, and was disappointed because of the four murder trials he witnessed all resulted in verdicts of guilty, and no one could dispute their righteousness. He chatted with detectives, who were as divided in their opinions as his friends, and he discussed the question with judges whose experiences of the Old Bailey were unrivalled, and was still puzzled.

" The only way to solve the problem," said Kean,

to a couple of fellow-actors, " is to accuse an innocent man ourselves. The three of us can make-up as detectives. It will be easy enough because arrests are not made in uniform, and we will select a man of known blameless life who regards the theatre with horror, and cannot have seen any of us."

The suggestion was applauded and instantly acted on. There was some delay while they chose the fourth and most important character in their comedy, the person who was to be accused of wilful murder. They reviewed quite a dozen names and eventually selected an elderly man of saintly life who was known to have spent the last thirty years of his life in helping others and who lived in what was practically a garret in order that he might give away nine-tenths of his income, which was about £600 a year. He was obviously exactly what they wanted, for thecharacter in the pl ay was a similar type, and Kean was very anxious to discover how the most ridiculous and absurd of charges would affect a real person.

It was nearly midnight when Kean and his friends climbed the stairs of the rickety and rackety old house in Southwark and knocked on the door of the single room which was the home of the self-denying worker amongst the poor.

" Come in, gentlemen," they heard a voice say before they quite realised the door was open, and they started as they saw a pale face and two eyes gleaming like coals, though the expression was as gentle as a child's.

" It is my painful duty," said Kean, in his rôle of senior detective, " to inform you that I have a warrant for your arrest on a charge of wilful murder. Anything you may say—— "

The old man in the shabby suit interrupted him with a cry of horror, and raising his hands in the air,dashed out of the room and down the stairs.

The three actors pursued him instantly, Kean, remorseful at having turned the poor man's brain by his practical joke, calling to him it was only their fun, but when they reached the second landing a shot rang out, and pushing their way into the room they found the philanthropist lying dead on the floor. And at the inquest they heard the solution of the mystery.

Forty years before the tragedy, the suicide had been one of a gay and careless coterie of university graduates who were intent on getting as much pleasure out of life as they could. He had then lived only for himself, and when a lovely girl, glowing with beauty and vivacity, had crossed his path he had fallen passionately in love with her, only to discover that her choice was his dearest friend. She duly married her lover, but the disappointed rival's jealousy did not diminish, and gradually it became an insane hatred. His jealousy was still burning fiercely when he encountered him in a lonely field and shot him dead.

The murderer was never suspected, but he could not forget his crime, and in an effort to expiate it he abandoned society and lived amongst the poor and starved himself for their sake. For forty years he endured this penance cheerfully, ever haunted by a memory of his crime, although to the world outside his conscience, he was a saint. When, however, three strange men entered his room and one of them talked of a warrant the unhappy wretch thought that the vengeance of heaven had descended upon him at last, and rather than allow human beings to decide his punishment he took his own life.

I believe that after this astonishing affair Kean was never seen at the Old Bailey, and that he refused all subsequent invitations to occupy a seat on the benches reserved for distinguished personages.

This custom of catering for the eminent public at a sensational Old Bailey trial has always struck me as more than a trifle cold-blooded. It gives one the impression that the officials responsible must meet to weigh up the drawing powers of each criminal so that they can estimate what demands there will be on the part of the greater public. An actor-manager apportioning stalls for a fashionable first-night, and an under-sheriff at the Old Bailey selecting the invités to the trial, shall we say, of Madame Fahmy, have both to be careful that they offend not by their omissions. The under-sheriff has the more difficult task because the space at his disposal is extremely limited. For example there were several thousands of applications for seats to view the agony of the French wife of the Egyptian millionaire. I know a woman whose proudest boast is not that she has the entrée to the presence of their Majesties, or that she is a member of the most exclusive circle in Mayfair, but that whenever she wishes to be present at an Old Bailey trial, she is one of the few admitted by that little door at the back of the court reserved for distinguished visitors and the judges.

She saw the trial of Madame Fahmy and duly applauded her acquittal, though she lost most of her sympathy for the unhappy Frenchwoman when she came face to face with her in the casino at Le Touquet during the height of the season of 1924. It was a startling experience for the Englishwoman, who did not at once identify the strikingly pretty foreigner whose simple black dress was sent off by magnificent pearls and diamonds. The last time she had seen her was when Madame Fahmy had fainted in the dock at the Old Bailey on hearing the verdict, and her last memory of her was a pair of hands pressed against snow-white cheeks with tears trickling between the long, thin fingers. Now less than a year afterwards

the woman who had escaped from the brink of death was sitting at a table and gambling at the rate of a hundred pounds an hour. Standing behind her chair, and obviously unaware of her identity, was a relation by marriage of King George and an English duchess, and only the lady I have mentioned seemed to recognise in the excited gambler the heroine of that sensational Old Bailey trial in the autumn of 1923.

I have come to the conclusion that the term, "new journalism," really means the particular kind of journalism we happen not to like. A hundred years ago the great Duke of Wellington applied the term to those newspapers which did not agree with his politics; in the sixties Carlyle repeated it to emphasise a piece of historical criticism, and in 1894 Mr. Charles Darling, Q.C. wrote to the *Times* appealing for fair play for Jabez Balfour who was awaiting trial at the Old Bailey.

I rather fancy that the Mr. Darling of those days would have been more surprised by failure than by success, and he may have anticipated even then the time when he would become one of the greatest of our judges, for within three years of the date of the letter he presided in the very court where the notorious swindler was convicted and sentenced. In recording his protest against the amount of pre-trial criticism to which the author of the Liberator frauds was being subjected he congratulated the *Times* on not being abreast of the new journalism. Now this is the point I wish to make. In the present year of grace whenever that term is applied opprobriously it generally means certain newspapers, few of which were in existence when Mr. Darling penned his letter in the library of the Athenæum Club.

As there could be no possible doubt as to the guilt of Jabez Balfour no injustice was done to him when

he was sentenced to fourteen years' penal servitude. His frauds were the cause of many deaths and the misery they created lasted for more than a generation. The only time I met Balfour was towards the close of his life and he struck me as being a singularly quiet and even humble individual. Of course, he would never admit that the verdict of the Old Bailey jury was correct, but terrible and unfortunate as association with the higher finance had been with him he itched to get back into the same groove, although his extraordinary good fortune in finding unofficial patrons on his release had placed him in a situation of ease and comfort. There was one part of London, however, into which he would never venture after his release from prison and that was the Old Bailey. He had once an appointment with a wealthy merchant who was willing to consider one of those numerous financial schemes which filled the ex-convict's brain almost to the very moment of his sudden death in a train, and he made an appointment to discuss it at his office. Balfour was all eagerness and enthusiasm for an interview which promised to smooth his way back to the city, but when he discovered that his acquaintance's office was within a hundred yards of the grim building which had replaced the old court in which he had heard his doom he abandoned the whole project.

Jabez Balfour, in common with most convicts, was especially bitter about the severity of his sentence and it became an obsession with him to make notes of punishment awarded to other men convicted of financial frauds. In my opinion he had nothing to justify this attitude, but I have been astonished myself by the contrasts between the sentences for what have been practically the same offences. In numerous cases the rogue who has done most damage has got off with the least punishment.

I remember some years ago at a certain session at the Old Bailey two men, a bank manager and a stockbroker, were charged with embezzlement. The bank manager had stolen about eighteen hundred pounds and the stockbroker fifteen times as much. Yet when they were found guilty the judge sentenced the stealer of less than two thousand pounds to seven years and the other man to eighteen months.

Old frequenters of the Central Criminal Court and the veterans amongst the staff profess to be able to forecast the result, including the sentence, of most important trials. Long association with judges of the distinctive types of Hawkins, Grantham, Channell and others enabled them to catalogue their various moods and weaknesses.

"He's certain to get ten years for this," I heard an usher say when the jury had retired to consider a comparatively unimportant case of forgery. When I expressed my astonishment that he should be so certain—the usual sentence for this offence was three years—he reminded me that the presiding judge was notorious for his severity towards those who offended against the marriage laws and that it had been proved in the course of the trial that the accused had deserted his wife and children and had committed forgery to pay for the extravagance of another woman. Sure enough, ten years was the sentence, a very severe one in the circumstances.

I am certain that one of the reasons why Lord Darling was so successful and popular at the Old Bailey was that he never permitted his private opinions to interfere with his administration of the law. There was no pressing home a point against a prisoner simply because his lordship's breakfast had disagreed with him or counsel for the prosecution had hinted at other offences not in the indictment. He could not resist the temptation to make a joke, but

then, when the joke is good, temptation becomes inspiration. What could be better as an impromptu than his remark to counsel who quoted the Lunacy Act.

"Ah, that is an act I do not carry in my head."

"My lord, you allowed Mr. Elliott considerable latitude in examination," complained an eminent barrister, who later was raised to the bench.

"I am afraid that is no reason why I should allow you considerable longitude in cross-examination," retorted his lordship, and those who laughed loudest knew that the special weakness of this particular counsel was verbosity.

In the not-too-easy art of summing-up Mr. Justice Darling was supreme. He had to preside over some of the most difficult and complicated trials of the last quarter of a century and it says a great deal for his ability that in nearly every case he escaped criticism. There are people who are under the impression that it is the judge's duty to exert himself to prove the innocence of the accused and that he must do nothing to assist the prosecution. It is nothing of the sort. An Old Bailey trial is an effort to establish the guilt or innocence of the prisoner and to do justice not only to the accused, but to the community at large. The judge has to administer the law and he is paid to make as few mistakes as possible. If he has reason to believe a guilty person may escape punishment by the weakness of the prosecution or by a ruse, he is bound to point that out to the jury in his summing-up. Mr. Justice Hawkins incurred the emnity of many Old Bailey barristers because he seized upon the weak points in their defences to the detriment of their clients. They resented bitterly the defeat of their attempts to restore every burglar to his friends and relations, and when their own incompetence and carelessness had disastrous results for the prisoners

they were defending they put the blame on the judge and not on themselves. Some of those Old Bailey practitioners were simply appalling. It was not very unusual for a red-faced, bewigged old man to appear after lunch in a semi-intoxicated condition, and one in this state delivered before he could be stopped a harangue on behalf of the prosecution, alcoholically oblivious that he was denouncing his own client.

All that is changed now and the Old Bailey is almost as respectable as the Court of Chancery. Judges and counsel no longer make spectacles of themselves for the derision of the world, and if summing-up has become almost standardised and, therefore, humourless, justice benefits. It would be impossible now, for example, for a Lord Chief Justice of England to address a prisoner, whose offence was that of stealing his master's wine, in the following terms :—

"Prisoner at the bar, you stand convicted on the most conclusive evidence of a crime of the most inexpressible atrocity—a crime that defiles the sacred strings of domestic confidence—and is calculated to strike alarm into the breast of every Englishman who invests daily in the choicer vintages of Southern Europe. Like the serpent of old, you have stung the hand of your protector. Fortunate in having a generous employer you might, without dishonesty, have continued to supply your wretched wife and children with the comforts of sufficient prosperity and even with some of the luxuries of affluence, but dead to every claim of natural affection, and blind to your own real interests, you burst through all the restraints of religion and morality, and have for many years been feathering your nest with your master's bottles."

That is sheer bathos relieved by unconscious humour. There was unadulterated Old Bailey brutality and callousness in the remarks of another

judge in the course of passing sentence of death on a prisoner convicted of murder.

"If guilty, you deserve the doom that awaits you," he said, with an airy inconsequence which was the refinement of cruelty. "If innocent, it will be a source of gratification to you to feel that you were hanged without such a crime on your conscience. In either event, you will be delivered from a world of woe."

It has been the fashion to give prominence to the absurdities of jurymen, but a large volume might be written on the blunders and absurdities of the judges and there would be no need to go beyond the confines of the Old Bailey for material. That low-comedy address to the butler was the work of Lord Kenyon, a Welshman who was credited with one weakness only, a fondness for accumulating the current coin of the realm.

The summing-up by an Old Bailey judge has often been the deadliest weapon of the prosecution, but on the other hand it has more than once saved the life of a prisoner. Many a man has been hanged on less evidence than that which failed to secure the conviction of Hannah Dobbs, nearly fifty years ago, but the minds of the jury were swayed at the last moment by the final words of Mr. Justice Hawkins, who reminded them of the weak links in the chain forged by the crown and warned them that they must be very certain of her guilt before they pronounced her guilty.

It was a very remarkable trial arising out of a very mysterious crime. Miss Hacker, the victim, was one of those eccentric spinsters who from time to time come into unfortunate prominence by their tragic deaths. She had a comfortable home at Canterbury until the local rating authorities asked her to pay more than she considered she ought to, and in disgust she

shook the dust of the city off her feet and came to London, her object apparently being to move about from place to place so as to avoid paying any rates at all.

In October, 1878, she was a lodger in a house in Euston Square, and Hannah Dobbs was the servant of her landlord and his wife. On the last day that Miss Hacker was seen alive she and Hannah were alone in the house, but when on the Monday the girl's employer ordered her to obtain payment for overdue rent from Miss Hacker—who, by the way, was known to him as Miss Huish—she returned with a five pound note which she stated the lady had just given her, and duly received the change. Yet there can be no doubt that Miss Hacker was not alive on the Monday and that the bloodstains on the carpet, which the landlord noticed when he heard a day or two later of the disappearance of his lodger suggested a mystery which ought to have been investigated at once.

However, there was no one particularly interested in this eccentric and quarrelsome female, and it was not until six months later, when the discovery of her corpse in the cellar of the house revealed the startling fact that the woman had never left the building which had been her grave for more than half a year, that her person was remembered.

Hannah Dobbs was almost immediately arrested and charged with the crime, and when it was proved that she had been dealing in certain articles of jewellery belonging to the old lady and that she had lied consistently about her and them, it seemed as though the problem had been solved. Hannah Dobbs was a convicted thief, and for a young person—she was only twenty-four—she had very unconventional views on morality. Perhaps, the strongest piece of evidence against her was the watch and chain which she wore soon after Miss Hacker's disappearance. When asked

how she had become possessed of these valuables, she explained that they had been bequeathed to her by an uncle who had left her some money in addition. It was, however, a suspicious circumstance that within a few hours of the question being asked the watch and chain should vanish. A Scotland Yard detective traced them to a pawnbroker's shop and having recovered them had them identified as the property of the late Miss Hacker and placed them amongst the exhibits at the Old Bailey.

That in brief was the case presented against Hannah Dobbs, and with Mr. Justice Hawkins on the bench there was no chance of the defence shirking the issue, had it been so inclined, but the prisoner's counsel—Mr. Mead, now the well-known magistrate at Marlborough Street—wisely devoted himself to exposing the weaknesses and improbabilities of the case for the crown, and his tactics must have been one of the reasons why Mr. Justice Hawkins summed-up strongly for acquittal.

Mr. Mead's main contention was that a girl of twenty-four could not possibly have murdered an old lady in a house which was in constant use by lodgers and others, and then carry her body down two flights of stairs to a cellar. It was all very well declaring that she must have lied when she went up to Miss Hacker's room on the Monday morning, but was the prosecution in a position to prove that Miss Hacker was not alive at that moment and did not actually hand a five-pound note to the servant to pass on to her employer? Was it credible that an ignorant servant-girl would have coolly turned a tragedy into a comedy by pretending that the old lady was alive in her room when all the time she knew that she was lying under the coals in the cellar? He insisted that no ordinary man or woman could have kept their nerve at such a critical moment, especially as she had been aware

that the landlord might insist on seeing his lodger for himself.

The evidence against the girl was on the whole very strong, but there was a doubt, and, thanks to Mr. Justice Hawkins, the jury gave her the benefit of it. Her demeanour in the dock was one of quiet confidence but that may have been simply resignation. The jury stated that the gravest suspicion rested upon her but that they hesitated to convict because her guilt had not been proved beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Everybody who knew anything of the Old Bailey must have considered that Hannah Dobbs was the luckiest prisoner who ever stood in its dock. Her acquittal made her a sort of heroine in certain quarters and she was taken up by a journalist who wrote a pamphlet for her in which he endeavoured to explain away some of the damaging facts proved at the trial. As it was necessary that suspicion should be turned from her to someone else, she seized upon her employer and amongst other things hinted that he had treated her badly. He promptly brought an action for libel and swore an affidavit that her statements were false. To this Hannah retorted with a charge of perjury, and a few weeks after her own ordeal the man stood in the same dock at the Old Bailey and was convicted of perjury and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment.

What was the solution of the Euston Square mystery ? That Miss Hacker was murdered was never contested, but who was her murderer ? Was it a man or a woman, or both acting as guilty partners ?

" David said in his haste that all men are liars," once remarked Mr. Justice Darling, " and had he been here he would have said it at his leisure."

I heard another judge make the same quotation and add, " and women, too."

" I was wedded to truth in my infancy, my lord,"

exclaimed a witness, indignantly, when there was a titter in court at one of his answers in the cross-examination.

"Quite so," said the judge, quietly, "but the question is, how long is it since you were divorced?"

CHAPTER III

FINANCING GREAT CRIMES

(1)

I HAVE seen many capitalists of crime on trial at the Old Bailey, and two of them were quite exceptional characters. These were Joseph Grizzard, known to his familiars as " Gammy," and that strange personality who called himself Dr. Bridgewater. By the term, " capitalists of crime," I mean men who conduct their criminal enterprises on business-like lines, planning them with great care and foresight, and spending large sums to ensure their success. Grizzard, who, in the dock at any rate, had a nervous, hesitating and diffident manner, organised gangs of jewel thieves and burglars, and thought nothing of spending a couple of thousand pounds to bring off a ten thousand pound coup.

To my mind no one looked less like a Napoleon of crime than he did, and yet there can be no doubt that he was a master-criminal.

" I know nothing about it—I am innocent," he exclaimed, from the dock, his toneless voice scarcely reaching the rafters of the court ; " the police are trying to make me a victim of their incompetence."

But the same police proved that for two years Grizzard and his confederates had prepared the plans which had resulted in the theft of two jewellery cases at a London railway station. At least once a week this committee of criminals had met in secret to discuss ways and means, decide who was to be bribed, who to be threatened, which persons were to be watched and where the final attack was to be made.

Grizzard dominated the proceedings, for it was his money that was financing the robbery, and the men who sat at his table were merely his employees.

The crime that made " Gammy " Grizzard, and at the same time broke him, was the startling robbery of pearls, valued at £120,000, in 1913. Never was a great coup so thoroughly organised, and never did a master-criminal select his assistants with greater care or control them more firmly. A dozen times his emissaries journeyed between London and Paris, watching and waiting and shadowing, and only when the signal was given that the time had come to act were two small boxes containing cubes of sugar, wrapped up in pieces of newspaper, substituted for those containing the precious pearls.

The bold challenge to the police was taken up by Scotland Yard with a thoroughness that more than matched Grizzard's, and with the late Chief-Inspector Alfred Ward in command of a small army of detectives four of the thieves and their employer were eventually run to earth.

Yet when " Gammy " stepped into the dock at the Old Bailey he believed that there was no legal evidence of his guilt, for a lifetime of crime had taught him all the tricks of the trade, and he was a master of the art of concealing one's tracks. Grizzard, for instance, never had a banking account in his own name, and during an active career extending over forty years—he was sixty when he died in the autumn of 1923—he was never known to draw a cheque. No matter how large the account was he paid it in cash, and it was not unusual for him to pay five thousand pounds in this way for the proceeds of a jewel robbery. He made many payments during the lengthy period he was preparing to get hold of these immensely valuable pearls, but each one had been accomplished without a clue being left to the identity of the payer.

That was why he was so confident of acquittal, and, although he was a man of few words and seldom revealed his contempt for the police except by a slight smile or an unusual gleam in his expressive dark eyes, he was heard to say to his fellow-prisoners that it was a shame to spend money on counsel simply to prove another Scotland Yard blunder.

But his natural enemies were cleverer than he thought, and the information they supplied to counsel for the prosecution quickly smashed the hopes of a criminal who has been compared with Moriarty, the famous enemy of Sherlock Holmes. Step by step the prosecution proved the close association of Grizzard with the actual thieves and it was established that the crime could not have been carried out without his active support and financial backing. A very clear case was drawn up by the crown, and the jury convicted with a promptness which was almost enthusiastic. Grizzard got seven years and, although he was not fifty, he knew when he heard his punishment that it was tantamount to sentence of death. I wonder if in that staggering moment he admitted to himself that crime does not pay. He was said to have made a fortune of not less than one hundred thousand pounds by his misdeeds and that the money was hidden away in half-a-dozen banks in as many different names, but what was the use of money when he could not purchase liberty with it. What was the comfort to be derived from scores of successful crimes when all his life he had been compelled to live in a state of nervous exhaustion? The man might have his motor-car and his servants, but day and night there was always the danger that a knock on the door might be the signal of his doom, and he could never forget it.

There was considerable laughter during the Grizzard trial when the working man who had found the pearl necklace which the gang had thrown away in their

panic on realising that the detectives were close on their heels, gave evidence. The oddest things happen in real life, but I do not remember anything to parallel the spectacle of a working man offering a pearl necklace worth more than one hundred thousand pounds in exchange for a pot of beer. But that was what did happen when he took the pearls out of the gutter in Islington. He had not the slightest idea of their value—I rather imagine most of us would have come to the same conclusion—and under the impression that they might be worth a few pence to some girl with a fondness for wearing cheap jewellery, he entered the nearest public house and attempted to bargain for a drink. "Gammy" smiled grimly during the recital, but behind his smile there must have been bitter pangs and almost suffocating regrets.

The opinion at the Old Bailey was that the sentence of seven years' penal servitude meant the last of Joseph Grizzard and that he would never be seen again in the dock, but if he went to jail a very sick man he came out of it improved in health, although he could not hope to live much longer. All the same he was soon in the thick of the fight again, planning and financing and conspiring with his usual thoroughness and verve.

His last exploit of all was characteristic of him. A crook of good education and family came to him with plans for a raid on a jeweller's which promised a profit of at least twelve thousand pounds. To bring it off, however, it was necessary that when the thief entered the shop he should have in his possession the sum of four thousand pounds. Grizzard carefully examined the proposition and decided in its favour and promptly provided the crook with the required amount in bank-notes. Thanks to the confidence inspired by the production of so much ready money, the swindle was accomplished and Grizzard's confederate got away with nearly twenty thousand pounds' worth of

jewellery. The police, however, were soon on his track, and their investigations lead to another and a final appearance of the master-criminal at the Old Bailey, where he escaped a sentence of penal servitude only because of his health. The sentence was twelve months' hard labour, and, as everybody present anticipated, the convict spent it in the prison infirmary, and when he was released it was only to die. There were rumours that Grizzard actually left a fortune of over a hundred thousand pounds, and it was a source of astonishment that his estate should be returned at a little more than was required to pay for his funeral expenses.

There is, of course, nothing of that atmosphere of tragedy which envelops a murder trial when the class of offence with which Grizzard was charged is the subject of investigation. The crowded court cannot be expected to be greatly excited because a few years of a worthless life are at stake, and the spectacle of a wealthy thief in the dock is not one to excite sympathy. It is the reverse, however, when the charge is murder, and it is not surprising that every barrister of fame who has practised in the criminal courts has made his name in a murder trial. That celebrated defender of murderers, Serjeant Wilkins, earned thousands of pounds by exercising all his eloquence and artifices on behalf of prisoners, and at the Old Bailey he took a prominent part in a score of murder trials which are still remembered. He was always ahead of his income, however, and as that income was dependent on the activities of the criminal classes, we can appreciate a story told about his clerk.

"Anything special to-day?" the learned serjeant asked him on arriving at his chambers.

"Yes, sir," exclaimed the man, in a delighted tone of voice, "there has been another horrible murder at York."

One of Wilkins' first successes at the Bar was his defence of a young man charged with the murder of his cousin, whose name was Heather. The Old Bailey court was nearly empty when counsel began his speech for the defence, but when the nature of that speech began to be noised amongst the corridors and adjoining rooms there was a rush to hear it. All the facts and all the proofs were on the other side, but Wilkins, not in any wise disheartened, delivered an impassioned address to the jury, which moved them to tears. He painted his client as a very much injured young innocent and practically told the jury that if they convicted him they would be nothing better than twelve murderers. It was then the fashion for counsel to declare with dramatic gestures and emphasis that they believed wholly and sincerely in the innocence of their clients, and Wilkins, who had been many things on the stage of life, including clown and light comedian, knew how to act the part of the "heavy father," and make the rafters of the Old Bailey ring with his words.

"Send Tom Ashton home to his devoted mother," shouted Wilkins, in conclusion, "and for the rest of your lives you will never be forgotten in the prayers of a good woman."

To the astonishment and annoyance of the judge, his summing-up proved to be so ineffective that Ashton was acquitted, and Wilkins was chaffed and congratulated by his colleagues in the robing-room on having brought about another miscarriage of justice.

A few months afterwards he was approaching the assize court at Leeds when he was accosted by a shabbily-dressed youth. The barrister paused and stared at him as he tried to remember which of his clients he was.

"Why, you must be Heather," he exclaimed,

confusing the names which had figured so prominently at the Old Bailey trial.

"No, sir," was the swift answer, "I'm the chap wot shot him."

The exaggerated style and pantomimic forensics of the Wilkins school of Old Bailey oratory was killed by ridicule. It was effective in the days before the Board School Act when, with juries who could see rather than think, it carried great weight.

"My client's record is as pure as driven snow," exclaimed an elderly barrister, forgetting in the heat of his argument that the countenance of the occupant of the dock was so hideous with brutality and vice that, in the words of Dickens, "it was a regular stamped receipt for cruelty."

"Wot's 'e mean by calling me a blooming snow-ball ?" whispered the injured innocent to one of the warders.

The old-time barrister identified himself with his client, and it was the custom to merge counsel and prisoner in the expression "we" throughout speeches to the jury. This frequently lead to absurdities and considerable laughter.

"So far from assaulting our wife we have never looked at another woman since we married her," exclaimed the zealous defender of a man charged with a murderous assault on his wife. The roar of laughter that came from the barristers' benches was due to the knowledge common in the profession that the speaker had married a termagant and went in terror of her.

Edwin James, the reason for whose tragic fall is still a mystery, was a notorious rather than a noted verdict-snatcher. The Old Bailey was his natural arena, and, it is a curious reflection, he might have become personally acquainted with the dock had it not been for the generosity of those he swindled. James howled and shouted at the jury, banged the

desk in front of him, flung his arms in the air and altogether behaved like a stage lunatic when he had worked himself up on behalf of a prisoner. On one occasion he finished in a state of collapse and he was still panting from excitement and exhaustion when counsel for the prosecution rose and began, "Now the hurly-burly's done I will address you on the facts of the case, gentlemen of the jury."

Eccentric as James and Wilkins were, however, they never dared to attempt the bathos of some of the brighter spirits of the American Bar. I recently came across the report of a speech in a murder trial in the States which secured an acquittal, and as it is a perfect gem of its kind I quote it.

"'Thou shalt not kill.' Now, if you hang my client you transgress the command as slick as grease, and as plump as a goose's egg in a loafer's face. Gentlemen, murder is murder, whether committed by twelve jurymen or a humble individual like my client. Gentlemen, I do not deny the fact of my client having killed a man. No such thing, gentlemen. Ye may bring the prisoner in 'guilty,' the hangman may do his duty, but will that exonerate you? No such thing. In that case you will be murderers. Who among you is prepared for the brand of Cain to be stamped upon his brow to-day? Who, freemen? Who in this land of liberty and light?

"Gentlemen, I will pledge my word not one of you has a bowie-knife. No, gentlemen, your pockets are odoriferous with the fumes of cigar-cases and tobacco. You can smoke the tobacco of rectitude in the pipe of a peaceful conscience, but hang my unfortunate client and the scaly alligators of remorse will gallop through the internal principles of your animal viscera, until the spinal vertebrae of your anatomical construction is turned into a railroad for the grim and gory goblins of despair. Gentlemen, beware of committing

murder. Beware, I say, of meddling with the eternal prerogative. Gentlemen, I adjure you, by the manumitted ghost of temporary sanity, to do no murder. I adjure you, by the name of woman, the mainspring of the ticking timepiece of time's theoretical transmigration, to do no murder. I adjure you by the American eagle that whipped the universal gamecock of creation, and is now roosting on the magnetic telegraph of time's illustrious transmigration, to do no murder. And lastly, if you ever expect free dogs not to bark at you, if you ever expect to wear boots made of the free hides of the Rocky Mountain buffalo —and to sum up all, if you ever expect to be anything but sneaking, law-flung, rascally, braided small-ends of humanity, whittled down into indistinctibility acquit my client and save your country."

Phew!

(2)

Youth in the dock should always excite pity in the same way that a woman fighting for her life against overwhelming odds makes us forget her crime. But there have been exceptions, and one of these was the trial of the brothers Stratton, who in the month of March, 1905, murdered an elderly couple, Mr. and Mrs. Farrow, at Deptford. Despite their youthful appearance—Alfred was twenty-two and Albert twenty—the moment they came into full view of the crowded court they produced an emotion of loathing and horror. They were obviously of the hooligan type, and yet had they not been so aggressively contemptuous of the proceedings there might have been some regrets that these products of the gutter had not been rescued from their evil surroundings before they had become contaminated beyond all cure.

Their crime, if sordid and inhuman, was not without its special features, and it must be remembered always because not only were the prisoners tried, but also the finger-print system.

Mr. and Mrs. Farrow had a small oil and colour store in High Street, Deptford, and they were so reticent and reserved that it was an article of common belief in the neighbourhood that they were well-to-do. In a district where so many wage-earners contributed goodly proportions of their incomes to publicans and bookmakers it was, perhaps, understandable that a couple who did not drink or bet should be regarded as rich. Rumour was false, however, but it was to have ghastly results for Mr. and Mrs. Farrow.

On the morning of March 27th a little girl, playing out of doors at the early hour of seven, saw Mr. Farrow for a second or two framed in the doorway of his shop. She noticed that blood was streaming from his head and face, and that he staggered as he reclosed the door and disappeared. The child did not speak about the incident for three days, and in the meantime the tragedy had been discovered by the milkman, who, calling at eight, looked in at the window of the kitchen at the back of the house and saw the old man lying dead on the floor, an overturned chair almost touching his body. He informed the police, and Scoland Yard was quickly on the scene, and no one could have been surprised when Mrs. Farrow was found lying on her bed with her head battered in. She was still alive, but before she reached the hospital she died without speaking a word.

A detective engaged on the case told me afterwards it was one of those murders which infuriates even the most hardened and callous of police officers. It was not that the outrage was a challenge to and a defiance of the whole system of police. It was not that the

guardians of law and order felt that they had failed to protect two old and defenceless people. It was the mute appeal in the dead faces, an appeal which seemed all the stronger because it was too late, which produced an intensive feeling of pity which was almost scorching in its effects. More than one hardened officer experienced a choking sensation as he gazed upon the white-haired man and woman who had been brutally done to death in the very midst of dozens of human beings who would have risked gladly their own lives to save them.

Fortunately, there were some important clues at hand. Under the bed was found the small cash-box belonging to the Farrows, and the tray was reclaimed a yard away. A careful search of the floor revealed a sixpenny piece, a sign that the murderers had departed in a hurry. The cash-box was examined for finger-prints, but it was spotless, and then the tray was inspected, and Sir Melville Macnaghten, head of the C.I.D., has related how relieved and excited they all were when on one side they saw the mark of a digital impression.

Another important clue was provided by two masks hurried and roughly manufactured out of old black stockings which a detective found in the kitchen. They proved that two men had been associated with the murder, and also that they were local men, for they could only have donned the masks to avoid recognition. That they had murdered the old woman as well as the husband was an additional confirmation of the theory that the criminals dared not allow her to live because she knew them by sight.

Scotland Yard took up the challenge with every weapon at its command, and dozens of detectives were set to work to "drag" Deptford. Hundreds of enquiries were made and an immense amount of information followed up and tested. The investiga-

tion was so thorough and conducted at such a high speed that within four days the chief inspector in charge of the case had good cause to believe that he knew the names of the murderers although he knew little else about them.

Who were Alfred and Albert Stratton ? What were their habits and where were they to be found ? Could anyone say for certain how they had spent the night of March 27th ? The police had to walk with great circumspection and not allow their anxiety for results to influence their judgment. They tested a lot of information which was obviously guesswork, burrowed into the very depths of the East End, and made no real progress. They were still in a quandary when one of their number was touched on the arm by a white-faced girl, pale and thin and suffering, who whispered fiercely that she would like to help to run Alfred Stratton to earth.

Her history was pitiful. Once she had loved the young ruffian, but now she hated him with a hatred which was almost too much for her debilitated frame, and there was a ferocious passion in her tone as she told all she knew about the elder brother. He had two hobbies, drink and Association football, she said, and she advised the detective to have a couple of plain clothes policemen standing at each entrance to the Crystal Palace on the Saturday as an important English cup-tie was to be played there, and the brothers were sure to witness it.

They did not attend, however, and, as they were fanatical followers of cup-tie football, their abstention on this occasion indicated they suspected the police were looking for them. But if this suggestion of the vengeful girl failed she made others which were chiefly responsible for the arrest of the elder brother on the Sunday and the younger one the next morning, and so she had her revenge after all.

At their first appearance before the magistrate the brothers shouted and stamped and swore and generally behaved like wild beasts, and if at the Old Bailey they were overawed by their surroundings and by the panoply of the law they occasionally interrupted the proceedings by laughing loudly. Even when sentence of death was not more than half an hour off they could talk football, and football remained their passion to the end. That year Aston Villa won the English Cup by beating Newcastle United, and the Strattons were able to find consolation in their last moments by discussing the great tournament and arguing the cause which had led to the elimination of their own favourite team in an early round.

It did not interest them in the slightest that the clue of finger-prints on the tray of the cash-box meant either life or death for them. They were bored by the contest between their own counsel and the leader for the prosecution. The finger-print system was on trial, and the barrister who defended the brothers did all he could to ridicule what was then an innovation in murder trials. He laboured to convince the jury that a smudge on a japanned surface could not justify the hanging of two young men because the police had a theory that the smudge had been made by one of them, but the prosecution proved that the finger-print system was a science and not a fad, and the only possible verdict was returned.

"It's a pity we missed that cup-tie at the Palace," Alfred was heard to say to his brother when they were being conveyed to the prison where they were executed, "They had us after all."

A whole volume could not reveal more vividly the extraordinary mentality of these two ruffians.

The termination of the trial of the Strattons was of the nature of an anti-climax, for their reputation in violence led everybody to anticipate disturbance.

However, they gave practically no trouble, behaving as though they realised that they were to pay a comparatively trivial price for their crime. I have seen a solicitor sentenced to five years for gross frauds display more terror than a convict listening to sentence of death.

There was a London lawyer who aimed at becoming a minor Whittaker Wright on a salary of twelve hundred pounds a year. He promoted companies and entertained lavishly and, pathetically enough, his wife, blissfully unconscious of the source of their sudden wealth, got that disease so expressively described as "swollen head," and by her absurd pride converted most of her friends into enemies. She gave banquets—that is the only word to describe them—for the purpose of showing her former circle of acquaintances that she had risen so high in the social scale that she could not take any further notice of them, and she flourished her wealth offensively, never dreaming that all was to be paid for by a trial at the Old Bailey followed by a heavy sentence.

When the crash came and her husband was arrested, the poor woman was practically friendless, and she suffered terribly. However, she exhibited more courage than the defaulting solicitor did as he sat in the dock and listened to the damning evidence against him, for the imitation Napoleon of finance whined for mercy and wept when he heard his sentence.

"What shall I do in prison amongst the scum of the earth?" he exclaimed, between his tears, when he reached that gloomy apartment below the dock which has been trodden by so many broken-hearted men and women.

"Cheer up," whispered the warder, whose intention was kind at any rate, "you'll find plenty of gentlemen of your profession wherever they send you to."

There is an ancient story of one Jew asking another,

"Where do the Christians get all the money we take from them ?" and I have often wondered as one Old Bailey trial has succeeded another where all the money comes from that solicitors embezzle. Apparently there are many persons whom they can rob with impunity, people who leave their entire fortunes at the mercy of a man who may be honest but is subject to more than the average person's share of temptation, and they often have paid dearly for their carelessness.

Twenty years ago a London solicitor suddenly became bitten with the theatrical craze, and decided to invest in a West End theatre, although his earnings of a thousand a year were considerably minimised by the fact that he was heavily in debt. When he was introduced to a famous actress and she spoke of the wonderful play she could not produce because of lack of funds, he volunteered to finance the production. He talked so convincingly of the powerful syndicate that he represented that the lady staged the play in the most lavish manner and with a very big cast, and when the first five thousand pounds advanced was exhausted she applied for another cheque and received it by return of post.

Had the piece been a success the solicitor might have been able to restore the stolen money to his clients, for every shilling which he had sent to the actress had been taken from trust funds without the owner's permission, but that year the Savoy was an unlucky theatre and the play failed miserably. By the time the last night arrived the solicitor was in a very desperate position, and being unable to stave off exposure he was arrested and committed for trial at the Old Bailey, where subsequently he was sentenced to five years' penal servitude.

But the most sensational trial of a solicitor at the Old Bailey was that of Benjamin Green Lake, in

January, 1901. No lawyer of his standing had appeared in the dock before, and so exalted and influential had his position been that it was difficult to find a judge of the High Court who was not an intimate friend of the prisoner's. He had been president of the Law Society and—there was a rare stroke of irony in this—he had been responsible for the formation of a special committee of the society to deal with defaulting solicitors and had acted as chairman of it. His clientèle had consisted chiefly of members of well-known families, persons of unimpeachable reputation, army officers, county magistrates and such like. It was impossible to doubt Benjamin Green Lake until the catastrophe, and then it was realised that few defaulting solicitors have caused so much suffering.

The embezzler, however, suffered as much as anybody, and in the dock at the Old Bailey he was misery itself. The shame of his position had a paralysing effect on him, and I do not think he was ever fully conscious of what was going on. He seemed to be broken in mind as well as in body when he heard the sentence of twelve years' penal servitude, but to a man of sixty in his condition, physical and mental, figures meant nothing, for he had no desire to make a fight against approaching death. After serving a portion of his sentence he was released in order that he might spend the remaining months of his life in a nursing home, but the well meant effort of a newspaper to create some sympathy for him was scotched by the news that on the day Lake left jail a retired colonel of the Indian army had been found dying of starvation in a garret. As the ex-solicitor had robbed the unfortunate man of every penny it was quickly decided by the paper in question to leave the ex-president of the Law Society in a merciful obscurity.

Professional men facing ruin can hardly be expected

to cut heroic figures, and any old detective will confirm my statement that the man of education charged with a criminal offence invariably betrays himself by a too obvious consciousness of his guilt. But now and then a convict who can boast a public school and university education will joke about his downfall even before he has had time to become accustomed to the debacle A solicitor of the name of Way was sentenced at the Old Bailey to ten years' penal servitude for forging wills, and when they brought him his first meal after conviction a warder found him laughing loudly.

"I'm glad you like it," said the official, grimly, suspecting that the solicitor was a candidate for Broadmoor.

"I've just discovered that I am the victim of a proverb," answered the lawyer, his mean little face shining with mirth. "Don't you see, my friend, that in my person I illustrate the old saying, 'Where there's a will there's a way?'"

A poor joke, perhaps, but his own, and he deserved forgiveness for the pun if only because of his refusal to embark on a lengthy term of penal servitude with his tail between his legs.

CHAPTER IV

ARTHUR DEVEREUX AND SOME OTHERS

(1)

THOSE of us who cannot understand why certain members of the community are incapable of appreciating the utter futility of crime—not to put the subject on a higher plane morally—invariably experience a creepy feeling whenever we read of such an instance as that which occurred in the Glasgow flat a few days before the Christmas of 1908 when an elderly lady, Miss Marian Gilchrist, was brutally done to death. It will be recalled that at the very moment the assassin was washing the bloodstains from his hands he heard a key turn in the front door, a sound which must have unnerved anybody but a hardened criminal, for it had been preceded by two loud rings of the bell when he had been standing over his victim. We imagine that we would collapse from sheer nervousness and terror if we were in such a position, but the man who plans deliberately to take the life of a human being has neither nerves or conscience to be tortured.

That cool and calculating murderer, Arthur Devereux had his unnatural complacency severely tested when he was arranging the bodies of his wife and twin sons, aged two, in the trunk which was to be the most eloquent evidence against him at the Old Bailey later on. He had given all three of them a strong does of morphine, choosing that poison because he believed that after a brief period no trace would be left of it. Devereux was a chemist's assistant, and it was mentioned in the course of the Old Bailey trial

that he became acquainted with his wife during a seaside holiday and easily won her in marriage by his amiability and good humour. He was, according to all accounts, a man who never lost his temper or his nerve, but he must have suffered a severe shock when a series of sharp raps on the outer door of the flat interrupted him while he was concealing the evidence of his triple crime.

But he did not stand rigid and silent until the caller wearied and went away. Arthur Devereux could not bear inaction, and he went straight to the door and opened it and never changed countenance in the slightest when he saw that it was only the milkman.

"We won't require any more milk, thank you," he said, in his usual manner, "We're leaving at once."

Sir Edward Ridley, who presided at the trial of Arthur Devereux, is now living in retirement, but a letter he wrote to me in his eightieth year betrayed no signs of the sapping of a virile and practical mind by time. Had he wished he might have adorned the bench for several years longer, and he showed when in control of the Devereux trial that he was one of the best judges for an investigation likely to be swayed by sensational and unusual features, for Mr. Justice Ridley always kept counsel and witnesses to the facts and left theories and moralisings to others.

At the same time there were aspects of the trial which raised it above a mere ordinary question as to whether the prisoner was a murderer or not. The personality and the motives of the man were curious, provocative and bewildering. No novelist could have created such a character; the most grotesque and eccentric mind only could have conceived such a story. The late Sir Charles Matthews, who led for the prosecution, was handicapped by an unimpressive delivery due to a shrill, piping voice which suggested

the schoolboy rather than the distinguished counsel of many years' standing, but his opening speech enthralled a crowded court because of its attempt to analyse and classify the prisoner's thoughts and motives when planning and carrying out his crimes.

What was the compelling, irresistible motive which induced Arthur Devereux, a man of some education and refinement, to plan with businesslike deliberation the murder of his wife and twin sons ? Why did the father and husband who was passionately attached to his seven-year-old son, Stanley, decide to slay the boy's mother and brothers ? Was it because he wished to have the child all to himself and that he was jealous of any affection the child gave his mother ? Was it because his earnings were irregular and spasmodic and he wished to save more money for his favourite by reducing the number of persons to be fed from five to two ?

There had been some bickerings between husband and wife, due, we may be sure, to his intermittent unemployment, but nothing to suggest the possibility of a terrible tragedy. Arthur Devereux was, as I have said, not the slave of a vile temper nor had he ever shown any signs of cruelty or treachery, but for some unfathomed reason he coolly spent two or three days tramping about London in search of a flat which he might turn into the mortuary of his wife and younger children. What could have been the state of the mind of a man who surveyed a dozen flats solely from the view-point of a triple murderer in prospective and who quietly and unemotionally rejected one after another because his mind's eye pictured gossipy tenants on one landing or poor brick-work on another. It was not until he came to a block of flats in Kilburn that he found what he wanted.

"I will have it," he said, hesitating no longer

when the agent intimated that the flat immediately under would soon be vacant and was not likely to be re-let.

Devereux moved his family in promptly, and amongst his luggage was a very large trunk. There was an epidemic of "trunk" murders in the first years of the present century, and if the chemist's assistant had not been so obsessed by his murderous plans he might have been saved from himself by memories of what had happened to others who had tried unsuccessfully to escape detection and punishment by the very means he was contemplating.

But he was intent on getting Stanley all to himself, and he wanted to get rid of the incubus of a wife and two children of whom he had grown tired. His employment enabled him to obtain poison, and after he had administered it he worked strenuously, but without undue haste or losing his head. He packed them all into the same trunk, and had it conveyed to a furniture depository, where he paid in advance a quarter's rent for the space it occupied.

Amongst the witnesses for the prosecution was the landlord of the flats, and he related a significant incident which could not have happened in the present year. When Devereux, whose attitude towards his neighbours was one of contemptuous aloofness, heard that the flat immediately under his own was to be re-let he at once went to the owner and threatened to leave if new tenants were allowed to move in.

"Leave it vacant," he urged, "and I will pay a little more for my own flat. I should hate to have a howling mob of children directly under me."

Flats have now become so scarce that it seems incredible that not so many years ago a tenant could talk like this to his landlord and have his wish granted. But there were thousands of vacant houses and flats

in London then, and Arthur Devereux knew this, and was not surprised when his offer was accepted. When he was on his trial at the Old Bailey tremendous significance was, rightly enough, attached to the incident, for at the time of its occurrence he had been very short of money, had had an expensive family to provide for, and could not have afforded the rent he was paying.

Mr. George Elliott, now unfortunately to be referred to as "the late," had nothing to work on except the contradictory statements of his client. When the murderer had been arrested by Inspector Pollard—it took place at Coventry where he had obtained a situation in a chemist's shop—he had denied the ownership of the trunk, the odour from which had compelled the owner of the depository to send for the police, but when he saw his identification with it was certain he recalled his first lie and substituted another about a self-sacrificing wife, who, rather than be a burden to him in his poverty, had poisoned herself and her twins.

Once upon a time the glorious rule of every advocate with a poor case was, "Abuse the other side." Now the policy adopted is abuse of the press.

"The papers have pre-judged the prisoner," said Mr. Elliott, in his valiant attempt to achieve the impossible.

"That is to be regretted," answered Mr. Justice Ridley, gravely, "but you can rely on the impartiality of the jury."

Impartiality! The jury would have to have been very partial, indeed, to have acquitted Arthur Devereux. The cowardly murderer wanted mercy and not justice, but it was a mercy that would have been as degrading as the crime with which he was charged.

Whenever I hear counsel for an obviously guilty

prisoner calling for justice to his client I cannot help smiling, for if the learned gentleman was taken to task he would have to admit that he did not exactly mean justice. It reminds me of a financier who brought an action claiming a large sum of money. He was unable to attend the trial, but on arriving in London he rushed to his solicitor's office, all anxiety to hear the result.

"Well, what was the verdict?" he gasped, sinking into the chair opposite the man of law.

"My dear sir," said the solicitor, with the pomposity of the conventional parliamentary candidate "justice has triumphed."

"Good Heavens!" cried the financier in horror, "Then we must appeal at once."

After his condemnation Arthur Devereux feigned insanity, acting childishly and talking nonsense, giving utterance to the most absurd statements with a grave face, and pretending he was oblivious of his actual position, but the cunning of the criminal was overdone, and he was not clever enough to see that to the trained expert there was always an underlying motive for each act which connected them together and stamped the imitation madness with a method which exposed its falsity.

The man who could invite his mother-in-law to the flat a few hours before he murdered her daughter and grandchildren was not a lunatic swayed by an impulsive and uncontrollable mind. The man who had a fresh story for every emergency and every question was no lunatic victimised by an irresponsible and bizarre mentality. The alienist who certified that he was sane made no mistake, and the execution of Arthur Devereux was the just finale to a very deliberate crime.

Sir Edward Ridley, the judge who sentenced Devereux to death, is the only person I have ever

heard of having a skeleton at his marriage feast. I am writing literally and not figuratively, strange as it may seem, but it is a fact that when his lordship was married, amongst his wedding presents received and on view at the reception was a tall, oak box holding the skeleton of an Austrian grenadier. The origin of this curious gift was odd enough. Before Lady Ridley married, an eccentric gentleman came upon her sketching from a human skull, and when she confessed to a fondness for drawing anatomy he promised to give her a complete skeleton on her marriage.

She had forgotten all about it when the oak case arrived and created much curiosity and wonderment amongst the guests and servants as to its contents. When it leaked out there was "a skeleton at the feast" there were many shudders, but Lady Ridley could not reject a gift which was well-meant, one which had entailed an enormous amount of trouble on the part of the old gentleman when it came to getting it past the customs house, and when she began her married life with Sir Edward it was given house-room. However, the young wife reckoned without the prejudice and superstitions of her staff, and when she understood that if she wished to keep the skeleton she would have to do without servants, she decided to make a present of it to a London hospital.

His lordship certainly never received a more extraordinary present, but then in their public capacity our judges are never offered gifts, for it is universally known that the British bench cannot be bribed. In other countries it may be different, but it must be well over a century since bribery and the bench have been associated together. Of course, it is different with the members of the legal profession. There is nothing to prevent grateful clients bestowing

gifts upon persons anxious to prove their gratitude. When Montague Williams saved a notorious pick-pocket from penal servitude by throwing oratorical dust in the eyes of the jury, the over-joyed rogue, conscious that the sum of one guinea which had been marked on the brief was not sufficient to reward such a genius, sought an interview with his counsel.

"Ain't got any money left, guv'nor," he said, hoarsely, "but come along of me to Piccadilly and pick out any bit of jewellery you fancy and I'll let you have it in five minutes."

It was the same barrister who, when another pick-pocket failed to persuade him to accept an insignificant fee, was told, "Well, sir, I couldn't have paid you at all to defend our Ben if I hadn't had a bit of luck on my way to see you this morning."

History does not relate whether or not Montague went into the Old Bailey jingling stolen money in his pockets, but if he had—and I doubt it—there were many of his professional brethren who would have seen nothing derogatory in it. Was it not one of these who when reproached with unprofessional conduct for having taken less than the prescribed guinea, retorted, "I admit that I accepted only eighteen and sixpence, but as it was all the poor beggar had I can't see anything unprofessional about it."

A Liverpool butcher who was defended successfully by the then Mr. Charles Russell, afterwards Lord Chief Justice of England, against a charge of manslaughter, vowed that he would provide his counsel with his Sunday joint for the remainder of his life. The brilliant Irishman promptly declined the offer, but the butcher, suspecting that the not yet over-worked barrister was nervous lest the weekly gift should cost the donor too much, assured him that he could well afford it, and in due course a joint of

beef of Gargantuan size was delivered at the house Russell occupied in a Liverpool suburb. It was only the return of the joint four weeks in succession that convinced the butcher that his meat was not wanted.

(2)

The Old Bailey "regulars"—by which term I mean the members of the habitual criminal class—have their likes and dislikes amongst the judges. The wife-beaters loathed Mr. Justice Day because they knew that he had such a horror of that particular class of offence that he meted out floggings whenever he could. The blackmailer abandoned hope if he heard that Mr. Justice Hawkins was to preside at his trial aware that his lordship's sentences of penal servitude were generally double figures for this offence. Then again, the prisoner under remand who was to be tried for bigamy or some other violation of the marriage laws trembled if Mr. Justice Phillimore was on the bench.

There was one prisoner in the Old Bailey dock, however, who, reasonably enough, I suppose, if we look at it from his point of view, had a prejudice against the whole personalia and paraphernalia of the law.

"Prisoner at the bar," said the clerk of the court, "do you object to any member of the jury selected to try you?"

"Object!" cried the "old hand," taken aback by this unexpected consideration for his feelings, "I object to the whole blinkin' lot of 'em and the judge, too."

It would not do to mention by name those holders of high judicial office who have gained popularity amongst the habituals of the Old Bailey dock. The

reason is that their "admirers" regard them as "soft" or "barmy," and believe it is easy to hoodwink them. An old convict once remarked that a certain judge could be influenced easily by a few tears and a reference in a choking voice to a wife and starving children. Another of their lordships he averred, could be persuaded to change penal servitude to a year's hard labour by a timely reference to an orphanhood spent in slums beyond the range of Christian influence.

The experienced criminal who is passing a week or two in a London prison previous to paying a return visit to the Old Bailey is always anxious to know the name of the judge. He hopes for one of the type he, ungratefully enough, despises, for the expert I have just quoted voiced the opinion of his "profession" when he contemptuously criticised those members of the bench who allow themselves to be deceived because they cannot resist sentiment. Years ago there was a very jaunty prisoner who talked confidently of a triumphant acquittal at the Old Bailey, until a couple of days previous to his appearance he heard that Mr. Justice Hawkins was to preside.

"I won't have a fair trial," he whined, and as the charge against him was the wilful murder of a policeman this was an acknowledgement that he dared not hope any longer to be able to deceive either judge or jury. For the prisoner was James Orrock, the murderer of Police Constable Cole, at Dalston, and he was the central figure in a great Old Bailey drama which took some of the cleverest detectives in London more than a year to prepare.

Orrock was a carpenter with a special taste for burgarly, and he was robbing a Baptist chapel when he was interrupted by the unlucky constable, who sacrificed his life in a vain effort to capture the fleeing burglar. The tragedy was a very poignant one, for

the young constable had but recently married, and there were many bitter hearts in the Metropolitan Police Force when the news was circulated that a young and promising colleague had been done to death.

When the corpse of the policeman was found, the detectives expected an immediate arrest, for close to it they discovered a variety of clues, including two chisels, a broad-brimmed hat, and a bullet in the truncheon of the dead man. All were carefully examined under a microscope which revealed on one of the chisels the word " rock."

" That's the name of the murderer," exclaimed a young detective, but Inspector Glasse, who was in charge of the case, was doubtful about it, and his doubts were confirmed when a list of burglars known to be fond of carrying firearms about with them was compiled and no name remotely resembling the word " rock " was in it. But the authorities at Scotland Yard remained of the opinion that the crime was the work of someone well-known to the police, for they knew that a newcomer to the burglary ranks very rarely uses violence of any sort.

The most promising clue was, of course, the chisel with the mysterious word scratched on it, and Inspector Glasse resolved to find the shop where it had been sharpened last, the scratch clearly being the shopkeeper's method of identifying its owner. That the murderer was the owner of the chisel could not be disputed, and if the inspector had only had a little luck he must have solved in a few days the mystery that puzzled him and the country for more than a year. But he drew blank at more than twenty shops before he heard that there was an old widow, Mrs. Preston, who was carrying on her late husband's business of sharpening chisels, and, although by now the detective was weary of the chase, he could not

afford to neglect this information, unpromising though it appeared to be. However, he was richly rewarded for all his trouble when Mrs. Preston informed him that if he had a chisel in his possession which had ever been in her shop she could identify it easily because she had made a practice of scratching the name of its owner on the blade.

In the witness-box at the Old Bailey, Inspector Glasse was careful to explain that he had not shown the widow the chisel until she had identified it to his satisfaction He had questioned her about it before he produced it, and she had actually named the exact part of the chisel where her mark must be if she had ever sharpened it.

When he did hand it over to her she pointed out at once the syllable "rock," and solved the problem by explaining that it meant "Orrock," a young man who worked as a carpenter and who had paid her to sharpen this chisel.

"I haven't seen him for more than a year," she remarked to the detective, and this was in itself another confirmation of his suspicions, for more than twelve months had passed since the murder of Police Constable Cole.

The hunters were after Orrock now, who had not been seen in his usual haunts for a long time. But it is unnecessary to give the details of the chase, or how it occurred to Inspector Glasse that the murderer might have adopted the ancient ruse of getting himself imprisoned for a minor offence so that he might be out of the way if ever a hue and cry was raised after him. Eventually he was run to earth in a London prison, and he was completely identified with his crime before he entered the dock at the Old Bailey and faced the stern and implacable Mr. Justice Hawkins.

There were famous counsel in the case, Sir Harry

Poland, K.C., and the late Sir Forrest Fulton, who was for so many years Recorder of London, and I am sure that neither ever forgot the trial of Orrock. Mr. Poland, as he then was, certainly never had an easier case to handle, for the police had left nothing undone, and they provided the prosecution with a volume of evidence which all the skill and dexterity of Sir Forrest Fulton could not weaken in the least degree. They had the prisoner satisfactorily identified; they found the man who had advertised the revolver which Orrock had bought, and they extracted from a tree in the Tottenham marshes the bullet the burglar had fired when testing the weapon before parting with his money. They traced him to the very spot where Police Constable Cole had been shot down, and they had a batch of witnesses to show that Orrock was the man who had been hovering about the Baptist chapel shortly before the murder.

During the trial it came out that Orrock attended three Sunday services at the chapel so that he might make a mental plan of the building and thereby facilitate his entry. A member of the chapel noticed the lusty singing of the stranger and hoped that he would develop into a valuable worker in the cause, and his amazement when he knew the motive behind the apparent piety was shared by scores of his friends.

But we have grown accustomed to associating hypocrisy with murder. Palmer was an ostentatious churchgoer, and Pritchard could pray by the hour when his wife and mother-in-law were dying from the poison he had administered to them. But the most revolting and loathsome specimen of hypocrisy and cant I have ever come across concerns a murderer convicted of an exceptionally cowardly crime, who when asked on the scaffold if he had anything to say, replied, "Why should I? Our Saviour said nothing when He died."

Mr. Justice Hawkins had the virtue of hating hypocrisy and hypocrites. Orrock whined about not having had a fair trial, and with sentence of death beginning to numb his faculties muttered between chattering teeth protestations of innocence, but the hangman who dispatched the murderer did good work that morning, and in the words of Hawkins, "rid the world of a disgrace to humanity."

It must have been Marwood who executed Orrock, for he was about that time a familiar figure in the Green Dragon, in Fleet Street, whenever his grisly services were required in London. Marwood took himself with greater seriousness than did his predecessor, Calcraft, and would never enter the Old Bailey during a murder trial because he feared that his motive might be misconstrued. It is worth recording, by the way, that when Calcraft gave place to Marwood the Secretary to the Board of Trade, who bore the same name as the retiring hangman, was succeeded by a gentleman of the name of Marwood. These names may sound a trifle ancient, but there is living to-day a very energetic baronet who once acted as assistant executioner to Calcraft, and there must be hundreds of Londoners who were in the habit of drinking in the favourite bar of the official hangman.

"What would you do if you were called upon to hang your brother?" Calcraft was asked in the course of an informal debate on the difficulties of his profession.

"I would do my duty as a Home Office official," was the answer, and there was something indescribably comic in the ridiculous pose of the bibulous old man who was wont to refer to the Home Secretary and the Old Bailey judges as "my colleagues."

Thomas Hardy wrote a great short story about a man under sentence of death who escapes and reaches

a cosy inn a few miles from the jail which was to have been his grave the next morning. He is drinking in a corner of the inn when he becomes charmed by the affability and good humour of a stranger, who turns out to be the hangman on his way to the county jail to hang the murderer, who was sitting opposite him at that very moment. There is a tradition that something of the sort actually happened in Dorset a hundred years ago, but the nearest approach to it in real life I can discover is the story related of Calcraft and a public house acquaintance. One night they drank to their next merry meeting, and parted, promising to call at the same place exactly a year later. According to Calcraft they did meet again, but it was on the scaffold, for in the interval his friend had committed murder and had been convicted and sentenced to death at the Old Bailey.

"I did all I could for him," said Calcraft, seriously, "and he died as comfortably as a baby falling asleep."

There was one public executioner who was publicly executed himself, and he fully deserved his fate. That is ancient history, but life is still full of surprises and paradoxes. I have seen the Official Receiver in bankruptcy make an exhibition of himself when called upon to explain his own bankruptcy, and prison governors have stood in the dock and have discovered for themselves by hard and bitter experience what prison-life is really like. Several detectives, more accustomed to the comfortable prominence of the witness-box at the Old Bailey, have entered its dock, and a few philanthropists, genuine and bogus, who have specialised in providing counsel for poor prisoners at the Old Bailey, have had occasion to provide counsel for themselves, and I do not remember an instance where they have escaped conviction.

"The Old Bailey is a hideous building—I wish they'd destroy it," petulantly exclaimed an affected youth to a famous judge.

"Every scoundrel in Great Britain will agree with you," his lordship retorted, and gained from his hearers the applause of genuine laughter.

It is, indeed, an unlovely erection, but it is a necessity, if we are to "defend the children of the poor and punish the wrongdoer," to quote the inscription which they placed on the new Old Bailey, a text which created so much controversy.

(3)

There have been so many queer, not to say eccentric, trials at the Old Bailey that it would not be difficult to fill a volume with them. It is within living memory that a Lord Mayor-elect of London had a true bill returned against him by a grand jury on a charge of criminal libel. That meant, of course, he had to take his place in the dock, although in view of what followed one can only marvel that he should ever have been put to such an indignity. Aldermen of the City of London may have their weaknesses, but penning libels on postcards is not one of them, and Sir F. W. Truscott must have been the most astonished man in the world when he found himself in the dock of the great court over which, as Lord Mayor, he had jurisdiction.

The trial was, of course, very brief and I do not suppose that any person ever proved his innocence so promptly and completely as Sir F. W. Truscott did. Counsel for the prosecution made a brief speech, and then a few witnesses were examined, whose evidence was vague and unsatisfactory. But when the defence placed in the box the author of the libel,

and the witness confessed in open court to having written it, the alderman's dignity and freedom were restored, and the sympathy he received assisted materially to make his tenure of the mayoralty a brilliant success.

Another Old Bailey trial is linked with the name of that great scientist, the late Sir Alfred Russell Wallace, whom I once heard refer to it as one of the most irritating incidents of his career. I must hasten to add that the famous rival of Charles Darwin was not the prisoner—that position was occupied by a crank of the name of John Hampden—a gentleman who became notorious by maintaining the theory of the flatness of the earth. He worried scores of eminent persons and thought nothing of stopping strangers in the street and trying to lure them into an argument on the subject. Unfortunately for Wallace he had, in an unguarded moment, taken notice of a communication from Hampden who had promptly retaliated with a challenge to submit the subject to arbitration, the loser to pay five hundred pounds to the winner. After some discussion Mr. Walsh, the editor of the *Field*, was appointed referee, and, each of the parties to the arguments having deposited five hundred pounds in his hands with instructions to give the whole thousand to the one in whose favour he decided, he proceeded to examine the arguments on both sides.

It goes without saying that Wallace won, but no sooner had he received the thousand pounds from the arbitrator than Hampden began a systematic persecution of both editor and scientist. He deluged the *Field* office with postcards, canvassed advertisers, warning them against the paper and its editor, and filled in his odd moments with worrying Wallace out of his life. The nuisance became so great that Mr. Walsh took a warrant out against Hampden, who was

eventually committed for trial at the Old Bailey on a charge of slander.

A brief acquaintance with jail and a practical demonstration of the fact that the Old Bailey dock, if roomy, does not conduce to repose of mind or body, influenced the prisoner to offer a humble apology and ask for mercy. The judge was inclined to take a lenient view of the eccentricities of a crank who had lost his reason because of his devotion to a ridiculous theory, and, as Mr. Walsh was not vindictive, the prisoner was simply bound over.

"But that didn't prevent him nearly worrying me into my grave," said Sir Alfred Russell Wallace, when recalling the circumstances of his only visit to the Old Bailey, "and if I hadn't believed he was mad I'd have had him sent to jail.

Generally speaking, cranks have a poor time at the Old Bailey, especially if they are just criminals seeking a cloak to cover their misdeeds. There was one cut-throat who shouted from the dock that he lived only to found a state of society in which all persons would be equal. As the offence of which he had been found guilty was stabbing an elderly workman who had objected to being robbed, his effort to give his crime a political complexion failed miserably.

"Then you will approve of the place to which I am about to send you," said the judge, with quiet sarcasm, "for you will find yourself in a community where everybody is equal."

But I will pass on from "politics" to something more interesting.

The trial of Luigi Baranelli, the Italian, for the murder of Joseph Lathan, in the west end of London, was due to one of those grim tragedies which, from time to time, disfigure great cities. There was a woman in the case—there generally is—and it was because of an old love that Baranelli murdered the person he

considered had supplanted him and attempted to take his own life.

There was every likelihood when the wounded murderer was examined by doctors that he would not survive to appear at the Old Bailey, but the best surgeons of the day were called in and they patched him up, a ghastly task for sensitive men who knew that they were preparing him for the scaffold. When Baranelli was able to leave the Middlesex Hospital a strange dispute arose between the police and the coroner as to which of them had the right to the custody of the body. The coroner, who was sensitive of his privileges and duties, made out a warrant committing Baranelli to Newgate, but the head of Scotland Yard would have none of this, maintaining that the murderer was his property and not subject at all to the municipal officer. The wretched prisoner was bundled into a cab by the coroner's two underlings, and they were about to mount the box and drive off with their prize when an inspector of police came on the scene, took command of the box, and seizing the reins, galloped away in triumph. The whole affair was indecent and revolting, and the misery and wretchedness of the prisoner for whose body they were fighting added to the disgrace of the whole proceedings.

When the girl for love of whom he had committed murder entered the witness-box Baranelli sobbed aloud, but he regained his composure when she went on to describe a very dramatic incident which had occurred, appropriately enough, in a theatre. One night the Italian had persuaded her to accompany him to see "The Corsican Brothers," a very popular drama of the day, and she related how she had observed an extraordinary change in him during the scene where one of the characters murders a man in revenge for having shot his brother. When the ghost

appeared in the play Baranelli had turned to the girl and had whispered to her that he would shoot himself because she no longer loved him, and that he would avenge himself by haunting her for the remainder of her life.

"What did you say to that?" asked counsel for the prosecution.

"I told him he was talking nonsense and that he had read so many novels that he was under the impression he was the hero of one of them," she answered, in a low tone; "I never thought that he would ever carry out his threat—I didn't think that he was so much in love with me as to commit murder," she added, breaking down and sobbing.

Baranelli collapsed when sentence of death was pronounced and in the condemned cell wept piteously because there was no mercy for one whose motive for a cowardly crime had been jealousy.

"Being in love with a girl does not entitle you to murder her," said a judge on another occasion to a guilty prisoner. "It is a peculiar way of showing your love and it cannot be tolerated in a civilised country."

"What's all this fuss about?" asked a burly Cockney of his solicitor as they consulted over the rail of the Old Bailey dock.

"You're charged with attempting to murder Jane Briggs," the lawyer reminded him, "and it is a very serious charge."

"Serious charge!" echoed the astonished prisoner, "but, guv'nor, she's my own wife."

That sums up the philosophy of many of those who have the misfortune to belong to the "submerged tenth," and, strangely enough, the women often appear to accept it as natural and lawful. I have heard of a woman, whose husband was sentenced at the Old Bailey to seven years for nearly killing her, spending

the whole of the time involved by the enforced separation working herself to the bone so that she might have a goodly sum of money to hand him when she met him at the prison gates. She nearly starved herself in her anxiety to make the peace-offering as large as possible, and it was not her fault that the feast —mainly of a liquid nature—which celebrated their reunion, ended in the re-arrest of the man because of a renewal of his violence due to strong drink.

One of the most pathetic scenes I have ever witnessed at the Old Bailey arose out of a much injured woman's efforts to shield the hulking brute who had stopped short of taking her life only because the police had arrived in time to save her. When she entered the witness-box a murmur of sympathy passed over the court, for she made a ghastly spectacle with her bandaged head and battered face. In a less restrained community the pathetic sight would have made every man in that crowded court a lyncher, and one could see that the judge—Grantham—was controlling his emotion with an effort. But the crisis of our overwrought feelings came when counsel asked her to explain how she had received her injuries In a tone none of us can ever forget she answered,

" I—I fell downstairs, sir."

There was a world of love and forgiveness in that reply, and the pathos was merely heightened by the obvious unworthiness of the object of it.

It was perjury, rank perjury, of course, but all the same a splendid lie. It deceived no one and it did not save the prisoner a day's punishment. But it showed that, however degraded humanity may be, it still retains something of the divine in it, the divinity of forgiveness when the wrong done is still fresh and the pain unassuaged.

Mr. Justice Grantham gave the brute ten years, and I was told afterwards he sent some money to the

poor wife, who had gone straight from the witness-box back to the hospital, where her stay was prolonged because she was broken-hearted by the belief that she had in some way contributed to her husband's disaster.

The pity of it is that so much of this self-sacrifice and devotion is sheer waste. There may be cases, of course, where the brute, softened by his wife's forgiveness, turns over a new leaf and becomes a credit to the community, but we never hear of them, and, as a judge once remarked at the Old Bailey, " There are certain persons who regard mercy and forgiveness as merely incentives to further crime.

" I have never been in jail before, my lord," sobbed one of these brutes.

" Don't cry," said the judge, pretending to misunderstand him, " I am going to send you there now."

It is not surprising that this spirit of forgiveness should not only surprise but irritate judges, and yet there is a quality about it which makes us think better of human nature, even if our first impression is one of contempt.

" But if I let him off he'll only assault you again," exclaimed Mr. Justice Grantham, when a woman who had been injured for life appealed on behalf of her husband in the dock.

" I'll chance that, sir," she answered, with an earnestness that deeply moved everyone in court.

However, I must not dwell too long on this melancholy topic. Women have the right to be illogical, and one must admit that there are just as many male cranks in this world of ours. And life would lose of its colour if women did not exercise their privilege of changing their mind. Lord Darling tells a story which is a delightful commentary on this feminine hobby—I will not call it weakness.

" I do not wish to sit on the jury, my lord," said a

middle-aged lady, impulsively ; " I do not believe in capital punishment."

" But the case about to be tried has nothing whatever to do with capital punishment," the then Mr. Justice Darling pointed out, " it is a dispute between a married couple about the sum of two hundred pounds. The wife gave it to her husband to buy a fur coat for her, but instead of effecting the purchase he lost the money by backing horses."

" Oh, if that's it," said the woman, brightening up considerably, " I'll serve." She paused before she added in a reflective tone, " Perhaps, after all, I am wrong about capital punishment."

The Old Bailey stands for mercy as well as for justice, and it is no reflection on our judges or our juries that very often the mercy is represented by some tattered and battered little woman in the witness-box. And then, in spite of his scarlet and ermine, his lordship on the bench is for the time being dwarfed by the humble creature fighting for her man.

" Defend the children of the poor and punish the wrongdoer." I quote the Old Bailey text again because as often as not it is the poor who strive to save the wrongdoer from his just punishment, and who shall blame them for not being able to harbour bitterness against those who have injured them ? By their self-sacrifice they raise the most sordid and drab of Old Bailey trials to a plane which is almost spiritual.

CHAPTER V

THE KU KLUX KLAN

THE reign of terror created by the doings of the notorious secret society, the Ku Klux Klan, was due to a large extent to a combination of the mysterious and the theatrical in its procedure. Even the bravest of men might be excused a lapse into cowardice if he woke up in the middle of a moonlight night to find his lonely farmhouse surrounded by a hundred motionless and silent horsemen, figures that, by reason of their disguises, looked like demons from another world. Clothed in long white robes, their faces concealed by a weird-looking mask, and wearing horns made of cardboard, which struck the terrified object of their vengeance as being very real, these messengers brought misery and desolation wherever they went.

That was how the members of the Ku Klux Klan conducted their campaigns against those who incurred their displeasure. For many years they held a vast district in the southern portion of the United States in thraldom. The Government was powerless, and the real ruler of the country was the Grand Wizard, the head of the "Invisible Empire," as the Ku Klux Klan called their sphere of operations.

Like so many similar organisations, the Ku Klax Klan was started with the best of intentions. It was once a young men's mutual improvement association. But the intervention of the American Civil War scattered its members, who, however, kept it going, until those who escaped death in the field returned home to build it up again. War, however, changed the spirit of the people, but as there were thousands of widows and orphans to be looked after it was

re-established as a benevolent association. New members were drafted into it, and for a short time it collected subscriptions and doled out allowances to the victims.

It was a timid, shrinking widow who indirectly led to the inception of the Ku Klux Klan. When the victorious Northern States announced that they would give the freed negro the vote, and that they intended to send teachers to tell the blacks how to exercise the franchise without fear or favour, there was scarcely a Southerner who did not protest, and the members of the benevolent association were amongst the most prominent. Then one evening a widow who had given her husband and her three sons to the Southern cause came to them with a story of persecution at the hands of two former slaves, who, having lost their heads when told they were the equal of the whites, had proceeded to injure the old lady's property. The committee instantly promised their active support, and in a body set out to investigate. They actually found the two negroes trying to set fire to the widow's little home. When the six members of the committee left them they were suspended from two trees.

It was the first act of vengeance, and it served to alter the whole complexion of the society. There and then it became the Ku Klux Klan, appealing to all white men who wished to see the negroes kept in their places, and who wished to stop the outrages of the numerous secret societies formed by the blacks.

"We will protect the whites against the blacks," said the leader of the Ku Klux Klan, and within a week he had ten thousand followers.

They were all chosen men, and they embraced all trades and professions. Each member of the Ku Klux Klan—the name was supposed to resemble the

clicking sound made by the loading of a revolver—was a crack shot, and an expert horseman. Every one burned with a fierce hatred for the negroes, but more especially for those emissaries from the North, who were to persuade the negroes that they were as good, if not better, than the whites.

It was, of course, necessary to work in secret, and an elaborate set of rules was drawn up. The strictest discipline was maintained. The Grand Wizard and his officers, who were termed Dragons, Titans, and Giants, according to rank, gave no second chances. They ruled with an iron hand, and with such severity that scores of members bitterly regretted ever having joined. Members were called "Ghouls," and the system of issuing orders was by anonymous letters.

Those who came under the ban of the society were first the recipients of a warning letter, and if this was ignored, a few orange pips, the ace of spades, or a rough drawing of a hanging man indicated to the recipients that he was marked for death. After that the white-robed figures, who worked in silence, paid him a visit, with the ghastliest results.

The objects of the Ku Klux Klan were tremendously popular in the South, and the black men who showed ability of a high order, and who thrust themselves into public life, were singled out for the attentions of the dreaded society. It was sufficient to speak favourably of any black orator or statesman to earn the hatred of the K.K.K. To entertain a negro was a terrible offence; to speak to one of them on equal terms usually resulted in a flogging; repetition meant death.

Night after night parties of strange white-robed horsemen rose about the country, dealing out death and floggings to those whom the Grand Wizard had condemned for offences against his peculiar code. Their numbers varied from half-a-dozen to as many as

a hundred. Sometimes one gang would hang five or ten men in a single night, and flog as many more. Then they would return home, and in the morning the local doctor would be attending his patients, the chemist making up prescriptions, the grocer genially supplying his customers, and a group of farmers discussing crops in the market place. Nobody except themselves would know that they were all members of the dreaded K.K.K., and that they had spent the previous night in organised lynchings.

The story of Robert Taylor, a New York teacher, will best illustrate the activities of the Ku Klux Klan. Taylor had fought bravely on the Northern side, and was a mixture of the crank and the idealist. He believed that all men were equal without regard to race, colour, or religion, and he hailed with enthusiasm the granting of the vote to his black brothers. When he heard that the negroes required to be educated up to the new order of things, and, furthermore, that certain ill-advised Southerners were doing all they could to prevent them exercising their rights, he volunteered to proceed to Alabama, and do what he could to educate the niggers and champion their cause.

Now, the dreaded Ku Klux Klan was stronger in the state of Alabama than anywhere else. Two of its members, taken by the police in an act of atrocious murder, were found "not guilty" by a jury of respectable citizens, who had been afraid to offend the army of self-styled Ghouls. That was sufficient proof of the position the K.K.K. held in the State. When Robert Taylor took up his residence in the country village he was literally asking for trouble. Of course, before he arrived there, the Grand Wizard knew all about him, and a special meeting of the committee was summoned, at which his punishment was decided on.

Taylor openly associated with negroes. He took the chair at their meetings, and started schools for both old and young. Around the country he went, preaching equality, and imploring the blacks to educate themselves. He was, of course, dead against the black secret societies, as he was against the Ku Klux Klan. But his enemies could see none of his virtues. Yet in their rough and uncouth admiration for his courage in defying them they decided to warn him first before proceeding to extreme measures.

Robert Taylor returned home one evening to find a letter pinned to his pillow. Wonderingly he opened it, and he read, to the accompaniment of chuckles, the following extraordinary gibberish :—

K.K.K., Dismal Swamp, 11th Hour.

"Mene mene tekel upharsin. The bloody dagger is drawn. The trying hour is at hand. Beware! Your steps are marked. The eye of the Dark Chief is upon you First he warns, then the avenging dagger flashes in the moonlight.—By Order of the Grand Cyclops."

It was impossible to take this seriously, and Taylor, who refused to regard the K.K.K. with awe, tossed it into the fire. He continued his work, but some of his negro friends, having heard of the letter, volunteered to act as a guard every night. Accordingly six of the most stalwart patrolled the ground around his house, each man armed to the teeth. For four nights in succession nothing happened. Then came a moonless night, when Taylor, after vainly beseeching his devoted friends to go home, and leave him to look after himself, was awakened from a heavy slumber by a terrified old woman who told him that his six faithful guardians were lying dead in front of the house.

The news drove Taylor into a frenzy, and he

resolved to track down the perpetrators. With extraordinary luck he actually managed to secure sufficient evidence against three neighbouring farmers, and they were arrested and brought before a jury.

The evidence for the prosecution was overwhelming. There could be no doubt of that. The bearing of the accused was eloquent of their callousness, and they hardly troubled to conceal their pride at having helped to reduce the negro population by six. A verdict of guilty seemed certain, and counsel for the State was nearing the end of an incisive speech when a tall, gaunt, fierce-visaged man of sixty suddenly entered the court, and took his seat directly facing the jury. All eyes instinctively turned on him, and a shiver went through the audience.

The jury were obviously fascinated by the personability of this silent imperturbable figure, who sat as though carved out of marble, for from first to last he never moved a muscle.

After a protracted trial the jury announced that the accused were not guilty, and the amazed judge and astounded spectators were so lost in wonderment that they forgot the stranger for a few minutes. When they remembered him, he was nowhere to be seen. The stranger was none other than the Grand Wizard, the head of the Ku Klux Klan, the most powerful person in the Southern States, and a man who could sentence any of his fellows to death, and know that it would be relentlessly carried out.

Of course, Taylor was disgusted by the display of cowardice on the part of the jury, who had been hypnotised into breaking their oaths by the sudden intervention of the stranger. They had only guessed who he was. No one there knew his name nor where he came from. Even those members of the secret society who were present in court were uncertain of his status. It was the custom for the heads of the

organisation to wear masks at committee meetings, and even the leaders were quite unaware of the identities of all their colleagues.

When Taylor reached home there was another message for him, but this time it was not in writing. It took the form of a small envelope, in which was the fatal sign—five orange pips. A neighbour informed him that the pips meant that he was now doomed.

Well-wishers, who really admired his courage, retailed stories of men they had known who had been murdered within forty-eight hours of the receipt of the orange pips. There was no appeal now. The Grand Wizard had grown tired of warning him, and he must prepare to die.

He must have realised the seriousness of his position, for he rode to the nearest police station that same day to request the protection of the authorities. The small force readily promised to do all they could, and Taylor, who was told that the white horsemen only appeared at night, started back in the blazing sunlight to tell his housekeeper of his precautions. But he never reached home, and when a party of neighbours went to look for him it was some hours before they found his dead body in two feet of water. He was lying on his face and he bore no mark of injury.

How had he met his death in a pool ? Had the white horsemen broken all precedents by wreaking the vengeance of the K.K.K. in the daytime ?

There were many who believed that Taylor had dismounted to take a drink, and, in leaning over the pool of water, had had a fit and fallen in. The majority, however, ascribed it to the Ku Klux Klan, but the society itself volunteered no explanation. It was, as usual, silent and mysterious, and consequently the death of Robert Taylor created widespread terror.

Another notable instance of the relentlessness of

the Ku Klux Klan was the murder of Donald M'Andrew, a Scotsman who had fought for the South, and who had once been a Grand Dragon in the K.K.K. M'Andrew was a fierce, jealous, and unscrupulous brigand, and before he incurred the displeasure of his colleagues he shared in at least fifty murders.

It was the custom of the society to accept no bribes, and not to execute vengeance for the sake of acquiring wealth. They preached and practised war against the negroes and their friends. M'Andrew revelled in bloodshed for years, and he was so ferocious and daring that he became the confidant of the Grand Wizard himself, who carefully concealed his identity, and only admitted a very few of his followers to his friendship.

But the thoroughness of the Scotsman's hatred for the negroes appealed to the Grand Wizard, and he and M'Andrew soon became great friends. They ruled the K.K.K., and, encouraged by success, they went from excess to excess.

Things became so bad that the official detective force at Washington planned a campaign against it, and an effort was made to penetrate the identity of the head of the Organisation. With that object in view a detective toured Georgia, and, after a great deal of trouble, succeeded in getting himself elected a member of the K.K.K. The detective carried his life in his hands, but he acted his part so well that for several months he was an active participant in the meetings of the local council. Of course, he was only one of the rank and file, a mere Ghoul, but he hoped to ingratiate himself into the good graces of the local leaders, and through them meet the really big men in the K.K.K

In the course of time he met M'Andrew, and the two men got on with one another exceedingly well. The detective played up to the Scotsman, imitating his

bullying attitude towards negroes, and always applauding his sentiments on the one subject that engrossed the Southerners. Gradually M'Andrew became confidential. He mentioned no names, but he told stories of midnight marauding parties, of the floggings of men and women, and of the destruction of farmhouses and the murder of their owners that sounded too improbable to be true.

These narratives were usually followed by complaints from M'Andrew, who stated that he had beggared himself for the cause. He said that he had neglected his own farm to lead the white horsemen at night, and he bitterly commented on the Grand Wizard's refusal to permit the members of the K.K.K. to enrich themselves at the expense of the pro-negro party.

It was not very difficult under the circumstances to lead the conversation from this stage round to the question of how to make a lot of money quickly. The wily detective was never in a hurry. He knew that, unless he first got M'Andrew to pledge himself to accept a bribe, the slightest criticism of the Ku Klux Klan on his part would result in disaster. But the time came when M'Andrew listened eagerly to his fellow-member's offer of a thousand pounds if he would give him the name and address of the Grand Wizard.

The Scotsman yielded to the temptation, and in the bar of an inn promised that he would give him the desired information if the detective would bring half the promised reward the following night, the balance to be paid when the information had been tested.

M'Andrew was really growing tired of the Ku Klux Klan business. His nerve was failing him, and he was now nearly sixty. He realised that the day would come when the society would be destroyed by the State, and it occurred to him that it would be

foolish not to feather his own nest before the catastrophe came.

The appointment was made, and the detective, who had gained the reputation of being a faithful "Brother and Ghoul," drove to the meeting-place with five hundred pounds. M'Andrew was waiting for him, the exchange was quickly effected, and the detective knew at once, when he heard the name of the Grand Wizard that the Scotsman had spoken the truth. M'Andrew hastily concealed the notes and prepared to go, but all of a sudden a rush of horses' hoofs was heard, and a moment afterward the two men were covered by the rifles of half-a-dozen members of the K.K.K.

Considering that M'Andrew was right in the inner councils of the organisation, it was astonishing that he should have discussed his treachery without first taking the precaution to see that he could not be overheard. But he had been so excited by the prospect of earning the money that he had forgotten that the innocent-looking young barman might also be one of those who had sworn allegiance to the Grand Wizard. It was the barman, as a matter of fact, who gave him away, hence the presence of the six men at the final meeting between the traitor and the detective.

There was a pause that lasted not more than a couple of moments. Then M'Andrew shouted something to the detective, who involuntarily turned as if to fly for his life. But simultaneously six rifles rang out, and the unfortunate man collapsed in a heap. M'Andrew, however, who was a born woodsman, took advantage of the momentary inattention to dart behind a tree. He had a pistol in each hand, and as the others came towards him he fired twice with each, and four of the enemy fell. The other two kept up the pursuit, but the Scotsman was more than their

match, when they returned to examine the dead and injured the traitor had slipped through their fingers.

When the Grand Wizard was informed he ordered that all the resources of the society should be utilised to destroy Donald M'Andrew.

In each large town one of the members was deputed to complain to the police, in his private capacity as a citizen, that a certain Donald M'Andrew had obtained from him a large sum of money by false pretences, and to request that a search might be made for him. Warrants were accordingly issued, and amongst others the police of New York searched high and low for the wanted man.

Despite all these efforts M'Andrew managed to reach Glasgow, where he lived in the Springburn district for a year, passing as a retired sea-captain, who had saved sufficient money to keep him for the rest of his life. It was generally noticed that he looked uneasy if anyone mentioned America. After twelve months M'Andrew thought he was safe, and he took to showing himself at the docks, where he met and chatted with mariners from all the corners of the earth. He was, of course, nervous to begin with, but as the days went past and nothing happened he concluded that the Ku Klux Klan had forgotten his existence.

He was in this frame of mind when, on entering his room in the tenement where he dwelt, he found the fatal pips on the table. He realised then that the Ku Klux Klan never forgot. It was a theatrical way of informing him that his fate was sealed. They must have been very sure of him, or they would not have given him this warning.

The agitated man rushed to the police office, and told an hysterical story of the K.K.K. to which the inspector listened in amazed politeness. He had

never heard of the society with the extraordinary initials, and he regarded M'Andrew as a madman. To calm him, however, he said he would send a couple of constables to protect him.

M'Andrew did not wait for the police. Once again he proved his ingenuity by slipping out of the toils of the K.K.K., and turned up in London two days later, where, believing that safety lay in numbers, he took a lodging in a crowded house in a dismal street off the Commercial Road, Whitechapel. But he was left in peace for less than a month. The secret society, which regarded him as the worst of traitors, tracked him to Whitechapel, and M'Andrew, returning from a drinking bout, found the ace of spades pinned to his pillow.

Nothing happened, but the wretched man, expecting to meet death at any moment, could not rest or eat.

It was maddening to be unable to persuade anyone to believe his story about the American secret society. Friends who had been lavishly entertained by him ascribed his invention of the Ku Klux Klan to imbibing too freely. Whenever M'Andrew spoke about it at the local police station he was gruffly ordered to clear out. Very soon he got the reputation of being weak-minded, and his wild, unkempt appearance seemed to accentuate it.

Meantime the K.K.K. were playing with him as a cat does with a mouse. No doubt they had received orders from headquarters to make M'Andrew die a hundred deaths ere he was despatched. And if so they succeeded only too well. The wretched fellow knew no happiness. He started if anyone addressed him, and if a stranger made advances M'Andrew would sheer off, afraid that he was one of the dreaded secret society men.

His end was extraordinary, and it resulted from

what M'Andrew thought was a stroke of genius. It occurred to him that the only place in London where he would be safe from the Ku Klux Klan and their nerve-racking messages was in prison. When he thought of this he sallied forth and assaulted the first man in blue he met. He was summarily convicted, and sentenced to six months' hard labour, and three nights afterwards he was found strangled in his cell. A coroner's jury returned a verdict of suicide while temporarily insane, but it is significant that only two cells away from M'Andrew there was a seafaring American who was under remand, charged with attempted smuggling.

But secret societies generally overdo things, and bring about their own destruction. Not content with exacting vengeance locally, the members followed their enemies to New York, Washington, Chicago, Paris, London, and practically all over the world. When anarchy stalked through the land the United States Government decided it was time to act, and Congress having conferred the necessary powers, the biggest effort of all was made to suppress the K.K.K.

It was hard work, but it succeeded in the end. Juries had to be persuaded not to be frightened by threats, and to do their duty. Of course, the K.K.K. retorted by murdering jurymen and witnesses, but gradually the law prevailed. Half-a-dozen leading members of the secret society were arrested, convicted and executed.

Immediately afterwards the people of a town which had suffered much in the past rose *en masse* and lynched five prominent citizens who were suspected of being "Ghouls." Their example was infectious, until the K.K.K., instead of being the persecutors, became the persecuted. The barest suspicion of membership involved the gravest danger.

The K.K.K. no longer attracted recruits, and finally all the lodges were routed out.

But some nine years after the declaration by the President that the K.K.K. had ceased to exist, three men were found murdered in Brazil. It was proved that they had been slain by former members of the society, who had heard that they had kept a list of the most prominent members. As some of the latter were by now famous lawyers and members of Congress, it will be seen how important it was to them that all record of their lurid past should be destroyed.

Then followed a period of obscurity, for peace has little use for secret societies, but the Great War altered everything, and a group of adventurers thought they saw an opportunity to revive the K.K.K. and their own fortunes.

The attempt, however, was an abject failure because the most insular of Americans had learnt that the problems of the sixties had been solved long since or else had gone out of date. Well-fed men make poor revolutionaries and financial adventurers have more desire for publicity than for secrecy. However, the money-making potentialities of the Ku Klux Klan were at once realised by a group of adventurers, at the head of whom was a filibustering firebrand of the name of William J. Simmons. Simmons had as a Methodist minister preached peace in time of war and when peace came preached war. With characteristic southern insouciance he abandoned the title of "reverend" and assumed that of "colonel," and having been elected Imperial Wizard started a campaign to make everybody good—according to his own peculiar definition of the word—and simultaneously make a fortune for himself.

It is extraordinary how similar the histories of secret societies are. Practically all of them begin with benevolence and end with blackmail. Founded

to protect life they soon become simply murder organisations. And the more successful they are the sooner they degenerate, the records showing that the men at the top have been unable to resist the temptation to turn to their own personal gain the power conferred on them by the implicit obedience of a large number of their fellows.

It was so with the Ku Klux Klan. "Colonel" Simmons professed not to like negroes, Roman Catholics, aliens and Jews, but his real object in reviving the society was to make America pro-Simmons. The ultra-patriots, invited to join the Ku Klux Klan at a moderate fee, were hypnotised in their thousands by means of sonorous phrases and terrific titles highly flavoured with suggestions of the supernatural.

The "colonel" soon had his organisation at work, executing orders rapidly with the efficiency of the keen tradesman. Did a member desire the removal of a business competitor or a rival for his lady's hand? The K.K.K. carried out the commission for a fee, and if the offending one was terrified into emigrating or was shot it was easy enough to proclaim him as a Jew or a Catholic or an alien or a lover of negroes.

In spite, however, of Simmons' activities the society—it would be a paradox to term it secret—did not attain its zenith until he took into partnership a man of the name of Clark, who was by profession a press-agent and boomster. Mr. Clark had no delusions about the ethics of K.K.K.'ism. He was determined to exploit the weakness of the average person for the unknown, and as every American child had been taught to regard the K.K.K. as a successful institution he was certain that with push and enterprise membership tickets could be disposed of as fast as they could be printed.

The indomitable Clark promptly marshalled an army of salesmen, and each State was placed in charge of a chief salesman who was given the more romantic and mysterious name of King Kleagle. Each " King " had a battalion of Kleagles under him who ransacked the country thoroughly for new members who were guaranteed the protection of the society on the payment of ten dollars, twenty-five per cent. of which the Imperial Wizard pocketed.

So many thousands paid their ten dollars that Simmons and Clark awoke one morning to find themselves rich. The K.K.K., made respectable by its length of years and its traditions of the civil war, appealed strongly to the imagination of young and middle-aged Americans. It was, in fact, democracy rebelling against democracy, for, tired of the benevolent freedom enjoyed in their own country, they hastened to swear oriental obedience to a despot to whom they willingly gave the power to direct their lives. Mankind soon grows tired of liberty just as it does of tyranny, and Americans of all ages gloried in the discipline of the K.K.K. and were sorry for those who were beyond its portals. Their passion for tyranny was strong enough to induce them not only to pay for it but to make themselves ridiculous. With the glee of schoolboys liberated for the day they left their homes and their offices to don white shirts and white masks and play at devils in the gloaming. Occasionally there was work to be done, and then persons of blameless character were flogged and tortured by order of the " Exalted Cyclops of the Ku Klux Klan " or some other absurdly-named official. Respectable taxpayers helped to terrify juries and threaten judges, and justified it with the plea that as members of the K.K.K. they had no souls or wills of their own and had to obey orders.

How many murders were committed by members

of the society it is impossible to say ; how many of the mysterious disappearances of recent years could be solved by its leaders one can only guess. Following upon the revival by Simmons and his associates there were many outrages in the more remote country districts, and even women were not spared. Men ran riot until the joke became a tragedy. Unscrupulous members used the organisation to further their own ambitions, and alleged offenders were banished without trial and without any evidence of guilt because they were in the way of subscribers to the society.

To the majority of members the K.K.K. was a harmless hobby. Nearly two hundred Congressmen belonged to it and ascribed their election to its influence. But the K.K.K. had to make its power felt, and occasionally it startled America by some such savage assault as that on a clergyman who had preached brotherly love and asserted that the negroes were the brothers of the whites. To convince members that they were fortunate to enjoy its protection emissaries carried off into the unknown men and women alleged to have offended the K.K.K. There were several instances of kidnapped persons never being heard of again, and other kidnapping mysteries were half solved by the discovery of the dead bodies.

Outrages and scandals became so common that there was a sudden press campaign against the K.K.K., a fierce campaign which proved such a splendid advertisement for the society that within six months its membership was quadrupled. As a result hundreds of thousands of dollars flowed into the coffers, and the Imperial Wizard looking round for an investment decided that the most suitable one would be a mansion for himself. He had one erected on the most prominent site in Atlanta, for Simmons

was no believer in secrecy, where everybody would see this monument to his power and his glory.

Ensconced in his mansion he thoroughly enjoyed himself composing flamboyant epistles to his followers, and a specimen of his style may be given.

On the occasion of an anniversary he wrote to the members as follows,

"The Most Sublime Lineage in All History Commemorating and Perpetuating the Most Dauntless Organisation Known to Man.

Imperial Palace,
Knights of the Ku Klux Klan
Incorporated,
Atlanta, Georgia.

To all Genii, Grand Dragons, and Hydras of Realms, Grand Goblins and Kleagles of Domains, Grand Titans and Furies of Provinces, Giants, Exalted Cyclops and Terrors of Klantons, and to all citizens of the Invisible Empire, Knights of the K.K.K.—in the name of our valiant venerated Dead, I affectionately greet you. . . .

Done in the Aulic of his majesty, Imperial Wizard, Emperor of the Invisible Empire, Knights of the K.K.K., on this the ninth day of the ninth month of the year of our Lord, 1921, and on the Dreadful Day of the Weeping Week of the Mournful Month of the year of the Klan LV.

Duly signed and sealed by his majesty,

(Signed) William Joseph Simmons,
Imperial Wizard."

A splendid advertisement-writer was lost when William J. Simmons allowed the K.K.K. to monopolise his time and abilities, and if he accumulated a fortune almost as rapidly as a speculator in bread, it profited

him nothing in the end, for the man who had lived by violence died by violent means and 1925 found the K.K.K. bereft of its re-founder. Simmons was a shrewd business-man with a little of the buffoon in him and he was the mainspring of the re-born K.K.K. His loss was an almost fatal blow to the society. His tragic death, following upon the newspaper exposures, undoubtedly disintegrated the K.K.K., but it will be heard of again, and it seems safe to predict that the United States will never be without its K.K.K. For in this undisciplined age there is a growing demand for order and discipline, but the pity of it is that good intentions should so often lead to evil. Whatever happens, however, secret societies will never add to the happiness or the improvement of the human race. The history of the K.K.K. proves that.

CHAPTER VI

The Black Hand

When Ricardo Policci was a youth of eighteen he came into sharp contact with the police of his native city of Naples over the ownership of certain articles of jewellery, which a tradesman accused Ricardo of having stolen from his shop during the early hours of the morning.

The police prosecuted him with what the thief thought unnecessary violence, consequently when he had served his term of twelve months' hard labour he emerged from gaol determined to avenge himself on the representatives of the law.

Being an Italian, there was only one way open to him to achieve his ambition, and that was by becoming a member of a secret society. It did not take him long to make up his mind which to choose. The Black Hand was the society for him. It was just what he desired. Other combinations of criminals called themselves political, but the Black Handers were brigands pure and simple, and it was part of their code to maim and kill as many police as possible.

Young Ricardo soon found a friend to show him how to join the Black Hand, and one night he was taken to a cellar behind a ruined church. There, in the presence of seven masked men, he took the oath to make war on law and order, commit as many burglaries as possible, and pay over to the treasurer of the society one-tenth of the proceeds. In return he was guaranteed the full protection of the dreaded and powerful Black Hand, and he was assured that if an "accident" happened before he had stolen anything the committee would provide him with the best possible legal advice.

It was a weird initiation ceremony. Stripped to the waist he had to stand before the sinister seven, and answer their searching questions. All the time two men stood on either side with drawn daggers, so that if Ricardo failed to satisfy the committee he would not be able to reveal the secret of that night's proceedings.

But the candidate passed triumphantly, and the book of signatures was laid before him. Then, obeying instructions, he made an incision in his arm, and, dipping the pen in his own blood, inscribed his name on the roll. He was not yet finished though, for every member of the Black Hand must bear on his body the insignia of the order—a devil, an angel, or one of the lions of St. Mark. In Ricardo's case the committee decided that just above the wrist an angel must be tattoed.

He was glad when it was all finished, and he received the congratulations of his fellow-criminals. In the general conversation that followed the young gaol-bird heard many things that astonished him. He was told that several members of the police force were Black Handers, and that they had representatives amongst the staff of practically every prison in Italy.

"If ever you are arrested again you will be well looked after," said one of his fellow members, when he mentioned his previous prison experience. "You will be given the best of food and the cleanest cell. Our warder will see to that."

In these circumstances it is not astonishing that, in Ricardo's eyes at any rate, crime lost most of its terrors. He was naturally lazy, quick-tempered, and jealous-minded. As yet he had not seen any girl sufficiently up to his standard to attract his attention, but Ricardo, who habitually carried a deadly stiletto, smiled ironically whenever he heard

his friends complain of the whims of their sweethearts. He would finger his stiletto caressingly, and those who knew him well guessed that whatever happened Ricardo Policci would always appeal to his favourite weapon.

About a week after he had become a member of the Black Hand he thought that he would relieve a certain prosperous householder of his savings. He had learnt that each week-end Signor Moschelle was in the habit of taking home with him the not inconsiderable takings of his cheap clothes shop. Having carefully laid his plans, Ricardo entered the house after midnight, and with characteristic skill, soon had the money hidden in his pockets.

He was in the act of creeping out when the alarm was raised, and it seemed as if the whole city was roused. Ricardo scrambled out of a window, and dropped to the ground just as a shadowy figure came round the corner. One glance at the tall and powerful policeman convinced the thief that he would stand no chance in a personal encounter unless he used his stiletto. Scarcely had he decided this than he plunged the dagger into the body of the unfortunate officer.

He knew as he fled through the dark streets that he had committed murder, and that henceforth Naples would not be safe for him. On and on he ran, and only when he was well beyond the outskirts of the city did he pause to take breath.

He was now panic-stricken. He seemed to feel the halter round his neck already. Of late public opinion in Italy had been roused by the number of unavenged murders. The press were calling for stringent measures, and Ricardo realised that if he was taken not even the Black Hand would save him. He was the latest joined member, a nobody, and they would let him be sacrificed to appease public wrath.

Three days later he arrived in a woe-begone condition at an obscure fishing port, and there he waited until he could be conveyed to another harbour, to which great ships called. It was lucky for him that the captain of the "Belle Susan," of Havannah, wanted hands badly, for he signed him on without asking questions. Soon after going on board the murderer was on his way to the great Republic of the West.

Twenty years passed, and the day came when Ricardo, generally known in New York as Charles Richards, was a prosperous jeweller, married, the father of five children, and the most respected man in the district. He had forgotten his lurid past, and no one could have discerned in the amiable and good-natured Italian-American the once-notorious thief.

As for the Black Hand, that was merely a nightmare of the past. He had been a silly, brainless youth then. Now he had made good, and he had even sent back to Italy the equivalent of all the money and goods he had stolen. He had done so anonymously, of course, but he had the satisfaction of knowing that they had reached the persons for whom they were intended.

One night, however, something happened that brought back with terrible distinctness that past which Ricardo thought was dead and buried. It was the day after the election of Woodrow Wilson to the Presidency of the United States. Ricardo, who had voted with the triumphant party, was feeling well pleased with himself, as he had a final look round his premises before retiring to a well-earned rest. Everything was in order, and after testing the door of the safe, which contained ten thousand pounds worth of precious stones, he made his way upstairs to sleep the sleep of a man who was sure that he had nothing of which he need be ashamed.

It was true that he involuntarily frowned whenever he saw that indelible tattoo on his wrist. Fortunately it represented an angel, a fact that had made explanations easy to his wife. Had it been a devil it might have been quite another matter.

He was sleeping soundly when his wife awakened him, and whispered that there was someone moving about in the shop beneath. Ricardo instantly sprang out of bed, dressed himself, and, firmly clasping a revolver, he crept downstairs.

There was a burglar in the shop. With his exact knowledge of the premises Ricardo knew that the intruder was now busy tackling the safe. Ricardo entered stealthily, and before the astonished burglar could rise from his crouching attitude he had him covered with his revolver.

In short and sharp sentences he ordered the fellow to stand up, and keep his hands well above his head. He was, of course, obeyed. Possession is nine points of the law when two men are opposed, and there is only one weapon between them. When Ricardo had his man in the frame of mind he wished he turned on the electric light.

" I want to have a good look at you," he said, almost genially. Stout, prosperous, and amiable, Charles Richards was noted for his good temper.

The light filled the shop, revealing everything. Ricardo saw before him a man apparently about sixty years of age, with a beard that was only slightly blacker than his dirty face. Hunger shone from his eyes, and as he stood with his hands raised he was a picture of helpless misery.

They had only been staring at one another for a few moments when the burglar suddenly dropped his hands and gave vent to a low chuckle. Ricardo's grip on his revolver tightened. It seemed as if he would fire, but the burglar's easy attitude and care-

less demeanour indicated that he had no intention of trying to overcome him.

"Shake hands, brother," said the thief, advancing towards Ricardo, and at the same time pulling back the strip of dirty cloth from his left wrist.

The movement hypnotised Ricardo, who stared with horror at the tattoo mark at which the intruder was pointing with a grin.

"It's a devil!" he cried, exultingly. "Yours is an angel. Brother, we are both Black Handers, and that means we are friends and partners."

The past had returned with a vengeance. Ricardo staggered, and only by gripping a show-case did he save himself from falling. Meantime the evil eyes of the hungry thief were slowly taking in the contents of the shop, and the man who had made good realised that the fellow was deciding how much of his savings he would demand.

It was useless protesting or denying. The Black Hander knew the peculiarities of the unusual tattoo marks of the secret society, and before he left he had forced an admission from Ricardo as to the date when he had been initiated.

"I will return, brother," he exclaimed, with a threatening grin. "There are many of our friends in New York. You must be prepared to welcome them. How happy they will be when I tell them the good news."

Ricardo went to bed again, but not to sleep. Beads of perspiration ran down his forehead and cheeks, as he struggled with the problem. Gone was his peace, gone the happiness of himself and his family. How he cursed the impulse that had led him to join the Black Hand. But it was useless repining now. He must do what he could to keep his ghastly secret from his wife and children, and, if possible, save a part of his hardly-acquired fortune for their sakes.

He had scarcely opened his shop the next morning when the burglar and a friend shuffled in. With excessive politeness they announced that they had come to open an account. Before they left each had selected diamond rings to the value of five hundred pounds, which they carried away with them, Ricardo could only look on without daring to protest, though he was feeling furious with himself for not having shot the burglar the previous night. It would have been easy to have convinced the authorities that it was done in self-defence, but Ricardo had long since advanced beyond the stage when he would have taken a fellow-being's life in cold blood.

The system of blackmail drove him mad. The first two members introduced others, all of whom smilingly "opened accounts," and never left the shop without taking some valuable jewellery. Gradually Ricardo's savings, and they had been considerable, went. At last the morning dawned when he knew that the first demand by the wholesale houses for payment of their accounts would disclose the fact that he was a bankrupt.

When his persecutors had reduced him to beggary their insolent demands did not cease. They insisted that he should obtain more goods on credit, and pass them on to his fellow-members of the Black Hand. When he protested that he did not now belong to the terrible secret society they reminded him that by the term of his oath he could only resign by death.

"Once a member always a member until death you are dead," they told him again and again.

When he endeavoured to rebel, they would seize his left wrist, and point to the tattooed angel, the sign of the secret society.

Ricardo suffered in silence for the sake of his family, but the time came when continual persecution

roused in him all the old ferocity. He was once again the rover, panting for revenge, utterly careless of the price he would have to pay. It was then that he determined to kill the man who had first discovered his past, and he thought of nothing else. Going to an old chest, which had remained locked for twenty years, he took from it a stiletto, which he had last handled in an Italian port. With loving care he got it ready for his enemy and torturer, Giuseppe Barti, and he forgot his troubles as he contemplated the murder of the man who had killed his happiness.

But Barti was too experienced a Black Hander to leave anything to chance. Although surprised that Ricardo had not attempted earlier to remove him, he did not relax his precautions. Twenty-four hours after Ricardo left his now almost denuded shop his body was found floating in the river. When the police brought the corpse ashore they saw that someone had traced a black hand on the forehead of the deceased.

The papers, however, did not believe that "Charles Richards" was a victim of the Black Hand. They informed their readers that an investigation of the dead tradesman's accounts had disclosed the fact that he had defrauded the wholesale houses by ordering goods to a large amount, apparently disposing of them at below cost, and not settling with his creditors. It was practically unanimously decided that "Charles Richards" had thrown himself into the river because he had realised that the game was up.

The black hand on his forehead was a clumsy device to lead his neighbours to believe that all his misfortunes were due to an Italian secret society instead of his own innate dishonesty.

And there it rested. Ricardo was buried in a cheap grave, and the man who had paid dearly for the sins of his youth was soon forgotten. His

murderers were never brought to justice, and at the headquarters of the secret society in Naples a black line was drawn through the name of Ricardo Policci, and against it was written the word "Traitor" and the date of his "execution."

I have given the full story of Ricardo, because it is an excellent example of the working of this dreaded society. Small in numbers compared with other organisations, it has almost as ghastly a record, because it operated, and still operates, all over the world. Wherever Italians congregate there is certain to be a Black Hander amongst them, and as it is a rule of the society that not more than four members shall work together on any one job, it will be seen that it does not require many to terrorise a city.

The Black Hand specialises in blackmail. During the last thirty years thousands of Italians have left their native country to find prosperity under other flags. Only a small proportion have belonged to the society, but that has not saved them. They are pursued and made to pay tribute, the penalty being death.

They have their own methods for identifying wealthy fellow-countrymen. It is easy enough when the latter keeps shops, but when they retire and take a mansion in an old-world English village, for example, it becomes difficult.

There was a leading Black Hander with his headquarters in Soho, who adopted an ingenious method of bringing himself into the houses of rich compatriots. He had a barrel organ made to order, every tune being a well-known Italian favourite. With his organ he trudged through the villages of Surrey, Kent and Sussex. On more than one occasion, as before a big house he stood turning the handle, the owner strolled down the drive and entered into conversation with him, as often as not confessing

that the last time he had heard a particular tune he had been a barefooted boy in an Italian village.

Shortly afterwards the wealthy Italian would be approached by a Black Hander, who would beg for assistance. Each new demand would be an increase on its predecessor, and, of course, the time would come when the insolent request would be refused. After that threats would follow, and sometimes a murder would prove that a final refusal to submit to blackmail had been punished.

Italians have a weird reverence for an oath, no matter how perverted and wrong that oath may be. In the majority of cases it does not require the natural fear of death to prevent them turning traitor.

The Black Hand, which has been in existence less than forty years, would have been crushed shortly after its birth had not the court that tried the leaders been packed with sympathisers. The Government actually succeeded in arresting nearly a hundred members, and charged them with innumerable crimes. The evidence was overwhelming. But no conviction followed, because the jury maintained that the four leaders of the gang had escaped during the period of remand that had followed their arrest, and it was not fair to punish their subordinates.

This was pretty cool in view of the fact that these men had been secretly liberated by the head warder of the gaol, who was himself on the committee of the Black Hand. Thus the rank and file streamed out into the sunlight, and for that "indignity" they subsequently murdered eleven warders and police officials, whose names and addresses were supplied by the chief warder previously referred to.

British travellers in Italy have often come into contact with the Black Hand. Every second brigand appears to be a member of the society, and for over a decade there was an old scoundrel who kept a curio

shop in the vicinity of St. Peter's, Rome, whose real profession was that of a " fence." He had the face of a saint, and was the very pink of politeness.

Let me tell you the case of a Frenchman, who was deprived of a very valuable gold watch by a member of the secret society. Having complained to the proprietor of the hotel where he was staying, he was told to interview the old man who kept the curio shop. He did so, but as the " fence's " price for the return of the property was outrageous, the excitable tourist rushed off to the Chief of Police with a complaint. He was murdered within twenty-four hours, and the " curio dealer " continued to sit at the receipt of custom, and graciously acknowledge the salute of the policemen, who daily passed the door of his shop.

An amusing story is told of a distinguished English author, who was travelling in Italy. He managed to do a kindness to an Italian, who, unknown to him, was a Black Hander. But he had forgotten the incident when a Milan jeweller accused him of having purloined a valuable diamond ring while inspecting his stock. It was clearly a blackmailing act on the part of the tradesman, and when it was resisted the Englishman was forced to appear in court to answer the charge.

To his amazement the jeweller brought no fewer than ten witnesses, who swore that they had seen the accused take the ring. As the Englishman and the shopkeeper had been quite alone at the time the offence was said to have been committed, this was pretty cool. But a lion can help a mouse, and the young Italian, who considered himself in the debt of " milord," having heard of the affair, had determined to extricate his benefactor from an awkward position.

He had, therefore, gone to the lawyer engaged for the defence, with the result that after the jeweller's ten witnesses had testified that they had actually

seen the theft, the defence was able to produce fifteen "respectable witnesses," who swore that they had seen the Englishman put the ring back. The verdict was one of acquittal, and the accused left the court "without a stain on his character." The fifteen witnesses, about whom he knew absolutely nothing, were all members of the Black Hand Society, and they had been brought into court by the young Italian, who had requested their assistance.

As a rule the average Black Hander is unambitious, and will content himself with petty crimes and the terrorising of small shopkeepers. It is only when the chiefs send for him and give him orders that must be obeyed that he becomes a pest to society. Should a prominent member attempt to shake himself free, the secret council of seven get on his track, and call upon all their fellow-members to join in the hunt.

There was one such man who was a member for years, during which he made a fortune and gained a seat in the Italian Parliament. By a strange mischance he was offered the post of Minister of Justice at a time when the King and Government had decided that a determined attempt should be made to destroy the secret societies, particularly the Black Hand. The ambitious deputy accepted office, trusting to luck, but it failed him, for his colleagues of the Black Hand demanded that he should place their interests before those of the State.

He promised he would, but in reality he encouraged his subordinates to prosecute, with the utmost rigour, all prisoners suspected of belonging to the association of blackmailers and murderers. Eventually the inner council notified him that he must attend a special committee meeting and answer to the charge of treachery.

In other words he, the Minister of Justice, was

called upon to stand his trial before a collection of cut-throats. In the most emphatic language he declined, and the same day an attempt was made on his life. He escaped by shooting his assailant.

Shortly after this the ministry of which he was a member went out of office, and he thought the opportunity a good one to get away. He took a house in Paris, was followed by the Black Hand; departed to London, and was persecuted there. New York proved no better, so he returned to Europe, and after many adventures settled down in Petrograd. There, only by a heavy bribe, did he secure the special protection of the Chief of Police, who was a German. But that did not save the ex-deputy, and one night as he was returning from a ball at the Italian Embassy he was stabbed. "A Nihilist Outrage" the papers called it, but it was the society of the Black Hand that did the deed, its emissaries having, by a heavier bribe, secured the "neutrality" of the German Chief of Police.

CHAPTER VII

The "Molly Maguires"

With the exception of the Ku Klux Klan no secret society established such a reign of terror as the notorious "Molly Maguires" of Pennsylvania. It existed for twenty-five years, and during that period it was the cause of some thousands of murders, and only the genius and courage of a Pinkerton detective brought it to an end.

There can be no doubt as to the cleverness of the founders. They were, as a rule, men of little education, loafers and cadgers, and yet once they got control of the society they made things hum. For years they virtually ruled one of the principal States of the Union, and the "laws" they made were obeyed by a million persons through fear.

The secret society known as the "Molly Maguires" was started amongst the miners of Pennsylvania in the early fifties, when the coal-fields were just beginning to be worked. Thousands of men poured into the district, many of them ne'er-do-wells and professional criminals, who looked round for a means of obtaining money without labouring for it. The miners had many clubs and societies which they could join, one of them being the "Molly Maguires," which was at first a sort of benevolent association favoured by Irish-Americans.

By some means half-a-dozen criminals, headed by a ruffian of the name of M'Coy, succeeded in being elected to the committee. They instantly expelled their more respectable colleagues, declared themselves dictators, drew up a fresh set of rules, and promising the rowdy element plenty of money,

persuaded the "Molly Maguires" to become a secret society.

One of the principal backers of the "reformers," as they called themselves, was a saloon-keeper, who was anxious that the miners should spend their earnings in his bars. He provided money for the society, allowed them to meet on his premises, and under his guidance they launched out on their career of crime.

The greatest secrecy was observed in all their doings, lodges sprang up in every coal-mining district, the head of which, termed the "body-master," had a small committee to assist him. Would-be members had to undergo various tests, and prove their utter recklessness before they were admitted. When they had successfully passed the committee they learnt that they must obey all orders, and that the society waged war against managers and the police, and also against those fellow-workmen who would not join the society.

The most astonishing fact about the "Molly Maguires" was its immediate popularity. Of course, America was just then a sort of receiving house, and all sorts and conditions of criminals fled to the Republic of the West, trusting to make their fortunes there. They never lost their hatred of work and their love of crime, and those who drifted into the Pennsylvania coal-fields found in the "Molly Maguires" the outlet for their energies.

M'Coy and his friends quickly set to work. Soon afterwards they decided that the superintendent of a certain coal mine had better be removed, because he had offended members of the secret society by refusing to pay them for time which they had spent away from the mines. That constituted a mortal offence, and Callaghan, an Irishman, was marked down for destruction. He was a brave man, rough perhaps, but fearless, straight, and honourable. The men for

the most part worshipped him. He was kind to everybody, and the sick miner with a family never appealed to him in vain.

The "Molly Maguires" worked so secretly that nothing was known of their intentions until Callaghan was found outside his house with twenty dagger wounds in his body. He was just alive, but as he never recovered consciousness he could give no help to the police. The murder at once aroused the horror of the decent workmen, who swore to avenge him.

Rumours now began to fill the district. Men and women whispered the name of the "Molly Maguires" with dread. It was said that shortly before Callaghan's death two men with black masks had been seen near his house. A newspaper declared that a secret society had arisen, which aimed at the terrorisation of Pennsylvania. The idea was scouted, but when five men who were considered the leaders of the Callaghan party were all murdered within twenty-four hours of one another, panic seized the miners.

No man would trust his neighbours. Few dared to criticise the "Molly Maguires" for M'Coy and his friends were striking blow after blow. A young miner, for instance, one Saturday night expressed a wish to meet one of the "Molly Maguires." Half-an-hour later a friend pointed to a strange message pinned to his coat. The miner tore it off and read, "'The Molly Maguires' will call on you to-morrow."

When he repeated it aloud a deep silence fell upon the hitherto noisy party. Was it a joke? Had one of the miners present done it to frighten the youngster? He laughingly declared that he would not be tricked, and went home singing a song. On Sunday night he was found dead in his room.

The story of this crime seemed to terrorise the people, and lots of men hastened to join the secret society. They felt that it was the only way to protect

themselves. Strangely enough, it often happened that a man who joined for this motive quickly became an out-and-out villain, contact with M'Coy and Morris working havoc with all decent feelings he ever had. It was sufficient for a member to complain that he had been insulted by a particular person for the latter to be removed.

One of the most notorious crimes committed by the society was the butchery of an entire family. There was a scoundrel by the name of Schultz, a murderer who had escaped from Bremen on a charge of killing his employer. He became a miner, joined the "Molly Maguires," and now and then he earned a day's wages in the pits. The superintendent of the mine was a Scotsman named Ross. His daughter, an exceedingly pretty girl, was engaged to a miner, who was only waiting until he should gain a job above ground before marrying.

Schultz soon came to the conclusion that he was in love with Maggie Ross, and he intimated to Shepherd, the girl's sweetheart, that it would be better for him if he surrendered his claim on the girl. Of course, the insult was met by a blow from the shoulder that left Schultz with two black eyes for some days. Schultz did not attempt to retaliate, because he knew that he could easily have Shepherd "removed" from his path without any danger to himself.

On the following Sunday he complained to his "bodymaster," who summoned a meeting of the committee. They decided that Shepherd was to be warned, and that if he did not heed the warning he was to be killed. Schultz was delighted. He was well aware that the custom of the society was never to employ a local member to commit a crime. When one lodge resolved on a murder for safety's sake, the "bodymaster" notified his friend, the "body-master" of the lodge farthest from him. Then the

distant lodge would send two or more men to carry out the commission which, when accomplished, would leave them free to return to their homes.

Shepherd, of course, refused to be parted from his sweetheart. He was a respected and popular worker, and Ross, the superintendent, had won the admiration of most of the men under him. When, therefore, a fantastically-worded letter arrived ordering him to refuse Shepherd leave to visit his daughter, he bluntly declined. To offend the hated society was to risk one's life; but Ross, sturdy and self-reliant, merely carried another revolver about with him, and advised his wife and daughter never to venture out alone. Then he waited for developments.

They soon came. Shepherd was the first to be murdered. He was discovered dead in a small lake. The crime brought on a serious illness for Maggie Ross, and while she was recovering, Schultz asked her father's permission to pay his addresses to her. For answer the sturdy Scotsman kicked him out of the house.

The murderers departed swiftly to their distant homes, and the "bodymaster" had to summon the assistance of another colleague to get rid of John Ross. He ignored two commands from the "Molly Maguires," and a fortnight elapsed before the superintendent was shot through the heart.

It might have been supposed that Schultz would have been arrested, but the agent of the society always took care to recover the letters sent. As Schultz lived an open life, spending his time and his money in the local drinking-saloon, there was no evidence against him.

Any other gang of ruffians would have been satisfied with the death and desolation they had caused, but the "Molly Maguires" revelled in spreading terror, and the head committee sent instructions

that the campaign was to be continued until Schultz had his own way with Maggie Ross. When the superintendent was murdered his widow and daughter had to leave their house, which belonged to the mine, and, therefore, was always occupied by the overseer. They went a hundred miles away, where they rented a small cottage, and soon afterwards Schultz obtained employment in the same district.

Very soon he had resumed his offensive attitude towards Maggie. She could not bear the sight of him, and even when she, too, was warned she could not overcome her repugnance. An anonymous letter informed her that unless she gave in, her mother would be killed. Maggie herself went to the police, imploring protection, and the kind-hearted inspector took her and her mother to lodge in his house.

Even that precaution did not avail, however. Mrs. Ross could not always remain indoors, and as she had not an enemy amongst the miners she ventured out most days for shopping purposes, always returning before dusk.

For weeks Mrs. Ross and her only child were unmolested, and it began to look as though they had been forgotten. Mrs. Ross was out later than usual, and Maggie, a prey to terrible fears, went out in search of her. At the corner of the street she met two miners carrying a stretcher, and on the rough board was the body of her mother. She had been shot through the head. Five years later it was proved that the two miners who helped to carry the stretcher were actually the assassins.

Maggie was now quite alone, and Schultz was put in gaol on a charge of wilful murder. When the case came up before the magistrates it was proved conclusively that he had been down the mine at the time of the murder, and he was acquitted.

The girl was taken to New York, and even there

two attempts were made on her life. But eventually she found happiness and safety in the love of a prosperous merchant, who brought her to England for safety.

After this, detectives constantly haunted the mining district, soldiers were drafted in to protect life and property, and all ranks and classes indeed, hastened to attack it as the vilest collection of ruffians the world had ever known. Yet the "Molly Maguires" prospered, and gained strength.

There was scarcely a magistrate who would run counter to its orders. Once when a member was captured after shooting a poor woman whose "offence" was that she had cried aloud for vengeance on the slayers of her husband, the case was remitted to a court three hundred miles from the scene of the crime. To make certain of an impartial jury eight hundred men were called, and out of these twelve selected. They were mainly substantial business folk who had the reputation of being level-headed, and too proud to allow themselves to be intimidated. But that jury actually acquitted the accused, despite the overwhelming nature of the evidence against him. They had, of course, been influenced by the numerous murders of jurymen who had incurred the displeasure of the "Molly Maguires."

The society was at its strongest, and it appeared to be in for a long lease of life at the time when a miner, James M'Parlan, secured election to the lodge at Shenandoah, one of the principal branches of the "Molly Maguires."

M'Parlan, a tall, handsome, fine-looking man in the early twenties, had much to recommend him. He avowed himself an anarchist, and a fearless user of the revolver and the pistol. He would dare anything. But, of course, he had to undergo a period of probation, and this he passed under the supervision of

Conroy, the " bodymaster," a fearful man who had risen high in the society because he had not hesitated to order the assassination of his own father when that parent had denounced the " Molly Maguires."

The newcomer proved a very good member, working hard most days in the coal mine, and regularly paying his weekly subscription, and a bit over, for the benefit of his weaker brethren. Everyone liked M'Parlan, and Conroy took him under his protection, promising to make a success of him.

He kept his agreement to the letter. M'Parlan rapidly progressed. He was marked out for promotion from the start, and while in the ordinary way it took six years for a member to reach the committee, M'Parlan gained that coveted distinction in as many months, though he was indebted to the "bodymaster" for most of his success. On the committee he showed himself a really clever organiser, and when the secretary of the lodge died, M'Parlan was unanimously elected to fill the post, the next in importance to that held by the all-powerful Conroy himself.

Once established as secretary, M'Parlan was right in the inner circle. He was introduced to the four men who conducted the affairs of the society. Individual lodges might direct their own policy as a rule, but whenever there was an attack on the " Molly Maguires " by the government, then the Big Four met and settled how to meet and defeat the enemy.

In addition to other duties M'Parlan kept all the books of the Shenandoah Lodge, books that only himself and the " bodymaster " knew to be in existence. Even the other members of the committee were not permitted to read that list of names, with particulars of each man's " career " set out in full. Here would be a member known to the public as a hard-working man, but in the " Molly Maguires' " book he would be set down as the author of half-a-

dozen murders, and each crime was marked by a red star as a mark of honour.

The secretary had been a member for eighteen months, when somehow the plans of the Shenandoah Lodge seemed to have lost touch with success. Thus, when news was received that a dozen government detectives were on their way to the district to investigate, the "bodymaster" passed sentence of death on all twelve. With the aid of other "bodymasters," he selected the members who were to carry out the execution. But, strangely enough, the officers of the law were warned in time and escaped, whereas three of the would-be assassins were shot before they could draw their weapons. Conroy decided that it was an accident that could not be helped, and so a levy was made on the members and their friends, and the money obtained handed over to the relatives of the martyred "Molly Maguires."

No one appeared to be more upset than M'Parlan at this failure. He proposed numerous bloodthirsty measures to make up for the defeat, and even Conroy, a pastmaster in the art of murder, had to remonstrate with his young friend for the cruelty of his schemes. But a second and yet a third time the vengeance of the secret society miscarried. A mine manager, held to be guilty of a mortal offence against the "Molly Maguires," escaped without a scratch, while his would-be assassin was captured. The society made elaborate arrangements to terrify the jury into acquitting him, but the accused died mysteriously in gaol before the trial, and the Big Four could only insinuate that he had been murdered by the police.

Yet the "Molly Maguires," through their numerous lodges, continued to strike blows at their enemies all over the State of Pennsylvania. A workman, popular with his fellows, was anonymously invited to join the secret society, but he refused to have any-

thing to do with them. Being a deadly shot, and usually accompanied by friends who would have sacrificed their lives to preserve his, it was not easy to get at him. Three times, however, his house was entered at midnight, with the object of murdering him. Once the " Molly Maguires " decamped when they heard him moving about, but on the other two occasions the miner took his enemies by surprise. The terrified miners congratulated him in secret, hoping that he would deliver them from the tyranny under which most of them groaned. But the " Molly Maguires," realising that they could not smash the dauntless miner, actually carried off his only child and foully murdered it—the prostrate miner losing his reason when he knew.

M'Parlan had, as a matter of fact, been against it, prophesying that the death of the child would bring ill-luck. He seemed to be right, too, for many important jobs went wrong during the four ensuing months. Members kept complaining, and there was not such a rush of work, when it was known that numerous detectives were haunting the district, endeavouring to secure legal evidence against the secret society. Conroy, the blustering bully, was beginning to lose his nerve, and the only person he did not suspect was Jimmy M'Parlan, his friend and protégé. When attempts at murder failed he went to see Jimmy, who had words of comfort ever ready, and when trusted members went off to execute vengeance and only lost their own lives, it was to the clever and courageous secretary that Conroy went for consolation.

His astonishment can be imagined when a member of the committee unexpectedly suggested to him that M'Parlan might not be all he claimed to be. The committee man pointed out that not until the new secretary had been appointed, had their bad

luck commenced. Conroy was impressed by his informant's confident manner, and promised to keep an eye on his friend.

A few days afterwards he was full of suspicion against M'Parlan, and sent for two of his fellow "bodymasters." They conferred with him, and decided that on a certain date they would shoot M'Parlan. They had as yet no proofs of his treachery—only strong suspicions, but that was sufficient for them.

The time mentioned was that chosen by M'Parlan for a journey by train, and as he did not appear in the saloon owned by Conroy, the "bodymaster" and his friends went to the railway station, arriving two minutes before the train was due to start. The moment M'Parlan saw them he guessed their plan, but he pretended to be the same as ever, and engaged them in conversation until the train started. Then he took a flying leap into his carriage, and before the astonished "bodymaster" could recover, was leaving them at the rate of forty miles an hour.

They returned, conscious that they had been foiled, but the next thing they knew was that they were surrounded by a force of soldiers, who immediately took them prisoners. At this time "Molly Maguires" were being arrested all over the country.

Jimmy M'Parlan was actually one of Pinkerton's detectives, and he had been acting a part all the time. No mistake was made when the leaders were brought to trial. Over fourteen hundred men were summoned, and out of these twelve were selected to form a jury, and they did not hesitate to return verdicts of guilty. Thanks to M'Parlan, the prosecution was able to bring into court the secret books and ledgers of the society. The execution of several of the leaders and the imprisonment of the remainder smashed the "Molly Maguires," and no attempt was ever made to revive the Society.

CHAPTER VIII

The Anarchists

Practically every country in the world has its anarchist club, but of recent years the most ferocious and secretive of these organisations was situated in Paris. Owing to the secrecy with which the anarchists conducted their affairs, it is not yet known who actually founded the club in Paris. Prince Krapotkine was certainly one of the leaders. He was an extremist, still glorying in his revolutionary opinions when, after a series of dynamite outrages, the police arrested him and fifty of his comrades, and sent him to penal servitude for five years.

The sudden revival of anarchy met with immediate success. It attracted a concourse of work-shys, malcontents, and ne'er-do-wells, who willingly submitted themselves to the weird, terrifying ceremony which made them members of the secret society. They were greatly impressed by the presence of a prince, who looked the real thing, and many of them were persuaded by him to believe that by making war on capitalists and governments they were working for the general welfare.

The anarchists in France wished for an impossible state of affairs. No man was to work unless he wanted to, and the community was to keep everybody. To bring this about a society was formed, and every member had to swear on a blood-stained dagger that he would carry out the orders of his superiors.

But if the heads of the club talked eloquently about the brotherhood of man, they took care not to take too many of their followers into their confidence. The inner council of the society consisted of twenty

men, desperate characters, whose past record made it impossible that society could ever forgive them. The terrible twenty met in secret several times a week, and in the depths of a cellar in the Rue Montmartre planned the murder of their foes.

Three years after the establishment of the society the anarchists came into open conflict with the police. Paris was just then passing through a bad period. Thousands were out of work, and trade was very poor. At a critical moment a fiery young woman (Louise Michel) suddenly arose and preached the gospel of anarchy at the street corners.

She made a picturesque figure, and as she harangued the sullen and hungry crowd it was not difficult to persuade them that the State was the cause of all their woes. Her speeches so aroused them that they began to pillage the shops. Scores of shopmen had to fly for their lives, and when the police intervened to prevent looting a regular battle took place. Louise Michel was arrested, and condemned to six years' imprisonment, and for ever afterwards was regarded as the first martyr of the cause.

When the anarchists became a formidable force in Paris, the Chief of Police prevailed upon Furneaux, the keeper of the wineshop in whose cellar the committee met, to report regularly what took place. For this he was paid a pound a week, with a promise of a big sum if he unearthed anything really important. The fellow willingly accepted the bribe, blissfully unconscious of the fact that the anarchists had their spies already amongst the uniformed police and the detective force.

Within twenty-four hours the president of the society knew that their landlord had turned spy, and as Furneaux was on the committee he decided to make an example of him. A meeting was called, and the traitor was amongst those who attended. He

was unaware that the reason for the gathering was to settle his fate, and that he was never to see another day. When he took his place at the table every eye was on him. He was closely scrutinised during a general discussion as to the best means of assassinating the French President and the King of Italy. Of course, they were only playing with his emotions. They had no intention of murdering the monarch mentioned, but Furneaux's eyes sparkled as he thought of the large sum of money the revelation of this plot would bring him from the police.

The last business of the meeting was the reading of a report by the president that a member had turned traitor. No name was mentioned, but those present were asked to vote the sentence the traitor had earned. Furneaux's voice was loudest in demanding death, and he had scarcely spoken when to his amazement and terror he was seized and bound.

At four next morning a policeman patrolling a quiet avenue found Furneaux's dead body suspended from a tree. As his hands and feet were tied there could be no suggestion of suicide. When shortly afterwards the police raided the wineshop the secret society had found other headquarters, and they found nothing.

No mercy was ever shown to anarchists who wished to withdraw. The fear of death was the only thing that kept the vast majority of the members faithful to their oaths. Men, too, who disagreed too sharply with the inner committee seldom lived to tell the tale. Of course, traitors recurred at intervals, but no one ever succeeded in escaping from the vengeance of his comrades. The result was that the anarchists became very powerful. Despite their lawless deeds, they could advocate their principles at the street corners, in the parks, and by means of weekly newspapers, and openly insult the police.

But the time quickly came round when the restless energy of the younger men in the movement had to have an outlet. A long period of inactivity ended abruptly with the brutal murder of a policeman, who had tried to prevent half-a-dozen anarchists wrecking property belonging to a well-known statesman. The death of their comrade aroused the police, and they swooped down upon the enemy, making many arrests. But, as usual, they only captured the small fry. The big men, the brains of the movement, were not to be found ; no one had the faintest idea where they met to plan assassination and outrage.

A few hours after the prisoners had entered their cells the Chief of Police received an anonymous letter from the anarchist committee to the effect that unless their friends were released something terrible would happen. The threat was ignored, and there ensued a series of attempts designed to terrorise the public.

Half-a-dozen desperate characters were chosen to do the damage, and two of these—Ravachel and Simon—selected a cafe for what they called a "demonstration." Strolling in one afternoon they called for coffee, and indulged in a chat, being joined later by a couple of friends. When all four of them calmly walked out, the proprietor could not have been expected to guess that they had left a bomb under the table, and that it was timed to explode at a moment when the restaurant would be crowded. It happened, however, that the bomb went off an hour earlier, and although the proprietor was killed, his was the only death. A few persons were injured, but if the original plot had not miscarried the death-roll would have been fearful.

That night Ravachel and Simon were captured as they were about to leave Paris for Brussels, and as soon as possible they were brought to trial. Every-

body felt that the sentence of twenty years' penal servitude erred on the side of leniency.

But the punishment of the authors of the outrage did not end the anxiety of the police to arrest their confederates. It became known that one man (Meunier) had fled to London, and it was realised that if he was permitted to remain at liberty he would only spend his time planning other crimes. A request was, therefore, made to Scotland Yard that Meunier should be arrested and extradited to Paris.

But Meunier was an elusive person. For one who had the temperament of a boaster and swaggerer, he was now singularly retiring, and it was several weeks before the man was tracked to an Italian restaurant. The detective knew that the anarchist was fully armed, and that if he had the slightest suspicion of danger he would attempt to escape by murdering him. Nevertheless, with superb courage he walked the length of the restaurant to the table where the fellow was, and, dropping into a chair beside him, entered into conversation. Meunier, however disturbed in mind, could not resist the offer of a cigarette from the detective's case, and he was smoking it with evident enjoyment when the detective quietly informed him that he was his prisoner.

Meunier knew that the game was up, and he submitted tamely. Just a few weeks later he was a convict for life in a French gaol.

But the capture and conviction of men of the Meunier and Ravachel type did not affect the anarchists. Protected by the secrecy of their governing committee, they never lacked for recruits. There were always men (and women, too) who eagerly allowed themselves to be made the tools of those who stopped in the background, directing the battle against society, but not exposing themselves to risk.

One of the most desperate of the fighting anarchists

was Emile Henry. This man was a firebrand from his early youth. He hated society, and he detested work. He was inspired by the example of his friend Auguste Vallant, an anarchist who actually made his way into the French Senate, and hurled a bomb at the members. Emile Henry immediately went to the president of the secret society of which he was a new member, and asked to be allowed to "demonstrate." In other words, he wished to be given a bomb for instant use from the secret factory of the anarchists.

The president tested him with a few shrewd questions, but Henry came through the ordeal, and soon afterwards he had a dangerous bomb in his pocket. He walked through the streets, for the young ruffian was seeking a crowded place where he could hurl the bomb and claim the greatest possible number of victims.

Presently he came to the Terminus Hotel, the café of which was crowded, and without hesitating he flung the bomb into it. A terrific explosion ensued, and scores of persons were injured, but by a miracle only two deaths resulted. Henry paid for them by surrendering his own life to the guillotine. The death of Henry exasperated the anarchists, and they declared his execution to be a crime which they must avenge.

The police were warned, and they increased their vigilance. But they never suspected that the anarchists were going to strike a blow which would reverberate throughout the world. Leading Frenchmen were protected, railway stations and other places frequented by the public watched, and at regular intervals searched for bombs. It was recognised that the chief danger lay in Paris, and that was why more than one leading detective expressed his relief when President Carnot went on a series of visits to the South in the summer of 1894.

On the morning of the twenty-fourth of June, the President had a magnificent reception at Lyons, and appeared at various places in the city without meeting with any insults or threats. Everywhere he was acclaimed, and although there were soldiers and plain-clothes detectives to guard him, it really seemed as though their presence was unnecessary.

But when apparently most secure Carnot's danger was greatest, for there had arrived in Lyons an anarchist who had been ordered by the central council to take the life of the President. This man, Santo, was a ruffian of ruffians. For hours he could find no chance to strike a blow at the President. Twice he got within a few feet of him, but his nerve failed him, and he shrank back to hide himself in the crowd. He would not abandon the task, however, because he knew that once the President left the city the task of assassinating him would be rendered doubly difficult.

At half-past nine that night the President stepped into his carriage to be driven to the theatre, where a gala performance was to be held. He was feeling very cheerful and pleased. France seemed to be herself once again. The policy he had pursued was bearing fruit. He was in the midst of such a reverie when, out of the crowd, a man sprang. Before anyone could utter a warning he had buried his dagger in the President's body.

The murderer was easily arrested, and only the presence of the police saved him from being lynched. Of course, he suffered death, but the execution of this worthless scoundrel was no consolation to the French nation, which had lost one of its greatest Presidents.

The assassination served to remind the public that the anarchists were still to be feared, and the police were urged to wage an incessant war against them. That was all very well, but while the authorities

knew not where to lay their hands on the leaders they were helpless.

Plenty of arrests were made, and half of those thrown into prison on suspicion were quite innocent. Everybody who had association with Santo, the assassin, was incarcerated, and in this way several of his sympathisers were brought to trial and sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

In their next act of terror they did not aim so high as a president or king, but turned their attention to certain French millionaires, the Rothschilds in particular. One morning the head of the Rothschild Bank in Paris received a bulky letter, which he passed on to his secretary to open. That gentleman, quite unsuspicious of danger, cut the fatal envelope open. The next moment there was an explosion, and he was lying unconscious on the floor, with several of his fingers missing, and the blood streaming from his face.

The man for whom the dynamite was intended suffered no injury. The anarchists ought to have known that the millionaire had secretaries who attended to his correspondence, and that the baron only dealt with letters which obviously came from relatives and intimate friends. Their little plot, therefore, miscarried, and the would-be assassins had to try another method.

It is an article of belief amongst the anarchists that rich men are enemies of society. For that reason they devoted their time to Baron Alphonse de Rothschild, a courageous Frenchman with a keen sense of humour. On one occasion an anarchist forced his way into the private office of the great financier.

"I have come to demand my share of your wealth," he cried, threateningly.

The baron took a small coin from his pocket.

"Here you are," he said, tossing it over. "I have been told that if my fortune was divided, each individual's share would be a farthing, so you can take yours now."

The anarchist was completely surprised by this cold douche of logic, and he made himself scarce without giving any more trouble.

But the anarchists were determined that Baron Alphonse de Rothschild should learn to fear them, and they showered threatening letters upon him, which he treated with the contempt they deserved. Realising this, they held a special secret meeting, and cast lots who would "remove" the baron. It fell to a certan Leon Bouteilhe to do the deed, and he announced, amid subdued cheers, that he would obey with enthusiasm.

The truth was that Leon was an arrant coward. A convinced hater of manual labour, he had joined the secret society under the impression that it would provide him with food and drink, and when he had found out his mistake he had been too afraid to resign. So he hung on, and did various small jobs, such as delivering warning letters and acting as a tracker of fellow-members who were suspected of being too friendly disposed towards the authorities.

Bouteilhe was in for it now. He was told to arm himself with a bomb, seek out the baron and hurl it at him. He knew that the chances were that he would also perish in the explosion. When his comrades hastened to assure him that if that melancholy event took place they would regard him as a martyr, and never forget how he had sacrificed himself on the altar of anarchy, he found very little consolation in their promises.

Leon did not wish to die, and he nearly went out of his mind trying to find an excuse for surrendering the job. He feigned illness, but a visit from the head of

the secret society in Paris cured him, Leon instantly becoming as well as ever he had been in his life.

A bomb guaranteed to blow up the Rothschild bank was delivered in due course to him, and he was informed that he must use it within six hours, because it was timed to go off after the lapse of that time. Bouteilhe's terror was pitiable as he sat in his bedroom with the bomb on a chair beside him. Outside was Paris, glowing with life and police—especially police—and Leon was so upset that he could imagine that the latter outnumbered the former.

When four hours had gone he was eager to be up and doing, and his first act was to render the bomb harmless. Then he went off to the bank, and with a dramatic gesture flung it amongst the clerks. It did no damage, of course, but Leon was arrested, and, as he had anticipated, he did not receive a long sentence, because it was proved that no one had been placed in danger. Three years was the sentence, and Leon went cheerfully to gaol, knowing that even if he was suspected by his superiors they would not be able to punish him until his term of imprisonment had expired. He hoped that by the time he was free again he would have been completely forgotten.

The anarchist, however, forgot that the council of the secret society to which he had once sworn allegiance never forgot and never forgave. When, less than thirty months later, he was freed from prison, he was met by an old friend, who took him to a café in the nearest village. Afterwards he started to walk with him to a town from which they were to take the train to Paris. But only one of the two men reached the station, and he was not Leon Bouteilhe. When his body was found by a farm labourer a blood-stained knife lying beside it plainly indicated how the ex-convict had met his death. The murderer was never discovered.

CHAPTER IX

"The Burners"

Not many years ago a French journalist, while on holiday near Cannes, discovered a benevolent-looking old gentleman, who had just celebrated his hundred-and-fourth birthday. It was a wonderful age to attain, and the pressman engaged him in a series of conversations, and thereby discovered that the centenarian's name was Yves Conedie. It was not until later, however, that he learned that Conedie was the last of the leaders of the most cruel of all secret societies, the Burners.

It was almost impossible to believe that the venerable Frenchman with the charming manners had once led bands of robbers through France, murdering and torturing those who opposed him.

Conedie had joined the secret society soon after it was formed. France was in a turmoil, and a particularly vicious Parisian who had served several years in gaol sought out his prison acquaintances, and bound them together by an oath not to betray one another. There has never been honour amongst thieves, and when Pierre Gandot brought the Burners into existence his first and greatest precaution was to eliminate any chance of treachery. He laid his plans with remarkable cunning, and the first forty members of the society were all men who had already forfeited their lives by acts of murder and assault, and who, therefore, dare not turn informers.

The meeting-place varied. One week it would be in a garret, another the cellar of a friendly landlord, then it would be a wood. No place was used more than twice consecutively, for the scoundrels had a wholesome fear of the police.

Candidates for membership were very severely tested, the final ordeal being a duel with knives to prove their courage. If there was the slightest suspicion against a candidate he was murdered without being given an opportunity to answer the charge against him. The secret society always ruled by terror, just as it achieved its most notorious feats by the same method.

But once a criminal succeeded in being elected one of the Burners he was practically safe from arrest for the remainder of his career. Backed by a powerful and very efficient body of men, he was provided with passwords and signs that gave him the support of thousands of members, not only in France, but in Germany. He could plan a series of burglaries all over the country, and journey from place to place, knowing that in most villages and towns there would be fellow Burners to help and advise.

It was seldom, however, that the Burners travelled alone. They nearly always worked in gangs of half-a-dozen, and usually the six were men of strength and ferocity. Women were not allowed to become members, but they were employed to prepare the way for the darings of their menfolk, and in nine crimes out of ten the co-operation of the women guaranteed success for the criminals.

There were, of course, several methods of working. One of the most common was for a leading Burner to get his wife or another relative he could trust to apply for employment at a house known to contain great treasure. The woman was supplied with forged references, and these were reinforced by her willingness to accept the lowest wages. It was rare, indeed, that the preliminary plan failed, and once the agent of the Burners was in the mansion the rest was comparatively easy.

She would report at once the amount of " swag "

in the house, and also supply details of the owner and his servants. It was the usual thing for wealthy Frenchmen and women to keep large sums of money in gold and silver in their houses, the treasure being carefully hidden. The steward himself was not allowed to know where it was, but once the Burners suspected its presence they had their own method of obtaining the information.

When they had heard from their spy, half-a-dozen Burners would set out for the house, arriving after dark. About midnight they would enter the grounds surrounding the house, and at a given signal the woman would admit them. By then the servants were drugged or locked securely in their rooms, and if neither of these precautions had been adopted the Burners would visit the servants' quarters first, and bind or gag them. It all depended on the leader, and occasionally he happened to be a man who did not believe in shedding blood unnecessarily.

But it was the owner of the mansion they most desired to see, and once the secret society was on his track, escape was practically impossible. It became a common enough experience for a Frenchman to be awakened at midnight by a rough hand seizing him by the arm. When he opened his eyes he would see four or more vicious, cruel faces staring down at him. Not knowing that they were members of a secret organisation, he would suppose them to be burglars.

" Where is your money ? " was the first question the leader of each gang asked his intended victim. The Burners were not as a rule interested in carting off heavy silver and gold articles, which would realise only a fraction of their value. They wanted hard cash, and they meant to have it.

" I have none," was the usual reply.

As a rule the unfortunate man struggled hard to save his fortune, but the Burners were implacable,

and if he continued to deny the possession of cash they bound him securely, and then applied a lighted candle to the soles of his feet. Sometimes they experienced failure, and there are cases on record where an old miser has parted with his life rather than with his treasure. But usually the tortured captive quickly gave in, and the robbers learnt where the money was to be found. This mode of torture earned for them their name, and when the horrible methods of the secret society became generally known thousands of wealthy families lived in daily and nightly terror of a visit from them.

One of the most stringent rules of the Burners was that one-fourth of all cash " earned " was to be sent to the committee, to be distributed at certain periods amongst the less fortunate members. Accidents will happen, even in the best-regulated secret societies, and now and then a Burner, becoming too bold, fell into the hands of the police.

There was one ruffian, Eppstein, a giant of a brute, who was responsible for at least a dozen murders. He used to delight in prolonging the torture of his victims, even when they had surrendered their all, and to him their agony was more pleasing than their fortunes. Eppstein, who was of mingled French and German parentage, was in the habit of devastating whole districts, and then returning to Paris for an orgy. It was during one of the latter that he forgot he was in public, and while attempting to strangle an inoffensive spectator four policemen overpowered him, carrying him off to gaol.

As the ruffian was a sort of vice-president of the Burners, the secret society knew no peace until they had secured his release. He was the brains of the movement, and the inner council were afraid that if he were put to death it would create a panic amongst the less resolute brethren.

They had at this time a huge sum in their chest. For five years the Burners had met with great success. One French marquis had been robbed of thirty thousand pounds, an old lady had been deprived of twenty thousand, and the widow of a famous statesman, who had a horror of banks, and who had kept every penny of her fortune in an ancient cupboard, was forced to part with a matter of sixty thousand. Consequently the Burners were able to secure the release of Eppstein by bribing the governor with forty thousand pounds, a bribe he could not resist.

Eppstein dare not, of course, remain in Paris, and, acting on the suggestion of the committee of the Burners, he made Lyons his headquarters. Under another name, and altering his appearance by growing a moustache, he was able to mix freely with the people, though he could not have escaped re-arrest had not the Burners been powerfully represented in Lyons. The police there must have known that to interfere with the professional murderer and torturer would be to risk their own lives. So they pretended to be unaware of his real identity, and shut their eyes to his "eccentricities" when he went on the "rampage."

Yet this same scoundrel was responsible for the downfall of the Burners. They regarded him as their chief prop. His immense strength, his utter disregard of danger, and his ferocity, led them from victory to victory. There was always keen competition for membership of the gang he controlled, for to be one of his chosen helpers was to make a fortune in a very short time.

Eppstein had been roaming the country for several months, when he came to a dismal-looking house, whose appearance suggested anything but wealth. He had already sent his female scouts ahead, and his own sister was at that very moment inside the mansion. She had told her brother that the house had been

allowed to get into its present miserable condition because the owner, a man of thirty, had decided to realise his possessions and emigrate to America. He had political and social reasons for making himself an exile, but he was in no hurry, and he had waited at the house for two years after coming to the great decision, in order that he might realise his property and investments in the best markets. The result was that when Eppstein came on the scene the young Comte de Neauville had over fifteen thousand pounds in gold buried in the garden.

With his sister's help Eppstein and his gang entered at midnight, murdered the four servants—Eppstein did not believe in simply gagging and binding them—and then seized the Comte and tied him up. When he refused to answer the usual questions, the torture was applied, and only when his feet were scorching, did he give way. He was moaning in agony when Eppstein and the other Burners were busy digging for the gold, and their shout of joy was the first intimation he received that they had found it.

It was not until some years later that the unfortunate man learnt that Eppstein had fully intended to return and murder him, but the ruffian's sister implored them to clear out at once, and, her manner alarming the Burners, they complied.

But the Comte de Neauville, now penniless and almost a cripple, determined to devote his life to avenging the murder of his servants, and the theft of his entire fortune, and as soon as his feet had healed, he went to Paris to begin his campaign.

He obtained an introduction to the Paris Chief of Police, and to him he confided his plan. His aid was enthusiastically welcomed, for the young nobleman was brave, clever, and resourceful. The Chief of Police had been driven to despair by the ravages of the Burners; the secret society had set all laws

at defiance, and it seemed impossible to discover who they were and where they met.

But the Comte de Neauville worked steadily. More than once he sat opposite the redoubtable Eppstein himself—now bold enough to show up in Paris occasionally—and the robber chief did not recognise him. When first they had met, the Comte had been lying in bed, and the only light had been a flickering candle. It was not astonishing that Eppstein, who had a vague idea that he had murdered all those he had robbed, did not remember the face of the young workman, who drank the cheapest of wines.

De Neauville purposely mingled with men he suspected to be Burners, and they became familiar with his countenance. They rather liked him, but, of course, they dare not reveal themselves. However, believing that he was of the "right stuff," they watched him, and one afternoon two members had the unspeakable joy of seeing the "workman" pick the pocket of a policeman in broad daylight. It was so neatly done that the policeman apparently knew nothing about it, and when de Neauville entered a café he was joined by the two Burners, who were full of admiration for his achievement.

When they had drunk his health they went off in search of Eppstein, and reported what they had seen. Instantly the fellow commanded them to induce the young man to join their society.

"He is the sort we want," he cried. "Robbed a gendarme in the market-place, you say? Ah, he is a genius. We must have him."

Of course, the picking of the policeman's pocket had been arranged by the Chief of Police and the Comte de Neauville, with the object of getting the latter into the inner circle of the Burners. They were aware that the Comte was being shadowed by members of the society, and they were delighted when de

Neauville reported that he had interviewed Eppstein, and that the scoundrel had promised to propose him for membership at the next meeting.

It would have been easy at this stage for the authorities to swoop down and arrest Eppstein, and at least a dozen other Burners, but the Chief of Police wanted to catch the whole gang. He accordingly kept quiet while de Neauville was taken to the secret meeting-place and elected to full membership.

That meant that he was provided with passwords, signs, names of leading members, details of the working of the organisation, and particulars of future thefts and murders. The heads of the society took an extraordinary liking to the young Comte, who had adopted a commonplace name, and posed as a dissatisfied workman. But it was difficult to suppress his sense of humour when he found himself meeting Eppstein, the man who had deprived him of his fortune, and who had actually held the lighted candle to his bare feet. Eppstein was fond of describing his exploits, and he gloated over tales of murders he had committed. Many times de Neauville felt like having him arrested, but he had sworn to destroy the Burners, root and branch, and he kept his temper.

He could not, while perfecting his plans, bring the activities of the society to an end. It was some months before he was in full possession of its story, and he knew the names of the principal provincial branches. Meantime the papers reported from time to time fresh outrages. Eppstein would disappear from his usual haunts, and then de Neauville would realise with a shudder what the villain was doing. He was amazed at the amount of treasure that was poured into the headquarters of the society. Only gold and silver were permitted to enter the great cellar that was used as the Burners' bank, diamonds

and jewellery being converted into cash. Members who wished to decorate their wives or sweethearts with jewellery were permitted to purchase them from the keeper of the treasure house, but de Neauville discovered for himself that a strict account was kept, and no unfairness ever took place in the distribution of the money.

Yves Conedie was now president of the Burners, and had little time for active service. He was even then well-known in Paris for his benevolence and kindliness. Women and children were fond of taking their troubles to "Father" Conedie, and he distributed a considerable sum amongst them. It was all done to prevent the police discovering his association with the Burners, for it was essential that the president should always be on the spot, yet in no danger of arrest. He held the key of the treasure store, and his decision was final in all disputes. Only occasionally did Conedie emerge from his passive state, and perform an exploit which proved his fitness for the office he held.

One of his most famous achievements was the robbing of a provincial police station of cash to the amount of seventy thousand pounds. The money had accumulated owing to a law passed in France ordering banks and other business houses to surrender to the police by a certain date all money held by them from men and women who had been banished as traitors to the state. The consequence was that in various districts the police paid visits of inspection to certain concerns, and forcibly removed considerable sums in gold and silver which had been retained in defiance of the law.

The money was kept for a few days while instructions from Paris were awaited, and Conedie, who knew through his agents every detail of the various transactions, selected an isolated police station. He

firmly resolved to rob the authorities of the fortune they had taken from those who had offended them, and been compelled to leave the country.

He was a shrewd scoundrel, with a cunning brain, and realising that the eyes of the secret society were upon him, he determined to make the affair as dramatic as possible. It appealed to his sense of humour to rob the police who were actually looking for him and his fellow Burners.

With a chosen gang of twenty men he set out for the police station. The inspector in charge of the latter was under the impression that he had succeeded in keeping his movements during the previous fortnight a secret, and that no one outside his subordinates were aware of the presence of the treasure. Because of that he did not trouble to place a strong guard over the building, thinking that if four men patrolled the path in front there was no chance of disaster.

Conedie set to work soon after his arrival. He remained quiet until after midnight, when he and his followers crept towards the police station, and surrounded it. Each Burner was armed, and at a given signal Conedie and five men overpowered the guard. The remaining members of the gang then rushed into the station, shot the inspector, killed four policemen who attempted to bar their progress, and within ten minutes were in the room where the money chests were. They were too heavy to be removed, but the resourceful Conedie had a couple of carts waiting, and, as all the police were by now either dead or helpless, he and his followers leisurely transferred the money to the carts.

Long after midnight they drove away, and it was not until some hours later that an early worker came upon a bound and gagged policeman, and gave the alarm. The fact that none of the marauders were overtaken, or a single coin of the treasure recovered,

indicates the completeness of the success the Burners enjoyed.

The crime, however, roused the authorities to a frenzy. They fancied that the leader of the gang was Eppstein, Yves Conedie being the last man they thought of.

But the Comte de Neauville was now bringing his investigations to an end. He had carefully compiled a list of members of the terrible secret society, their addresses, meeting places, and was able to add details of their individual exploits. Eppstein's record was an amazing one. The Comte had particulars of seventeen murders, and he knew that they formed only a fraction of the total number for which he had been responsible.

It required great bravery and resource to tackle the Burners. They had in their ranks the greatest criminals of France and Germany, and Schendune, a German, was one of their most ferocious leaders. Schendune, like Eppstein, delighted in cruelty, and he spent his time inventing new methods of inflicting pain. Later he was suspected of parleying with the enemy, and was eventually tortured to death by his colleagues, who considered a traitor a greater enemy than a policeman.

That happened shortly before the Comte de Neauville was able to inform the Chief of Police that the time had come for the smashing of the Burners. He asked only one favour—that he should be in charge of the party sent to arrest Eppstein. The request was granted, and de Neauville and four officers went to Nantes, where Eppstein was in hiding.

While de Neauville and his assistants were in Nantes the Paris police were engaged preparing the net for the biggest haul of all. The young Comte had told them that on a certain date a full meeting of the society would be held in a secluded part of a wood,

two miles from the outskirts of Paris. The whole committee was to be present, with the exception of Eppstein, and they would have with them the books of the society, which were in cipher, but the key had already been supplied by de Neauville.

At the time appointed the police, suitably disguised and heavily armed, surrounded the chosen spot, and in due course the Burners began to assemble, coming in twos and threes. The officer in charge of the police was more than amazed when he recognised in certain of the members men who were well-known business-men. One Burner was actually a doctor, whose sudden rise to riches had puzzled most of his friends. They knew the reason now.

From their hiding places many of the police could hear the speeches of the president and his committee men, but they only waited until it was obvious that all had assembled. Then at a signal they dashed forward, and, before the astounded criminals could recover, they had captured nine-tenths of them. The remaining tenth fought desperately, but with three exceptions every man present was eventually secured. One of the exceptions was Yves Conedie, who was not seen again in France for thirty years.

It was a complete victory for law and order, and as the result of that raid the Burners ceased to exist. The police, thanks to the Comte de Neauville, could now go straight to the place where the funds of the society were hidden, and recover cash to the value of eighty thousand pounds. Further search brought many valuables to light.

But if the police were lucky the Comte was not. Eppstein was giving the finishing touches to a pleasant little scheme for the robbery of a mansion near the town, when de Neauville and four policemen entered his apartment. Although the odds were against him the notorious Burner refused to surrender.

Taken by surprise, he was unable to get at his pistols, but he picked up a crowbar, and, despite the fact that three men were hanging on him, he wielded it with effect.

In succession the four policemen dropped, and then de Neauville advanced towards the ruffian with a pistol in his hand. He fired twice, but missed. Eppstein then sprang at him, and, with a sudden crashing blow on the head, killed him. By now, however, one of the men lying on the floor had regained consciousness, and, taking careful aim, he sent a bullet through the ruffian's head. Eppstein uttered a curse, staggered, and then collapsed across the body of the Comte.

The police recovered, and de Neauville's death was the only casualty, but the only record of his achievement is a small tombstone to his memory in the churchyard at Nantes. The Burners were destroyed, and, as I have stated, its president was its last survivor, dying at the age of a hundred and four in the midst of people who knew nothing of his awful past.

CHAPTER X

Adolphus Williamson of Scotland Yard

(1)

In his early days Adolphus Williamson had no intention of becoming a detective, for his prowess at school indicated that he was destined to raise the social status of his family, and his father, ambitious in true Scottish fashion, canvassed his influential friends to secure an appointment in the Civil Service for the boy of whom he was so proud.

His efforts succeeded, and at eighteen young Williamson found himself a clerk in the War Office and rubbing shoulders with the products of our public schools and universities. In a short time he was the most popular man on the staff, and his many friends had just come to the conclusion that he had in him the makings of a future Under-Secretary of State, when he created a sensation by announcing that he had sent in his resignation and was about to join the Metropolitan Police as an ordinary constable.

"You're joking, Dolly," said his friends, in amazement. "Turn yourself into a common policeman! You must be mad!"

"Promotion is too slow here, and I want an open-air life," he answered, with a smile. "I won't be long in uniform, and once I get inside Scotland Yard I'll make rapid progress."

They remonstrated with him, and implored him to reconsider his decision, but Williamson was adamant, and a little later one of his former colleagues strolling down Pall Mall beheld with eyes that nearly bulged

out of his head "Dolly" Williamson, so recently the star clerk at the War Office, regulating the traffic, clothed in blue. After that it was decided that he was not quite right in his head—that is until the name of the detective had become the most famous in Britain, and then they thought differently.

Williamson became a policeman at a time when the force, although it had gained the confidence of the community, was still regarded as something inferior in personnel and rewards to the army. The average constable was very ignorant, and the detective establishment in Whitehall was old-fashioned and slumberous.

The change must have been astounding to the Scotsman, who found himself mixing with men his Civil Service friends would have despised, but he knew he would not be in uniform long, and he justified his confidence by earning promotion to the plain clothes' branch in less than eleven months.

His first achievement was characteristic of his powers of observation and quick thought. One night when patrolling the West End he noticed a man hovering near the railings of the London residence of the Earl and Countess of Dudley. The stranger was well-dressed, and the constable might have concluded that he was a resident in the neighbourhood if the fellow had not started in guilty surprise when he became aware of the existence of a second person in the road at two in the morning.

"What do you want, sir?" Williamson asked, politely, at the same time scrutinising his face by the light of his lantern.

"Nothing, thank you," answered the suspect, obviously endeavouring to appear at his ease. "I'm on my way home—I live in Bloomsbury, you know. I've been dining with friends near the Marble Arch."

The information was given in a series of jerky

sentences, accompanied by nervous glances to see if it was believed.

"But why have you been watching Lord Dudley's house for nearly an hour?" said the constable, whose youthful appearance concealed a shrewd brain and much worldly knowledge.

"I haven't been here an hour," protested the stranger. Williamson caught him by the wrist.

"That's a lie," he said, sharply, "and, as I'm not satisfied, you must come with me and explain to the inspector."

His loud protestations proving unavailing, the suspect presently stood before Williamson's superior, and repeated his story with considerable emphasis.

"You swear you have been to the Marble Arch?" asked the constable. "You haven't been anywhere else to-day?"

"Of course not," came the instant rejoinder.

"Raise your right foot," exclaimed Williamson, and the curious command so surprised the man that he mechanically obeyed. Immediately the officer pointed to traces of lime on his boot.

"They were made within the last three or four hours," said the constable, quietly. "I think, sir, you had better put him in a cell and have inquiries made," he added, turning to the inspector, and, feebly protesting, the suspect was removed.

At ten o'clock the next morning the inspector received a message to the effect that a dressing-case containing four thousand pounds' worth of jewellery had been stolen from Lady Dudley at Paddington Station, and that every available officer was to be turned on to the job of trying to find the criminal and the gems. When the order was repeated to Williamson, he instantly thought of his arrest of the previous night.

"I'll tackle this, sir," he said, and went at once to

interview Lord and Lady Dudley and their servants, particularly the maid who had been in charge of the dressing-case.

The latter was a most important person in Williamson's opinion, and when she told him that she had observed a man hovering near the first-class compartment reserved for her master and mistress, the detective took her with him to the police station, and had the suspect brought up from his cell.

"That's the man," she cried, dramatically, the moment she saw him.

"What's her little game ?" asked the prisoner, sullenly. "She's a complete stranger to me. I know nothing about her."

Williamson did not reply, and the man was locked up again. The young policeman had by now realised that the great chance he had for months been hoping and praying for had come to him, and he was determined to make the most of it.

He had, of course, learnt by heart Walter Bartlett's account of himself. The prisoner had given his name and address, and his statement that he was a commercial traveller out of work had been tested, and found to be correct. Williamson believed that there was little more to be learned about the man, but he was anxious to discover something of the fellow's relations, and, foreseeing that the prisoner would create trouble by lying, he did not consult him on the subject.

For a couple of days, therefore, he spent his time investigating Walter Bartlett's antecedents, and when he discovered that his prisoner had an uncle who was a builder, he knew that he had solved the problem which had puzzled the best brains at the Yard.

Mr. John Fielder, the builder in question, was severely indignant when Williamson questioned him concerning his nephew.

"I haven't seen him for more than a year," said the builder, with a frown. "He has borrowed so much money from me that we are no longer friendly."

"But didn't he call here last Tuesday between ten and midnight?" the policeman inquired.

"You may take it from me, my lad," exclaimed Mr. Fielder, his countenance now embellished by a purple tint, "that he hasn't been anywhere near me for a good twelve months."

Williamson rose, walked to the door, opened it, and admitted a couple of colleagues in plain clothes.

"You will keep an eye on Mr. Fielder while I search the yard," he said, quietly. "Don't let him leave the room."

For three hours the now terrified builder sat huddled up in his chair, and no relief came to him when Williamson returned carrying the newspaper in which the Countess of Dudley's jewellery was wrapped.

"Come along, Mr. Fielder," he said, in a friendly tone. "The case is out of my hands now, and you'll have to explain to the chief your connection with your nephew's theft of the jewels. I'd advise you to wait until you can consult a solicitor before you do any talking."

That night the Scotland Yard detective in charge of the case had the solution of the crime placed on his desk by young Williamson. It took the form of a neatly-written account of Walter Bartlett's theft at Paddington Station; his journey to his uncle's building yard in Shepherd's Bush, and the burying there of the gems by the two men.

"When I saw the lime on Bartlett's boots I guessed he had recently been in a building yard, for by his own statement he had not been out of London that day. I, therefore, sought for the jewellery in a building yard, and, of course, once I ascertained

that he had an uncle who was a builder the rest was easy. The reason why he was loafing near Lady Dudley's house that night was that he is courting a girl who works for her ladyship."

The Chief Commissioner of Police read that report, and marvelled at the crispness and clearness of the language.

"Composed by the constable who solved the mystery," he exclaimed, when he questioned the inspector about it. "Why, he's the very man we want here. Send for him at once, and tell him that from henceforth he is attached to the detective force."

And that was how Scotland Yard gained its greatest recruit.

A new world opened up before Williamson when he began his work at Scotland Yard. It was an exceedingly busy and anxious time for the detective force, for several veritable captains of crime were at work, and well-organised gangs were plundering the wealthy. Murders were frequently reported, and even in the West End the police had to be armed. In the circumstances it is not surprising that the young recruit was soon put to the test.

A week after his promotion Williamson was chatting with several of his colleagues when the proprietor of a music-hall in the East End was ushered in. As he was well-known to the detectives, he was cordially greeted, and when he intimated that he was there to offer a nightly job to one of the officers, there was plenty of competition for it, but, to the general surprise, he offered it to the only man who did not ask for it.

During the bustle and excitement caused by the manager's arrival Williamson had remained in the background, and had not spoken a word, and he was amazed when the owner of the music-hall chose him for the task of standing near the entrance to his

establishment and warning off pickpockets and roughs.

You can do it in your spare time," said the proprietor, genially, " and for your trouble there's ten bob, a drink, and a cigar."

" Thank you very much, sir," said Williamson, in his quiet way, " but I can't accept it. I have to be on duty at nine in the morning, and, besides, I am studying hard at home."

His companions laughed, and when one of them secured the well-paid job, and the manager had departed, they took to chaffing him. They knew that Williamson's salary was only thirty shillings a week, and his refusal to more than double it by working for a few hours each evening struck them as the height of folly, but, just as the Scotsman had obstinately resisted the efforts of his friends at the War Office to keep him there, so now did he ward off the banter of the detectives.

" Look here, you chaps," he said, suddenly rousing himself, " I'll speak plainly to you. I don't like those music-hall jobs. They only mean that whoever takes them on drinks too much, goes to bed late, and turns up here in the morning with a headache, and too tired for his official duties. It's not worth risking one's promotion for a few extra shillings. You think I'm a fool to have refused it. Well, you'll know differently in a short time. I wouldn't take a pound a night for the work, because every moment I have to spare I'm devoting to learning French and German, and they'll be worth more to me one day."

A roar of laughter greeted this confession, and at the earliest opportunity some of the inspectors and sergeants were fetched in so that they might be acquainted with the ridiculous folly of the Scotsman. I wonder if " Dolly " Williamson remembered that crowd of grinning faces when less than five years

afterwards every one of them was inferior in rank to him, despite the fact that the most junior of them had been at the Yard several years longer than himself!

But Williamson was a far-seeing man. He had realised that the West End of London contained a large proportion of foreign criminals, and he resolved that he would clear them out. Knowing that he would be handicapped if he could not speak their language, he studied diligently, and he was rewarded when he was deputed to arrest a Frenchman who had murdered his wife in Soho.

It was quite by chance that the Scotsman was put on the job at all, for when the news came through to the Commissioner that a very pretty Frenchwoman had been found murdered in her bedroom in a hotel in Soho the Chief called for Inspector Thornton. The latter, however, was not in his room, and Williamson, as the most intelligent of the plain clothes men, was despatched to make a preliminary investigation.

When he arrived on the scene there was a crowd of jabbering men and women eager to yell information at him, but Williamson decided that they could be of no real assistance, and when he had obtained the meagre details from the constable who had been sent for by the terrified neighbours he left to inquire into the circumstances which had brought Vivienne Germaine to London at all.

No register was kept of aliens, but there were very few ports at which Vivienne could have entered this country, and eventually he discovered that she had travelled from Calais to Dover and from Dover to London three months previously.

Her description was recognised by several railway officials, who had reason to remember her because of her marvellous beauty, and of the height of the man who had accompanied her. According to their statements he had been at least six feet three, and they

all agreed that he had looked a bad-tempered beast.

By means of hard work, Williamson elicited the important fact that the tall man had engaged the room at the hotel for himself and the lady, but the proprietor, an Italian, could say nothing more about him except that he was madam's husband, for he had stayed at the hotel only one night, and since then had not been seen.

The Scotsman questioned the hotel proprietor for several minutes before he made up his mind that the fellow was lying. The Italian was a shifty-looking man with thin lips and red eyes, and if it had not been for unimpeachable evidence to the contrary Williamson would have suspected him of the robbery.

As it was, he believed that the Italian was in league with Monsieur Germaine, the murderer, but there was no legal evidence of that, and when a fortnight subsequent to the crime Germaine was still at large, and Scotland Yard had no idea of his whereabouts it seemed certain that the mystery would never be solved.

Three weeks from the day of the crime Williamson walked into the hotel and ordered dinner. It was a hot night in July, and the place was nearly empty, and if the detective's brain had been idle he might have supposed that the proprietor was waiting on him simply because it was not worth his while to employ a waiter, but he knew that he had been recognised, and that the Italian was "keeping an eye on him."

The Italian insisted on standing him a glass of wine, and the officer noticed his hand trembled as he poured it out.

Williamson was pondering on the subject when three acquaintances of the hotel-keeper's strolled in, and presently the detective was quite alone at his table, while at a table in the corner the four men sat and chatted, and occasionally glanced across at him.

The Scotsman leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes, as if overcome by the food and wine.

"They are fools," he heard the Italian say—in French.

"What of Paul ?" asked another, in the same language, "and has he got the jewels ? I will take them to Antwerp next week. He must not play false, for we were entitled to a fourth each for helping him. But for us he would have been taken. It's no use his talking of blackmail. It was agreed that we were to have Vivienne's jewels between us."

Williamson saw in a flash what had happened. Germaine had brought his wife to England to kill her, and convert her jewellery into cash. He had tired of her, and wanted money, and she had refused to sell her gems. Perhaps there was another woman in the case.

This surmise, by the way, proved to be correct, for there was. Paul Germaine's motive had been a desire to marry a cousin of his wife's, and he had persuaded Vivienne to come to London, where she was unknown, and would have no one to appeal to, and there he had slain her ; but in doing so he had failed to vanish with the jewels, and having been intercepted by the hotel-keeper and his three friends, they had bargained with him to save his life at the expense of the property of the dead woman.

Detective Williamson thought of all this as he listened to the conversation in French, and when it had subsided he rose.

"Good-night," he said, to the proprietor.

"Bon soir, monsieur," cried one of the latter's companions, hilariously.

Williamson pretended not to understand.

"What does he mean ?" he asked the Italian, frowning.

"Good evening," answered the hotel-keeper, and

the Scotsman passed out, and on the threshold paused to smile to himself as the derisive cries of the hilarious quartette followed him into the street.

It was easy, of course, for the detective to have the hotel watched all through that night, and also to have the three friends of its owner shadowed to their lodgings. Williamson would have had them all arrested at once if the conversation he had overheard had not made it obvious that the murderer still had the jewels in his keeping, and that consequently there might be no evidence against the quartette so long as Germaine remained in hiding.

But he was confident that at least one of the gang would give the show away, and five days later he was able to say that his anticipations were correct.

The friends of Germaine were taking extraordinary precautions to hide him until a favourable opportunity arose to smuggle him out of the country, and they had now decided that the time had come.

But when the burly Frenchman, with food in a small leather bag, stepped on to the stairs to tell Germaine to get ready, two men sprang out of the darkness and gagged him ere he had time to cry out, while two men crept silently up the stairs. One of them tapped three times on the door. It was opened, and the murderer of Vivienne Germaine was confronted by Williamson of Scotland Yard and a colleague.

The fellow did not resist, for surprise, acting on a constitution much weakened by constant terror of arrest and close confinement, caused him to collapse.

Two months later he was executed at Newgate, and his wife was avenged. His "friends in need" each received ten years' penal servitude just to teach them that they must not take sides with a murderer against the law.

There is always a very human side to crime. That

perhaps is only another way of saying that there is always a woman in the case.

Williamson studied human nature just as closely as he did the rules and regulations of the police force, and to this may be attributed many of his successes. Scotland Yard failed many times, chiefly because it was impossible for the brilliant Scotsman to take charge of every case entrusted to it, but he himself had exceptionally few failures, and these were mainly due to the inability of other officers to provide him with anything tangible to go upon.

(2)

When one day a visitor was announced at Williamson's office, and a girl was shown into his room, he saw at a glance that she had come on no ordinary errand. He suspected that behind that deathly pallor, the unnatural light in her eyes, and the intense and fierce temper—revealed by a sudden tightening of the lips and a hardening of the expression—there was something sensational.

"My name's Fanny Kay," she said, with an abruptness that startled him. "You don't know it because you've never heard it before, but if it hadn't been for his misfortune I'd have been married to Ted Agar by now."

At the mention of the name "Agar" the puzzled look vanished from the face of Williamson.

"You're referring to the man who got a life sentence for forgery?" he said, quietly, "I remember the case."

"Yes, that's the chap," she resumed, wiping her eyes. "Three years ago I was an attendant at London Bridge Station, when a gentleman asked me if I'd seen a small bag in any of the carriages of the

train which had arrived half-an-hour before. I helped him to look for it, and found it, and he gave me a sovereign.

"He was very well dressed, and I took him to be a real toff, and I never expected he'd take any further notice of me, but the next day he came to the station, and we had a chat, and a few evenings later I was walking out with him. He told me his name was Ted Agar, and that he was making his fortune, and when he proposed I accepted him. Then he said that he couldn't marry me right away, which I thought strange, seeing that he always had plenty of money, but I know the reason now.

"He was expecting to be arrested at any time, and he didn't wish me to be tied to a convict. However, he made me a generous allowance, and promised to marry me when his affairs were straightened, and I was happy enough.

"We had a few quarrels, but, on the whole, Ted treated me well, and I was very fond of him, although occasionally I had reason to suspect that he wasn't going straight, but as he always lost his temper if I hinted at that, I soon stopped referring to it at all."

She paused to wipe her eyes again, and Williamson, well aware that Agar had been a member of one of the most dangerous gangs of crooks in Europe, waited patiently. She was giving him a great deal of useless, if interesting, information, but he had plenty of time to spare, and there were certain adventures of Agar's which he wanted to hear.

At this stage he believed that Fanny Kay, ill-treated by her lover, had called to betray him—probably he had committed murder, and she wished to be revenged by having him hanged for it. He was soon proved to be wrong, but it was characteristic of Williamson never to act on surmise, and this rule of his saved him from many a blunder.

"I've forgotten how long Ted and I had been engaged that particular evening I called to see him at his house in Shepherd's Bush," she continued, in a clearer voice. "It was my custom to go there three times a week, and I'd always been welcome, but on this occasion he looked upset at seeing me, and promptly bundled me into a room on the top floor, and asked me to wait there for him. He was very anxious and nervous, and for an hour I sat alone by the window, not wishing to worry him. You can imagine my surprise, though, when, on going to the door, I found it locked.

"However, Ted came running up the stairs when I knocked, and took me out for a walk. In passing through the hall I saw through a chink of the kitchen door that there was a regular furnace in the grate, and the house was filled with a peculiar smell. Ted, however, wouldn't answer any of my questions, and a fortnight afterwards he left the house altogether and went to live in Kilburn.

"Meanwhile I'd made the acquaintance of three of his pals—Pierce, Tester, and Burgess. There was also a well-dressed gentleman who called twice, and who refused to have anything to do with anyone except Ted. He spoke like a lord, and Ted wouldn't tell me his name, but once I overheard Tester say to Burgess that 'it was a funny job for a barrister to be doing.' But that doesn't concern me. The man I've come to ask you to arrest is Pierce, who has robbed Ted and me."

Williamson concealed his surprise, and mentally ran through a list of the shady members of the Bar whose misdeeds had been reported to Scotland Yard. He was lingering on the name of the relative of a famous judge when the girl resumed her narrative.

"Despite our quarrels and his many adventures, Ted was always in love with me," she said, proudly.

"I never wanted for money, and I lived like a lady, and I was the happiest girl in England until I heard that my sweetheart had been arrested. The shock nearly killed me, but I was well enough to attend the trial at the Old Bailey, and a few minutes before Ted was sentenced for life a friend brought me a message from him that I needn't worry, as my lover had arranged for me to have five pounds a week for life.

"I couldn't think of money at the moment, but weeks afterwards I went to see Pierce, who was living in style in a big house in Shepherd's Bush, for he had been selected by Ted to look after my affairs. Pierce gave me a ten-pound note, and I went away; and the next time I called he gave me five; but on the third occasion he sent me away without a penny. I didn't know exactly what the arrangements between him and Ted were, and I decided to get into touch with Ted somehow.

"You're a policeman, and so I won't give away my method, but I heard from Ted that he'd given Pierce seven thousand pounds in cash to settle on me. Now you know why I'm here—Pierce, the dirty scoundrel, knowing that my sweetheart was boxed up for life, decided to swindle me, to rob a helpless girl, in order that he might live in luxury on the money earned by his unfortunate friend."

The ferocity with which she summed up the man who had robbed her amazed the detective. The expression in her dark eyes was demoniacal, and her whole body quivered as her hands clenched tightly.

"You wish me to have Pierce arrested for defrauding you?" he asked.

She sprang to her feet in her excitement.

"No," she cried, passionately. "I want you to arrest him for robbing the South Eastern Railway Company of twelve thousand pounds' worth of gold bars. You remember the case, don't you?"

Even the usually unperturbed Scotsman was excited now. At the moment he had least expected it the most baffling mystery of the century had been solved—if Fanny Kay was speaking the truth.

"The job was carried out by Ted, Pierce, Burgess and Tester," she said, dramatically. "They spent months planning it, and by bribing Burgess and Tester, who were in the service of the company, they carried it out successfully. Ted took most of the risks, and Pierce the least of them all. But so far Pierce has benefited most."

"They were melting the gold bars at the villa at Shepherd's Bush," said Williamson, thoughtfully, "that evening you called."

"That's it," she cried, eagerly. "I was supposed to know nothing about it, and Ted never hinted at it to me, although the papers were full of the robbery between London Bridge and Folkestone."

"I shouldn't be surprised if some of the gold bars are still hidden under the floor at the Shepherd's Bush villa," said Williamson, who had regained his composure. "I think you'll be amply avenged on Pierce," he added, with a grim smile. "Your lover can't be punished, because the law cannot award a bigger sentence."

"I don't care what happens so long as all Pierce's money is taken from him and he is sent to gaol," she exclaimed, with passion.

"We'll begin by driving to London Bridge and seeing the secretary of the company," the detective announced, and together they left the building.

No time was lost in capturing Pierce, Tester, and Burgess, and huge crowds thronged the neighbourhood of the police court when the three scoundrels were brought up before the magistrate. The theft of the bullion from the guard's van of the London-Folkestone train eight months previously had excited

the whole world, the robbery being considered the most daring and remarkable that had ever been effected. Every precaution, apparently, had been taken to ensure the safe arrival of the three boxes containing the bars of solid gold, and yet during the comparatively short journey the thieves had broken up the iron boxes, transferred the gold to handbags, and replaced the precious metal with a quantity of shot.

There had been all sorts of other difficulties to overcome. Special keys had to be obtained and copied, and a small army of police and detctives at London and Folkestone to be outwitted, but the gang had got clear away with solid gold to the value of £12,000, and the cleverest detectives in Great Britain had been left guessing as to its whereabouts.

The result of the trial was the conviction of the accused, all of whom went to join Agar in penal servitude. A charitable lady befriended Fanny Kay, and helped her to emigrate to America, where she married a wealthy shopkeeper, and left a son who became a member of Congress.

At his last interview with her in London, Williamson tried to obtain a more complete description of the aristocratic gentleman who had visited the gold stealers in the villa at Shepherd's Bush and Kilburn, but Fanny was unable to assist him further.

"They always locked me in the room upstairs when he called," she said, "and whenever I caught a glimpse of him I only saw his side face."

But it was not many months before Williamson solved this minor problem of the great bullion robbery, for the night that he received information that James Saward had been arrested for forgery he went at once to interview him in his cell, and, although the prisoner was dressed in corduroys and described himself as a labourer, Williamson recognised in the elderly crook

a barrister-at-law, the nephew of a judge, and a member of a well-known Yorkshire county family.

"By the way," he said to Saward, shortly before the latter was transferred to Newgate to stand his trial at the Old Bailey, "you were the man who bought certain gold bars from Agar and Pierce and sold them to a continental dealer. Fanny Kay saw you at the villa at Shepherd's Bush and Kilburn. She didn't know your name, but she could describe you."

"If it hadn't been for the treachery of that fool Pierce, you'd never have been wiser about that little coup," retorted Saward, who knew that he would not be charged with complicity in the case because he had a more serious accusation to face. "I advised them all to keep away from women while the detectives were bothering about the matter, but Agar would have Fanny Kay to see him. I'm glad, though, that Pierce got paid back."

A few hours later James Townsend Saward, commonly known as "Jim the Penman," was sentenced for life for a series of forgeries which had struck terror into the hearts of the leading bankers and merchants of London.

A detective naturally sees more of the ups and downs of life than any other man, and Williamson had some extraordinary experiences in this respect.

One may be recorded here. The famous sleuth was spending a well-earned holiday in Scotland, when he was invited to dine with an old friend who had prospered in business in Glasgow. When Williamson arrived at the house of his host he was informed in a proud whisper that amongst the guests were Mr. M'Gregor, M.P. for a Glasgow Division, and Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Mr. Humphrey Brown, M.P., a famous authority on railways and banking.

The Scotland Yard man at this period in his career did not often meet M.P.'s socially, and, being ambitious, he was delighted to make the acquaintance of two men who appeared destined to become Cabinet Ministers.

The Scottish M.P. proved to be a charming man, but Mr. Humphrey Brown was a pompous, self-satisfied person, who patronised Williamson excessively, never lost an opportunity to proffer good advice, and who, towards the close of the evening, delivered a sort of lecture on the sins of omission and commission of the British detective force, which the inspector did not find to his liking.

However, he was too discreet to give vent to his feelings, especially as Mr. Brown, M.P., was a friend of the Home Secretary, the Cabinet Minister who is responsible to the Government for the efficiency of the police throughout England.

If it had not been for Mr. M'Gregor, M.P., that evening would have been completely spoilt, for the middle-aged politician, who had recognised in Williamson a compatriot after his own heart, was particularly charming and lavish in his praise of Scotland Yard.

"I'd like to see you again, Mr. Williamson," he said, at parting. "I remain in Glasgow until the day after to-morrow, when I have to go south for the opening of Parliament."

"I'm sorry," answered the inspector, regretfully, "but my leave is up to-morrow night, and I must report myself at the Yard on Thursday morning. If ever I can be of any use to you command me."

The two men shook hands and parted, and the last Williamson saw of Mr. Brown, M.P., in Glasgow was a curt nod and a patronising smile. But he did not mind now that he was getting beyond the range of his glib tongue, and he had forgotten the existence of the

English M.P. inside twenty-four hours. He did not, however, forget Mr. M'Gregor, for he felt that by making the acquaintance of that gentleman he had secured a friend for life.

Williamson, as it happened, did not return to London immediately, for the next morning he received a telegram from headquarters requesting him to search Glasgow for a notorious burglar known in criminal circles as "Hoxton Joe" and in public records as Joseph Moss. The crook had burgled a mansion at Enfield, and as he was getting away with the booty had fired twice at the owner of the house, who had started in pursuit. "Hoxton Joe" was, therefore, wanted for attempted murder as well as burglary.

Now Williamson knew him by sight, and as "Hoxton Joe" had been tracked as far as Berwick, the police had come to the conclusion that he would try and lose himself in one of the big Scottish cities. Accordingly it had been decided that as Williamson was in Glasgow his services should be brought into requisition.

With the aid of the Chief of the Glasgow police, the detective was able to draw up a list of lodging-houses favoured by crooks on the run, and although it was a formidable list the man from Scotland Yard was in a position to reduce it to three, for the simple reason that he knew that "Hoxton Joe" would not condescend to patronise the cheap houses, being particular about his food and drink.

Luck favours the intelligent, just as it does the brave, and the very first lodging-house Williamson entered he saw "Hoxton Joe" sitting opposite a fire reading a daily paper. A significant bulge in the region of his hip pocket indicated that the rogue was armed and ready for emergencies, and although he turned sharply at the sound of footsteps Williamson

was on him before he could draw his weapon. The astounded crook was so overcome by finding the "bracelets" on that language failed him, and he could only stare at the famous detective.

"Rather a surprise, Joe," said Williamson, with a smile.

"Just my luck," growled the burglar. "You're the only 'tec at the Yard wot knows me by sight, and yet you're in Glasgow the day I arrive."

"I've been holiday-making," said the detective genially. "But come along. You and I must journey to London at once."

They travelled by the night train, and in the morning, when Williamson had handed his prisoner over to the police of the district where his crimes had been committed, he drove to Scotland Yard. To his astonishment, he found the commissioner in his office, for it was only half-past eight, and the chief usually did not arrive before half-past nine.

"I've an important task for you, Williamson," he said, briskly. "When I heard you were returning from Glasgow I arranged to be here when you arrived. There are two warrants to be executed, and they must be done tactfully and with due regard to the law. The men they concern are very powerful, possess influential friends who will spend a fortune on their behalf if necessary, and I don't want to give them a chance to attack us. Here are the warrants. Take a sergeant with you, but keep him in the background, if possible."

"Very well, sir," said Williamson, picking up the papers.

He went to his room to examine them, and a cry of amazement burst from him when he saw that the name on the first warrant was that of Humphrey Brown, M.P., and the charges were obtaining huge sums of money by fraud and issuing a false and

fraudulent balance-sheet in connection with a bank of which he was a director.

"Now that I know him I oughtn't to be surprised," he said, aloud, and glanced at the second document. "Good heavens!" he ejaculated, and the detective-sergeant who had come in in response to his summons was startled by the vehemence of his tone. But he had every reason for his excitement, because the second warrant authorised him to take into custody Mr. M'Gregor, M.P., the politician who had been so kind to him that very week.

It was with a heavy heart that Williamson walked to the West End residence of the Scottish M.P. with the intention of arresting him for conspiring with Humphrey Brown, and when the scared-looking manservant opened the door to him the detective saw at a glance a dozen signs of the ruin which had so suddenly come on a politician who had until recently been the envy of most of his acquaintances. However, he had to do his duty.

"Will you inform Mr. M'Gregor that——?" he began, when the footman interrupted him hurriedly.

"Mr. M'Gregor is not at home, sir," he said, nervously. "He left late last night for the continent."

Instantly Williamson became the alert, suspicious and tenacious representative of the law, who is determined to carry out his orders regardless of his own or any one else's feelings.

"I am Inspector Williamson," he said, sharply, "and I hold a warrant for Mr. M'Gregor's arrest. If I cannot see him, I must search the house."

The footman fell back limply, and Williamson and the sergeant proceeded to make a thorough search of the roomy and luxuriously furnished mansion, but they did not find its owner, and Williamson was spared the pain of witnessing the degradation of a

fellow Scot, who had only a little while previously been so charming to him.

When he had satisfied himself that the footman had not lied, he proceeded to call on Mr. Humphrey Brown, M.P. The latter was at home, and he confessed at once that he had been expecting such a visitor.

"I suppose I can obtain bail?" he asked, pretending not to recognise the officer he had met as a guest so recently.

"That is a matter for the magistrate," was Williamson's answer.

Some months later Humphrey Brown was sentenced to imprisonment for his share in the frauds of the defaulting bank, but Mr. M'Gregor was never brought to earthly justice. Overwhelmed by his disgrace, and keenly conscious of his misdeeds, the Scottish M.P., who had fled to the continent to avoid arrest, died, broken-hearted, at Boulogne a few weeks after Williamson had knocked on the door of his house in London.

It was, everything considered, the best thing that could have happened to a man of M'Gregor's temperament. The Scotsman had had his ideals, and had never been intended for a criminal or an adventurer, and so life would have been simply torture to a man of his type.

With Brown it was different. He was an adventurer, both in the mercantile and political worlds. He had bluffed his way into Parliament, and had tried to conceal his deficiencies by a display of hypocrisy, but although the bombastic bounder endeavoured to re-establish himself as a shipper after his release from gaol, he failed dismally, and he ended his days in a country cottage, a small weekly allowance from a relative keeping him supplied with the necessaries of life.

(3)

When Williamson was in his prime, London and the provinces were infected with a number of female criminals, who, owing to their novelty and daring, were reaping a rich harvest. The famous detective had many tussles with them, but in the person of Mary Simms, an ex-shop assistant, who successfully hoodwinked hundreds by her impersonations of "Lady Sylvia Cavendish," he met a foe worthy of his steel.

Mary Simms was a fragile beauty, with an appealing manner and a pair of wistful eyes, which worked havoc with numerous impressionable males, but for all her apparent timidity she was a bold and resourceful criminal from the moment she decided that shop life was too tiring and unremunerative.

It is a remarkable fact that the very week Mary left the shop in the West End of London she engaged a suite of rooms at a leading hotel within a mile of her former place of employment, and styled herself "Lady Sylvia Cavendish." She had very little money at the time, but the manager of the hotel did not ask for payment in advance from "her ladyship," who was accompanied by her maid, and for three months she succeeded in meeting her weekly accounts in London and the country.

She did not confine herself to the Metropolis, of course. When some time later the first complaint was lodged against her at Scotland Yard, Inspector Williamson realised that a remarkable female criminal had appeared on the scene.

Amongst Mary's innumerable exploits was the following example of her cleverness in extricating herself from a dangerous position. She had planned to obtain on credit some costly jewellery from a Bond Street firm, and to prepare the way she wrote to the

manager announcing that within a couple of hours of the receipt of her message " Lady Sylvia Cavendish " would call to make a selection.

She had to follow hard on the heels of her letter to prevent the firm making enquiries, and it was shortly after ten that Mary, dressed with an exquisite simplicity which heightened the effects of her beauty, entered the shop.

Almost simultaneously an assistant advanced towards her, and Mary was on the point of mentioning her assumed name when an elderly lady turned and glanced at her. To her horror the girl recognised a duchess famous for her philanthrophy, who had been and still was one of the principal customers of the shop where she had been employed for five years; and her embarrassment was increased by the knowledge that the old lady knew her well, for Mary had scores of times waited on her Grace, who had taken a particular fancy to her.

" Ah, Mary," she said, graciously. " How are you getting on ? "

" Very well, I thank your Grace," she answered, with an expression of humility. Out of the corner of her eye Mary noticed that the assistant who was to serve her had dropped his deferential manner, and was regarding her with an amused grin. She bit her lips in vexation, for it reminded her of her real social position.

" What are you doing now ? " said the duchess, genially. " The manager told me you had left to better yourself."

This was the critical moment. The duchess and the ex-shop-assistant were the only people in the shop besides the staff, and, having nothing better to do, the latter were listening to the brief colloquy. Mary felt that she was in a fix.

She had already informed the manager that " Lady

Sylvia Cavendish " was coming ; but the presence of the duchess meant that " her ladyship " must transform herself into a person of humbler rank. A false move would have meant disgrace and gaol for her, but she saved the situation by suddenly making the best of her awkward position.

" I am acting as maid to Lady Sylvia Cavendish," she answered, brightly. " Her ladyship was to have called here this morning, but she isn't well, and she sent me in her place."

" You prefer service to shop-life ? " said the duchess, in surprise. " Well, I've always known you as a steady, reliable and intelligent girl, and I'm sure you'll do well. Good-morning."

Four assistants hastened to escort her Grace to her carriage, and Mary Simms waited patiently until the excitement had died down and someone was willing to attend to her.

It is certain that the jeweller would not have let her take anything away on credit if it had not been for that unsolicited testimonial given by the leader of society, but when Mary chose a diamond necklace worth eleven hundred guineas and two diamond rings (to bring the amount up to two thousand guineas she said she would submit a fascinating bracelet and a necklet to her mistress) he willingly gave her permission to carry them off with her.

Mary did not return to the hotel, and with her confederate—the girl who acted as her maid for a salary which made it worth her while to keep her counsel—she went to Ostend, her luggage having been sent on in advance.

She was not arrested for this daring robbery, although the victimised jeweller offered a reward of £500 for her arrest, and the police made every effort to capture her, but it was impossible for the Belgian police to connect the young lady in widow's weeds

who lived so quietly in the Ostend boarding-house with the daring London thief. It was only by chance three years later that it was ascertained where she had taken refuge.

When Inspector Williamson read of this exploit he smiled grimly to himself. Mary Simms was clever, but he knew that one day she would over-reach herself, and that then there would be an end to her career.

His first difficulty was to get a description of her as she appeared now. He was in possession of a photograph of her at least six years old, but he guessed that it flattered her, because the life she had led was bound to have left its mark on her. The next difficulty was to find where she was operating at that moment.

Her latest exploit had been to invite a wealthy Edinburgh merchant to dine with her at a hotel, and wheedle a cheque for £50 out of him—" for charity "—as she put it. But that cheque was raised to £500 when the bank cashed it, and the merchant was feeling rather sick about it. Mary, of course, had vanished from Scotland, and rumours that she had been seen in Liverpool, Newcastle, Birmingham, and Manchester were so numerous that it was obvious that it was not worth investigating them.

The cool-headed Scotsman started on his quest by going to Edinburgh and interviewing the gentle-man whose cheque had been forged. Having ex-tracted from him a more or less flattering description of Mary Simms, he proceeded from town to town until he came up with her at a hotel in Leeds, where she was staying in the name of " Miss Mary Grant."

Williamson caught a glimpse of her passing up the stairs, and his first impulse was to arrest her there and then, but he recollected that she was suspected of carrying about with her a phial containing poison,

with the intention of committing suicide if she was in danger of capture.

Now it is paramount in a detective to take his prisoner alive, and Williamson, confident of his own ability to outwit Mary Simms, stayed his hands, and retired to lunch by himself at a table near the window.

After lunch he sent for the manager.

"I want a room for the night," he said, briskly. "My name is Lord Devon. As I have very little luggage, here is a five-pound note deposit."

The manager assured his lordship there was no necessity for a payment in advance, but Williamson insisted. He knew that his rank would make him the "star" attraction at the hotel, and he had assumed it because he intended it should act as the bait to draw Mary Simms to him.

Williamson was soon in a position to realise that his tactics would be successful. During lunch she eyed him with flattering persistence, and in the lounge afterwards she dropped her handkerchief at his feet, and when he picked it up, turned and thanked him prettily.

A moment later they were sitting in adjoining armchairs, and "Miss Grant" was talking in subdued tones of her titled Scottish relatives, and of the great houses she was going to stay at in the autumn. Williamson was not communicative, but his reserve was regarded as aristocratic aloofness by the impostor, who, having got the impression that "Lord Devon" was a bachelor, had resolved to lure him into marriage.

It was a bold and ambitious plan, but Mary Simms tackled it fearlessly, and, if "his lordship's" responses to her attempts at flirtation were hardly encouraging, she was too sure of herself to abandon hope. Other men had succumbed to her fascinating

ways, and she was determined that " Lord Devon " should be no exception.

But she had an unpleasant shock when, on consulting the " Peerage " she always carried about with her, and which she was in the habit of studying diligently so that she might know the people she was supposed to be related to whenever she assumed the rank of a peeress or a nobleman's daughter, she discovered that her latest acquaintance, " Lord Devon," was a crook like herself. Then the small mouth hardened, and the dark eyes glittered.

" I'll make him pay," she muttered, and the next moment laughed. Had not the manager told her of a large pocket-book stuffed with bank-notes he had seen in " his lordship's " hand ?

" I'll denounce him unless he pays me not to," she said to her maid, and the next morning after breakfast she boldly confronted him.

Williamson pretended to be frightened, and when she hinted that a visit to a local jeweller's would enable him to purchase her silence at the cost of a few hundred pounds' worth of jewellery, he consented. Fifty yards away from the hotel she suddenly clutched him by the arm.

" I see a detective," she whispered, excitedly. " He's approaching you. Slip down a side street. I'll not give you away."

Her companion smiled to show his lack of fear.

" There's no need to run away," he said, quietly. " That gentleman is a friend of mine. Allow me to introduce him."

When the detective came up to them it seemed to Mary Simms that another man sprang out of the earth, for she was seized by two men, who, to her amazement, treated " Lord Devon " with great deference.

" Who is he ? " she gasped, as she was being led away. " I—I thought you were going to arrest him."

The officers burst out laughing

"Why, that's Inspector Williamson of Scotland Yard," one of them exclaimed, his colleague being on the verge of hysterics at the thought of the famous detective being in danger of arrest.

Mary Simms did not speak again, and when she was brought up before the magistrates her maid and confederate was in the dock with her, and "Lord Devon" sat beside a box containing a quantity of jewellery—all stolen or obtained by false pretences—and a little later exhibited the bottle containing the prussic acid which Mary had carried about with her with a view to defeating the ends of justice.

Thanks to Williamson's thorough methods and his refusal to effect merely an arrest, the case against the imposter was fully proved, and in addition six thousand pounds' worth of goods obtained by her was recovered and restored to their lawful owners.

"I'll be revenged on you yet!" she shouted, when at the assizes the judge sentenced her to ten years' penal servitude.

The inspector ignored the threat, but it was not long before an attempt was made to murder him. One dark night as he was walking near the Embankment a man whose face was muffled fired twice at him, and then disappeared into the darkness.

He had quite forgotten Mary Simms, when, years after her conviction, he was informed that she had been released, and that a charitable society had arranged to send her to a relative in New York. His informant added that the ex-convict appeared to have repented her misdeeds, and was anxious to go straight in future.

"In that case I'll see her and wish her luck," said Williamson, with a warmth he did not often reveal, and that week Mary Simms called at Scotland Yard and had a long chat with him. Penal servitude had

aged her, and there was little trace of her beauty, and Williamson experienced a pang of sympathy for the woman who had to face the world without money, friends, good looks, or character.

"But I'll make good yet, Mr. Williamson," she said, and the detective knew that she had the day he heard that Mary Simms had died while nursing some slum children in New York. Three years as a slum worker in the service of a mission to the poor had weakened her constitution, and she succumbed to a chill. And the two hundred persons who attended her funeral never knew that their heroine had once been a notorious adventurer!

Williamson had scarcely finished with the case, when he was despatched to the East End of London to investigate a complaint made by a woman of the name of Spear, who had been to Scotland Yard to ask that she might be helped to find her brother, a dealer in secondhand furniture.

Her story was that Reynolds—Mrs. Spear's brother—had been always accessible to her until the last six months, but for that period her numerous letters to him had not been answered, and when she had called at his shop in Whitechapel she had learnt that he had left without giving anyone in the neighbourhood any clue to his present address.

"I am sure he has been kidnapped or murdered," she said to Williamson.

It was late on a Saturday afternoon when the detective entered the public-house near the dilapidated shop once occupied by Jack Reynolds, and as he was wearing old clothes and looked what he claimed to be—a furniture polisher out of a job—he soon had the freedom of the premises, and was on confidential terms with the customers. Most of them, it appeared, had known Jack Reynolds.

"What surprised me," said an elderly painter,

flattered by Williamson's interest in him and " oiled " by the refreshing liquid the Scotsman paid for, " was his sudden quarrel with Bill Sturdy. Him and Bill was to go into partnership and take bigger premises in the Commercial Road, but it never came to anything beyond talk. The last time I saw them together Bill and Jack were arguing in whispers, and the next day the shop was empty, and the " To Let " bills were up."

" Where is this Bill Sturdy to be found ? " asked Williamson, at the right moment. He had waited for it for twenty minutes.

" He generally spends Saturday night at the Pavilion Music Hall in Shoreditch," was the reply. " I goes there myself with the missus as a little recreation from the labours of the week."

The following Saturday night Williamson who had been hovering near the entrance to the music hall for nearly half-an-hour, walked in as soon as he caught sight of the painter. Recognition was mutual, and when Mrs. Painter had taken her seat the detective gently guided his friend towards the bar, and kept him there until a sudden exclamation, " Hello, Bill ! " convinced him that he had found Jack Reynolds' mysterious friend. But Bill was in a lofty mood that night, and he hardly took any notice of the painter. However, Williamson kept an eye on Bill all through the performance, and when he left the hall he followed him.

To his surprise the fellow led him to a neat little house in Dalston, and the glimpse he had of the hall was sufficient to prove that it was expensively furnished. He was convinced on this point when the next morning he called on Mr. Sturdy to ask him for the address of his friend Jack Reynolds.

" He's dead and buried," was the surprising rejoinder.

" Where was he buried ? " The question seemed to startle Mr. Sturdy, but he answered it quickly enough. The cemetery was in West Ham, and full confirmation of Mr. Sturdy's statement could be obtained from the authorities there.

" Thank you," said Williamson, taking up his hat. " It's merely to satisfy Mrs Spear that I inquired."

He passed out of the house, satisfied that he had found the commonplace solution to the Chelmsford woman's story, but he thought differently when a fellow-inspector came to him in his room at the Yard that night.

" By the way, Williamson," he said, lazily, " the chief wishes me to tell you to do nothing more about that Reynolds' inquiry. Mrs. Spear has written to say that she saw her brother in Chelmsford yesterday, and he is quite all right. The old story of jumping to conclusions. How queer women are."

Williamson glanced at him, but did not speak. The case had taken an important turn, a turn which seemed to point in the direction of tragedy.

That afternoon the detective called at Mrs. Spear's house, and, having introduced himself, he requested her to repeat in his presence the message she had written to his chief.

" Its quite true," she said, briskly and happily. " Jack is all right. He was rather annoyed I'd inquired about him, and I had to promise him that if he disappeared again I wouldn't go to the police."

" Where did you last see Mr. Reynolds ? " said Williamson, who was studying Mrs. Spear as she had never been studied before. He was not quite sure of the little rosy-cheeked woman with the friendly manner, although to all outward appearances she was straight and honest ; but Williamson could not forget Bill Sturdy's repeated statement that Jack Reynolds was dead and buried.

"It's on your account I came down here," he explained. "I want to be sure that you are satisfied your brother is perfectly well."

They shook hands, and parted, and at midnight Williamson, who never rested while there was a problem to be tackled, was knocking on the door of Mr. Bill Sturdy's house in Dalston.

Fortunately for him, there were plenty of pedestrians about that night, and when, after a lengthy wait and no response, the detective was thinking of abandoning the attempt to see Mr. Sturdy, a stoutish, middle-aged man strolled up, and seeing Williamson, informed him that Mr. Sturdy had left.

Williamson returned home, certain that Bill Sturdy was a rogue, and that he had committed a very serious crime, and the next morning, before he went to the cemetery where "Jack Reynolds" had been buried, he gave instructions that search should be made for Sturdy and also for Reynolds.

He experienced no difficulty at the cemetery in getting the superintendent to talk about "Jack Reynolds." The burial had been so recent that all the details were fresh in the officials' mind, and he gave Williamson the full history of the case as it was related to him.

So far there was no reason to suspect Bill Sturdy—except Bill's flight—and the Scotland Yard detective had almost come to the conclusion that Bill had vanished because of a conscience rendered guilty by a crime which had no connection with the Reynolds affair, when he thought he would interview the doctor whose name was on the certificate.

"You're the fifth caller I've had in connection with this business," the medical man said, testily. "Four insurance officials and——"

"Ah!" Williamson started to his feet. "Thank you, doctor," he said, with a slight smile. "I'll

worry the insurance people, not you, if you'll be so kind as to give me the name of the company."

The agent had a commonplace story to tell. The man known as Jack Reynolds had been insured with his company by another agent, but, as he had removed just before his death to West Ham, the local man had been sent to make inquiries because the company had been called upon to pay five hundred pounds to the next-of-kin to the deceased, who had paid only one premium before dying of pneumonia. The agent mentioned that his employers had been more than usually surprised, because Jack Reynolds had only six months earlier been certified by a doctor to be perfectly sound.

" Who was the next-of-kin ? " asked Williamson.

He took down the agent's answer before returning to the doctor and obtaining from him a positive assurance that " Jack Reynolds " had died a natural death.

" He was not murdered," said the doctor, confidently. " He succumbed to pneumonia acting on a very weak heart."

Williamson was in a fog, though he was beginning to see a little light ahead, and the little became a lot when one of his subordinates traced Jack Reynolds to a house in Northwood. Reynolds was not arrested for a week, but when he was taken into custody Williamson had his case against him and Bill Sturdy complete. They had not committed murder, but they had perpetrated a very clever fraud on the insurance company.

Bill Sturdy, the ingenious, invented it, and Reynolds, his friend, willingly entered into partnership with him. First Reynolds went to an insurance company, and insured his life for five hundred pounds, Bill acting as reference. Then the two rogues had found a pauper of Reynolds's age and height, a pauper

who was in a very bad state of health, and who agreed for a weekly allowance to call himself Jack Reynolds, and when their plans were matured they informed the local agent of the state of " Mr. Reynolds's " health, but before the latter could do anything he heard that the ailing man had passed away.

It had, of course, been easy to obtain a certificate from a doctor stating that Jack Reynolds had died of pneumonia, and on the strength of the certificate Reynolds and Bill Sturdy secured the five hundred pounds from the company, the pauper having made a will in their favour. Williamson traced the whole conspiracy from beginning to end, and he searched Sturdy's late residence, and found hidden under the cistern in the loft certain papers which proved that, encouraged by their initial success, they intended to launch out on a much larger scale. And they would have if Mrs. Spear had not written to Scotland Yard to help her to search for her lost brother.

(4)

During his forty years' active service at Scotland Yard Williamson came into personal contact with most of the celebrated criminals of the later half of the last century. He was the man who had to decide on the plans for the capture of Muller, the murderer of Mr. Briggs, on the North London Railway, and it was Williamson who many years afterwards started the hunt for Dr. Lamson, the poisoner.

That hunt was so carefully organised that the wretched criminal preferred to surrender himself at the Yard. It was a dramatic moment when a pale-faced man with a lady on his arm asked to see an inspector. Butcher was sent for, and in his presence Lamson admitted his identity.

" You must wait here until I consult my chief,"

said Inspector Butcher, and went to Williamson's room. When he returned it was to inform his visitor that he must consider himself a prisoner.

Everybody knows the story of Lamson's murder of his wife's brother, Percy John, but little has been written concerning the extraordinary attentions the doctor received from certain more or less hysterical ladies after his conviction. Williamson often referred to it in sarcastic terms.

The Scotsman was one of the most generous of men, and, although his income was never large, he assisted out of his pockets hundreds of ex-convicts and their families. Occasionally a rich friend entrusted him with money for this purpose—and it was always well spent—but generally Williamson found his work hampered because of lack of funds.

He knew that many men and women become criminals through force of circumstances, and that after their first conviction they only require a little help to keep them straight for the rest of their lives. This help the detective did his best to provide, and as he was one of the shrewdest of men, he seldom made a mistake. It annoyed him, therefore, to see baskets of costly flowers, hothouse grapes, and other luxuries showered on a very cowardly murderer, when less culpable culprits were left to starvation the instant they were released.

He was pestered personally by many females for permission to interview Lamson in his cell, and his assurance that he had not the power to oblige was disbelieved. It was, of course, with a certain amount of sympathy that he regarded the efforts of the condemned man's friends to save him from the scaffold.

That was only natural, and Williamson offered no opposition to it. The decision lay with the Home Secretary, but, despite innumerable certificates from

American experts in insanity, Dr. Lamson was executed, the Government maintaining that if they allowed such a deliberate and cold-blooded murderer to escape the dread penalty they would be unable to hang anyone convicted of the capital offence.

The most pathetic figure in that horrible tragedy was undoubledly the wife of Dr. Lamson, a gentle, tender-hearted and affectionate woman, who stood by her husband from beginning to end. Williamson was able to be of considerable assistance to her when later she changed her name, and opened a small boarding-house at a popular seaside resort, and it was a source of satisfaction to him that they always remained good friends. But then Williamson never made an enemy if he could help it.

In the Muller case he was made the object of attack by the friends of the German murderer. Excited Teutons, who pretended to believe that Muller was innocent, invaded Scotland Yard, gesticulating wildly, and, when turned out, followed Williamson home, behaving in characteristic German fashion. They started by imploring, changed to threatening, and ended up by whining.

Vainly did the detective assure them that he had nothing more to do with the case, and that a police officer dare not usurp the function of government. The Germans, imagining that Williamson had the powers of one of their own chiefs of police, sat on his doorstep all night, and the day after Muller's execution showered abusive letters on him—unsigned, of course. But they might as well have made faces at the Houses of Parliament for all the real harm they did the Scotsman.

It was about the time of the Muller sensation that Williamson had to tackle a bad case of forgery in the West End. The son of a clergyman named Beaumont had started in business as an estate agent, and, having

obtained the title deeds of a valuable property, had forged the transfer of them to himself, and had raised six thousand pounds on them from a moneylender.

It was a daring and barefaced fraud, and Williamson was instructed to leave no stone unturned in his efforts to capture the fugitive from justice, for the criminal had fled from England to the continent.

The detective was given his choice in the important matter of selecting a subordinate to accompany him, and after considerable thought he decided to take a clever young detective-sergeant of the name of Druscovitch, a Russian Pole, who had already displayed gifts above the average.

Williamson was fond of Druscovitch, who was a splendid linguist, and who possessed unbounded courage, and when they set out for Paris the Scotsman was confident that they would succeed in their quest, difficult though it was.

They soon got a clue to the whereabouts of the fugitive, Williamson having provided himself with a specimen of the fellow's handwriting, and thus being able to compare it with signatures in the registers of the hotels which foreigners patronised in Paris.

At the fifth call they found an entry corresponding with Beaumont's handwriting—he had stayed there in the name of Ormonde—and following up this important clue, they worked through a maze composed of cabs, railways, hotels, farmhouses, and nights in open fields, until they came to Geneva, fortified by the knowledge that Beaumont had rented a furnished villa overlooking the lake.

He was now posing as an aristocratic Frenchman, but as his French was more redolent of London than Paris, he merely attracted attention to himself, and the detective soon found where he was living.

They arrived outside the villa close on midnight, and when their repeated knockings brought no

response they smashed a window at the back and entered like burglars. There was an uncanny and weird silence prevailing, and a queer smell suggestive of dead things, as slowly and cautiously the two men from Scotland Yard made their way through the four rooms on the ground floor and up the stairs. Here they paused to listen again before entering the first room on their left.

Williamson's lantern was a tiny one, and the room was very large, and so he felt for the gas bracket and lighted up before attempting to survey the apartment, but the instant the light was turned on Druscovitch uttered a cry of astonishment that prepared Williamson for the spectacle of Beaumont lying dead on the floor. He was fully dressed, and beside him was a revolver.

" Suicide," said Druscovitch, curtly.

The Scotsman stared at the corpse.

" From all accounts he wasn't the chap to take his own life," he said, thoughtfully. " Still, one never knows."

He glanced around the room, which was luxuriously furnished as a sort of combined sitting-room and library. Then he knelt down beside the body of the fugitive, which was fully clothed. A few feet away a hat lay as though it had fallen from the head of the murdered man, and had rolled up against the bookcase.

" Give me the hat," said Williamson, sharply, and when he was obeyed he clapped it on the head of the corpse.

" I thought so," he said, rising. " This hat never belonged to Beaumont. He was murdered, and in the excitement and confusion one of the murderers—there must have been more than one, for a single man would not have entered with the object of committing such a crime—took his victim's hat instead

of his own. This is a case for the local police, so you had better go and bring them, Druscovitch, while I remain on guard."

It was not a very pleasant vigil, for it took the detective nearly an hour to find the local chief of police and bring him and half-a-dozen of his men to the lonely villa. When the head of the Geneva police heard the name of the famous Scotland Yard man he was profuse in his compliments.

"I think you had better look for the murderers," said Williamson, drily. "Every moment is of importance."

"We will catch them," said the chief, importantly. "We do not let murderers escape in Geneva."

The next morning Williamson and Druscovitch returned to London, and both were surprised a fortnight later when they heard that two men had been arrested in Berne for the murder of Beaumont, the English forger. When they were brought to trial they were convicted, and it was undoubtedly the clue of the hat which did not fit that secured the verdict against them. The evidence, with the exception of the hat, which was proved to have been the property of one of the accused, was weak, but the jury brought in a verdict of guilty, and shortly before their execution the convicts confessed.

Their story was that one of them had been employed by Beaumont to hire a house for him, and having guessed that the Englishman—who made such a poor imitation Frenchman—had a considerable sum of money on him—which they suspected he had stolen, because he was so anxious to conceal himself—he told his confederate, and between them they agreed to murder and rob Beaumont.

Their plan was duly carried out, and if the wrong hat had not been taken by the chief conspirator they might never have been caught and punished.

One result of that visit to the continent was the promotion of Druscovitch. Brought into closer association with the detective-sergeant, Williamson discovered for himself the brilliant qualities of the Pole, and on his return warmly recommended him to the Commissioner. Druscovitch was very grateful to the Scotsman, and thanked him with tears in his eyes.

"You'll be head of us all, sir," he said to him, sincerely, "before we are much older."

"If I have officers like you to serve me faithfully I shall not fear any responsibilty," answered Williamson, with a smile.

"You can rely on me, sir," said the newly-made inspector.

For several years Druscovitch was one of Scotland Yard's most efficient officers, and during those years Williamson soon made a unique position for himself, and had only one superior, the commissioner himself. Apart from him, the Scotsman reigned supreme at the Yard. He chose the men to go out on special jobs, and it was Williamson who controlled the promotion from the ranks.

By sheer personality and cleverness he achieved his commanding position. He loved his work, and set himself out to select only the right men. He was very fond of Druscovitch, and a great admirer of his talents. The Pole was a master of the art of disguise, and his knowledge of languages was profound.

Once he spent a day disguised as a dock labourer in the East End of London, and when he had run his quarry to earth he returned to headquarters, changed into evening clothes, and attended a reception given by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at the Foreign Office. It had been notified anonymously to the Yard that an attempt might be made on the life of the Prime Minister, who was the guest of

honour, and Druscovitch was despatched to guard him.

He was not ten minutes in the salon of the Foreign Office when he recognised an old acquaintance who was notorious in Russia for his thefts, and who now posed as a political refugee. The fellow had actually entered the Foreign Office in the guise of a member of the Russian Embassy! The detective addressed a few words in Russian to him, and then the two men left together.

"If you are not out of England in twenty-four hours I'll have you sent to gaol," said Druscovitch, coolly. The hint was sufficient, and the next day the anarchist was in Paris.

Williamson and Druscovitch worked together on many big cases, and very seldom did they fail to attain their object. The Scotman's clearness of vision and rare faculty for smelling out a clue at once was reinforced by the Pole's energy and thoroughness. The two men did not know what fear was. Thus when, in an East End lodging-house for seamen, they were attacked by nine villainous aliens, who wished to prevent the arrest of an ex sea captain for murder, the Scotland Yard men defended themselves with chairs, and drove the cowardly skunks into the street, where they scattered and fled, as if for their lives.

The murderer was taken, and eventually convicted at the Old Bailey for cutting his wife's throat because she had objected to his drinking habits. The case was not remarkable, except for the fact that the local police had at first arrested a cousin of the woman, with whom she had been on very bad terms, and whose blouse was bloodstained when taken into custody.

The inspector who charged her was greatly impressed by her refusal to explain the bloodstains, and

regarded them as conclusive proof of her guilt. When, however, Williamson went down to investigate he saw in her obstinacy an indication of her innocence.

"The woman is too delicate to have inflicted such a deep wound," he said, to the inspector at the station, "I'll make enquiries about her while I'm looking for Mrs. Vince's husband."

At the time it was thought that Captain Vince was at sea, but Williamson discovered that he had been dismissed from his last ship a week before the tragedy in the little house in Millwall, and when he ascertained that the reason why Mrs. Vince's cousin would not talk was that her husband and herself carried on along with their legitimate business the side-line of receivers of stolen goods, he had a clue which enabled him to determine the cause of the bloodstains.

"She was wrapping up a quantity of stolen knives which she had just bought from a dishonest shop assistant," he explained to the local inspector, "when she accidentally cut her right hand, and involuntarily wiped it on her blouse. Release her at once. Inspector Druscovitch and I have traced Vince to a lodging-house near the docks, and we're going there to-night to arrest him. Have a few plain-clothes men stationed outside, but not until after our arrival. There are many ratholes in the East End for a murderer like Vince to hide in."

Williamson was, as usual, right, and the prosecution of the receivers revealed to the public the reason why the cousin of the murderer had done nothing beyond protesting her innocence of the murder of Mrs. Vince when charged with that crime.

It would be easy to quote details of a score of criminal investigations on which Williamson and Druscovitch worked together, but they would occupy too much space, and it must suffice to say that when the Scotsman became head of the detective department

he made his colleague a chief inspector; and when Benson and his gang of rogues entered upon a series of daring swindles, and Scotland Yard was appealed to, Williamson deputed Druscovitch to see what he could do to bring to justice the crooks.

Benson and his associates succeeded in defrauding the public out of thousands of pounds before he and his principal lieutenants were captured, but their arrest was due to the Scotsman's individual work, for finding that Druscovitch, Meiklejohn, and Palmer, the three officers who had been assigned the task of running the swindlers to earth, were making no progress, Williamson took the matter in hand himself, and eventually three of the conspirators were arrested in Holland as the result of a telegram sent to the head of the police at Rotterdam. When a reply was received that the men were at the disposal of Scotland Yard Williamson sent for Druscovitch.

"Here are the necessary papers," he said. "They will authorise you to receive Benson and his friends and bring them back to London."

The detective took the documents and withdrew, and it was not until some time later that Williamson knew the irony of the position so far as Druscovitch had been concerned. When he did realise it the shock was so great that it was feared by the great detective's friends that he would never recover from it.

It was Williamson's habit to make up his mind about a man and ever afterwards trust or distrust him. Druscovitch, the clever linguist and astute detective, had early impressed him with his abilities and character, and for years Williamson regarded him as about the best of his subordinates. A little below him in the estimtaion of their chief was Meiklejohn and Palmer, the former of whom was a Scotsman also.

Williamson trusted the Pole implicitly, and gave

him his confidence, and he believed that when the time came when he would have to retire Druscovitch would succeed to his onerous post.

Benson and his fellow criminals had been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, and Williamson was beginning to forget the trouble and worry their capture had entailed when he was informed that a message had been received from the Governor of Dartmoor Prison to the effect that, according to a statement by Benson, four inspectors at Scotland Yard had conspired with the gang to defeat the ends of justice.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Williamson warmly. "It's an infamous lie."

"I thought so, too, when I read the names of the men they accuse," observed the commissioner; "But Benson swears he paid two hundred pounds to Druscovitch, Meiklejohn, Palmer and Clarke, in return for which they kept him and his gang acquainted with our plans to arrest them."

"Can it possibly be true?" cried the Scotsman, whose emotion was so great that he might have been one of the accused. "I can't credit it. Druscovitch is one of our best men, and the others are only barely inferior to him. It can't be true, but the scandal that the accusation will create will deal a heavy blow to the Yard."

The Commissioner shook his head.

"Read these papers," he said, gravely. "They seem to prove a very strong case against the inspectors I have mentioned. Benson and the brothers Kurr were most emphatic on the subject, according to the report of the prison governor. I am afraid there'll have to be a public trial."

The most imaginative of fiction-writers could never have conceived the scenes which took place in Scotland Yard the day four detectives of high rank were arrested in their own offices.

Druscovitch, Chief Inspector, and in the running for the highest post of all, was sitting at his desk drawing up his report of an investigation into a fraud on a London bank, when the door opened, and two officers who were accustomed to acting under him entered. They looked anxious and nervous, but the Pole smiled pleasantly at them as they advanced towards him.

"I am sorry," said the senior of the detectives, "my duty is to arrest you for conspiring with Harry Benson."

For a moment there was a tense silence. Then Druscovitch staggered to his feet, pale to the lips.

"My God!" he cried, dramatically. "I—I—God help me."

He did not utter another word, and when he was lodged in a cell three of his former colleagues occupied adjoining ones.

The arrest of the four detectives—all famous men—created an unparalleled sensation. The country seethed with excitement, and at the hearing before the magistrates the court was besieged by a mob excited to the verge of frenzy.

Eminent counsel were engaged on behalf of the accused, and at the trial at the Old Bailey—which occupied a month—a series of amazing stories were told, and a crowded court heard how Benson had skilfully bribed the accused, and how they had from time to time sent him warning of the plans of Scotland Yard.

Benson and the brothers Kurr gave evidence against the accused, and, although their statements were not accepted when they were not corroborated, the jury decided that Druscovitch, Palmer and Meiklejohn were guilty and Clarke innocent.

The three officers, who had brought hundreds of criminals to the bar of justice, now stood up to receive sentence themselves, and in the moment of their

humiliation and disgrace they broke down completely. All three of them made heartrending appeals for mercy, but the sentence in each case was two years' hard labour, although Williamson had testified that apart from the Benson case the detectives had rendered devoted service to the state for thirty years.

It was a long time before Williamson recovered from the blow the affair inflicted on him. He had trusted the three convicted detectives as honourable men, and he had always done his best for them, and their betrayal of his confidence and the interests of the service nearly broke his heart.

It was thought that he would retire, but he decided to stay on and help to reorganise the Yard, and in the succeding years he worked hard to achieve this, and amongst those he trained were John Kane, John Sexton, Frank Froest, and other famous detectives.

There was plenty of work for the Scotsman, for big crimes have unfortunately never been rare, and he was kept busy to the day the doctor told him that he must retire.

"I can't live away from the Yard," he said, mournfully, "Retirement will mean death." His words were prophetic, for he was dead a few weeks later. That was in 1889 and he was only fifty-eight.

King Edward sent a special message of condolence, for he had been a great friend of the detective, and the Home Secretary, in a public tribute, declared that A. F. Williamson had been for forty years the greatest detective in the world.

A memorial was erected to him, but the finest tribute to his powers and the most eloquent reminder of his deeds is the Scotland Yard of to-day. Williamson practically brought it into being, and made it into the most efficient of detective organisations, and as long as Scotland Yard exists, "Dolly" Williamson's name must be associated with it as no other man's name can be.

CHAPTER XI

James Monro—Policeman and Missionary

Right to the end of his long life James Monro's proudest boast was that he was "born, bred and educated in Edinburgh." He was a devoted son of Scotland, and wherever he went he kept the name and fame of his native country well to the forefront.

Gifted with a strong personality—he was a strict disciplinarian and the soul of generosity—he stood no nonsense from anyone, and yet his tenure of office as head of Scotland Yard was chiefly remarkable for the affection he inspired in his staff.

Monro was the son of an Edinburgh solicitor, and at the age of eighteen he passed into the Indian Civil Service. He quickly made his mark, and by solving a couple of murder mysteries drew attention to the fact that he possessed an extraordinary memory for faces and details, and that he had one of the clearest and most efficient brains in the service. More police work was given him, and he was so successful that the mention of the name of Monro was very soon a source of terror to a native criminal. But it was not until his appointment as Inspector-General of Police in India that he had the chance to prove the full extent of his remarkable gifts.

He had a herculean job, for there were thousands of criminals to tackle, and the number of the police was limited. But Monro quickly reorganised his forces, and his personal intervention in the gravest cases resulted in the discomfiture of several gangs of murderers. One problem he solved in his own inimitable manner, and the story of it is still told in India by British and native detectives.

A wealthy merchant suddenly disappeared, together with ten thousand pounds in gold, silver and notes. The old man was known to be suspicious of banks, and to keep his wealth on his premises, and it could have caused no surprise when it was realised that his natural enemies, the crooks, had succeeded in capturing both him and his savings.

But there were plenty of clues, and they led to a certain village some forty miles from the merchant's house. As quickly as possible, James Monro was on the scene, the inspector-general having determined to punish the kidnappers of the old man, so that the natives would come to believe as an article of faith that the British Government was equal to protecting all its subjects.

Monro casually inspected the inhabitants of the village, and had a lengthy chat with a young woman whom he had only once seen previously, but, as on that occasion she had been in the company of a man suspected of two murders, he decided that she was worth his special attention, for it occurred to him that her presence in the place where it was rumoured that the merchant had been murdered was not a mere coincidence.

Meanwhile his subordinates were working hard, and in the evening they were able to produce three natives who swore that they had seen the merchant near the village with two men, who were evidently trying to prevent anyone identifying him. The detectives tracked them to an ancient temple which had long since fallen into decay, and when the next morning Monro went to inspect it his knowledge of the country enabled him to state positively that the merchant had been murdered and buried there.

An attempt had been made to conceal the tracks of the murderers, and to make it appear that the ground had not been disturbed, but the Scotsman was certain

a grave had been dug in the vicinity. When one of his men brought him word that the young woman he had interviewed the previous day was preparing to decamp, Monro ordered her to be shadowed, and interpreted her panic to mean that he was on the right track.

"She will lead you straight to her lover, who is probably mixed up in this affair," he said, confidently. "When she does, arrest them both and bring them back. I will wait for you."

Thirty-six hours later the woman and her lover, a notorious criminal, were in Monro's presence, and the terrified man was protesting that he had not touched a hair of the merchant's head.

"But a grave has been dug in the temple ruins," said the Inspector-General of Police, "and I have a witness who saw you walk to the ruins six nights ago."

On hearing this the fellow confessed that he had assisted a relative to bury a friend who had died suddenly in circumstances which might have got them into trouble if they had not got the corpse out of the way.

"Point out his grave," ordered Monro, who felt that he had solved the mystery, and who congratulated himself on his good fortune. Hitherto he had not attempted to dig, because the ruins covered a large area, and he wished to avoid unnecessary labour. The brother of the murdered man—who had been brought along for identification purposes—was equally sure that he was about to gaze on his relative's corpse, and when the native had pointed out the spot, and the diggers began their work the brother began to lament loudly.

Two feet below the surface the diggers came upon a human body, and when the earth was cleared from its face Monro was startled to see that it bore no resemblance whatever to the old merchant.

"There, my lord, that is the man we buried," said the native, humbly. "Your doctors will tell you that he died of a disease."

It was a terrific shock to Monro, who had counted on finding the corpse of the old merchant, and it was with difficulty that he controlled his voice as he ordered the diggers to stand by until further orders. Then for nearly an hour he paced up and down, deep in thought.

James Monro had now been in India nearly a quarter of a century, and during that time he had never ceased to study the native mind. In his early days the natives had often outwitted him because of his lack of knowledge of their temperaments, but it was a different man now who struggled with the problem.

He reminded himself that all the clues had pointed to this particular village, and that since arriving in it his suspicions had been confirmed, and yet it seemed as if he had blundered after all! He recalled stories of the tricks practised by Indian criminals, and he knew that for trickery the oriental mind is unsurpassed.

Could it be possible that he was being fooled? He glanced sharply at the native, but his face was as expressionless as a stone. Then Monro turned to the diggers. "Proceed with your work," he said, sharply. As if in a stupor the criminal watched the others dig deeper into the earth, and the shout of amazement that heralded the announcement of the finding of another body was not participated in by the chief.

"I expected it," he said, quietly, when the body of the old merchant was reverently brought to the surface.

It was an old trick, and one which had been practised in the East for thousands of years, but this was

the first time that Monro had come across it. His prisoner at once confessed that he and two other men had carried the merchant off, and, having tortured him into disclosing where his treasure was, had murdered and buried him in the temple ruins.

Well aware that the dreaded Monro would soon be on their track, they had thought to hoodwink him by burying their victim six feet below the ground, and, three feet above him, placing the body of a native who had died a natural death. The gang of murderers suffered death for their crime.

A few years after this sensational occurrence Scotland Yard wanted an assistant-commissioner, and as the police of London were fighting a gang of dynamitards a man of tremendous courage, resource, and brain-power was particularly required. There were many candidates, but James Monro, who did not apply for the post, was chosen. He had not been at the Yard a week before every official there, from the highest to the lowest, knew that the hour had produced the man.

Five months from the date of his appointment Monro was issuing directions to his staff one morning when a couple of telephone messages informed him that attempts had been made to blow up the Tower and the House of Commons. For weeks there had been a succession of dynamite outrages, and several deaths had resulted. Even the Yard itself had been attacked, though in a half-hearted way.

Confronted with the task of choosing which of the simultaneous outrages required his presence, he decided on the Tower, and was as quickly on the spot as possible. His first act was to order all the exits to be closed and guarded, and then he had every person questioned.

When he came to a man who gave the name of Cunningham the famous detective summed him up in

a single glance, and a few pointed questions did the rest. Cunningham was arrested, and the excited crowd of visitors to the Tower that day were at last allowed to go home.

Monro guessed that Cunningham had not carried out the attack on the Tower single-handed. The fellow was not of the stuff of which heroes are made, and the Scotsman realised that he was the type that works well with a gang, but has no individuality. This proved to be correct, and owing to Monro's fine detective work, an accomplice named Burton was captured, and sent with his friend to stand his trial at the Old Bailey.

The result was their conviction and sentence to penal servitude for life, and the prisoners had not been in their cells half-a-dozen hours before Mr. Justice Hawkins (later he became Lord Brampton) who had presided at their trial, was the recipient of threatening letters.

These were passed on to Monro as the head of the C.I.D., and he took special precautions to guard the residence of the judge. Now, a certain budding anarchist had been ordered by his task-masters to blow up the house in Tinley Street where Sir Henry Hawkins lived, but when he found that it was being kept under observation he decided that it would be foolish to attempt it, this anarchist not caring to risk his neck or his liberty.

However, he had been threatened with death by his " comrades " if he did not carry out their orders, and so, to make it appear that he was a desperate fellow, indeed, and a fear-nought, he crept down Tinley Street one night and placed a bomb on the door-step of a house he selected at random. It duly exploded and injured the door, and Lord Asher, the owner of the door, had to buy a new one.

Other explosions occurred in various parts of

London, and with such frequency that there was at one time a real danger of a public panic, but James Monro set to work to stamp out the terrorists, and, under his personal supervision, a squadron of detectives laboured day and night. They gave the rats no rest, and within a couple of years the leaders of the dynamitards were in penal servitude and their followers scattered.

A couple of Americans who joined in the game found their way to Portland Prison, and as a consequence a gang of six bomb-throwers, who were preparing to leave America for Britain to continue the work, suddenly decided that the climate of old Albion would not agree with them. They were wise, especially as Mr. Monro had received due notice of their intentions, and would have been the first to "welcome" them on British soil!

From 1884 to 1888 Mr. Monro was chief of the C.I.D., and there was not a sensational crime during that period which he did not personally assist in investigating. His experience in India proved of the greatest help, and his uncanny knowledge of the workings of the criminal mind enabled him to suggest to many a harrassed inspector exactly what to do.

One unique case he handled was known as "The Innocent Prisoners' Defence Union" fraud. This was the invention of three men who were in a hurry to get money, and did not care to work for it. Their plan was to collect cash from the charitable, on the pretext that it was to pay the expenses of people who had the misfortune to be arrested and charged with offences of which they were subsequntly found not guilty. A very laudable notion, but Monro had no doubt from the inception of the "society" that it was a swindle, and he paid a visit to the head of the trio of "philanthrophists," and pointedly asked what

was being done with the large sums extracted from sentimental ladies.

At first the director blustered and tried to bluff, but the detective discovered for himself that all the money went into the pockets of the collectors, who were by no means entitled to benefit from the Union, seeing that when they were arrested they were guilty of the charge—obtaining money by false pretences.

It was, nevertheless, a clever fraud, and it might have succeeded for a time at any rate if Monro had not known that there are many men and women who are ever ready to live on the misfortunes of others, and that this was not the first attempt to exploit prisoners, innocent or guilty. Accordingly the promoters of the fraud qualified as gaol-birds, and the ingenious swindle died almost in the hour of its birth.

More than one sensational robbery had to be investigated by the C.I.D., under Mr. Monro, and amongst them was an attack on a diamond merchant, who nearly died from his injuries. Two men assaulted him in his office in the Euston Road, chloroforming and bludgeoning him for the sake of the twenty thousand pounds' worth of uncut gems which he had just purchased.

The ruffians were part of a gang of seven which had for weeks planned the robbery, but Monro and his assistants were quickly on their trail, and a visit the Scotsman paid to a hotel in the West End, where he interviewed a girl who was related to one of the plotters, resulted in the capture of the whole gang, and the recovery of the diamonds.

Shortly before the trial the girl complained to Monro that certain relatives of the prisoners had threatened to "do her in" if they were convicted. The detective knew that they were very likely to

carry out their threats, and he also realised that it would be useless appealing to the judge and asking him to warn friends of the convicts against assaulting any of the witnesses. Monro determined, therefore, to settle the matter himself, and he went to the prison where the ruffians were in custody, and warned each of them that they would be held responsible for any injury done to the girl.

"I will have you put on trial if she is attacked, no matter how many years you may get for this diamond affair," he said, and conscious that he would keep his word, they called their would-be avengers off, and the girl was not molested, although the men she gave evidence against were convicted and sentenced to lengthy terms of penal servitude.

Monro was assistant commissioner, and, therefore, head of the C.I.D. when the series of murders in Whitechapel, attributed to "Jack the Ripper," startled the world.

Only the middle-aged can now recall the eerie-like sensation caused by the Whitechapel murders. Young women walked abroad in streets well patrolled by armed policemen and were brutally murdered, and for once it seemed as if the law was powerless. A murder took place in an alley as dark and dour as it was horrible. Plain clothes officers shadowed it night and day, and yet a second life was taken there. Women chatted with friends, said good-night, and parted with the intention of going to their homes, a few yards away, but they never reached their homes, for the mysterious "Jack the Ripper" added them to his victims.

Monro spent a dozen hours a day on the job, and had a small army of detectives at his beck and call. Suspects were shadowed, and every square inch of the dismal region known to have been visited by the murderer was covered and searched. Yet the

"Ripper" remained at large, although scores of persons must have seen him.

Various reports were made to Mr. Monro concerning his identity. A well-known West End doctor was amongst those denounced, but as he had been in Italy at the time of the murders no notice was taken of the anonymous accusation. Then it was said that a young medical student at St. Bartholomew's Hospital had suddenly gone mad, and had taken to wholesale murder because he deemed it was his mission to rid the earth of its bad characters. Only a maniac could have had his luck in escaping arrest, and that it was the work of an insane man there can be little doubt, but beyond that nothing, despite the many "revelations" which have been made, is known of "Jack the Ripper."

An amusing experience Mr. Monro was fond of relating was his meeting with a couple of Indian burglars in a West End mansion. A famous rajah was on a visit to London and when a certain earl invited him and his suite to dinner he asked Monro, an old friend, to join them. It was a large party, not fewer than fifty persons sitting down to dinner, while three hundred more were expected for the subsequent reception.

In due course the head of Scotland Yard arrived and renewed acquaintance with the rajah, a gorgeously attired individual whose loyalty to the crown was always a matter of doubt. However, he was now professing undying devotion to the Empire, and London society was making much of him, and the Scotsman had a cheery chat in Hindustani.

Then he turned to glance at the members of the suite, four six-foot specimens of humanity arrayed in the most garish of garments. When he caught sight of two of the "officers in attendance" Monro smiled, for in one he recognised the most successful of native

burglars, a man who seemed to possess the miraculous faculty of rendering himself invisible when detected at work. On more than one occasion he had got out of the clutches of two policemen, who had been unable to retain hold of the fellow's body, which he had purposely greased to enable him to wriggle and slip away. The second rogue was only a little less accomplished than his companion.

The last time Monro had seen the precious pair they had been labouring in a penal settlement in India, and their subsequent escape was proved to have been accomplished by means of heavy bribes to their native gaolers. The Scotsman smiled whimsically at them.

"This is indeed promotion," he said to the trembling men. "I had no idea you were of the rank that entitles you to personal service on a prince of high lineage."

They bowed, but did not speak, and at that moment the earl engaged Monro in conversation, and when he was free again the ex-convicts had disappeared. Monro was not sorry, neither was he surprised, when the rajah complained a few days later that two members of his suite had vanished, and requested the commissioner to search for them.

"They will land in India in a few weeks," he answered, and did not trouble to explain the enigma to His Highness. It would not have been policy to have exposed the prince to the ridicule of the world—and the oriental mind is particularly sensitive to ridicule—and so Monro did not tell him how he had had two crooks in his service. If he had, the rajah would have blamed him for exposing him to the risk of publicity in connection with the affair, and it was essential that nothing should be done to weaken the new-born loyalty of the native prince. A year later the two rogues were in gaol in India for burglary.

During his brief tenure of the office of commissioner Monro reformed and revolutionised the yard, and in his anxiety to raise its standard of efficiency he suggested certain innovations to the Home Secretary. That gentleman, however, declined to give his approval, and the Scotsman thereupon tendered his resignation.

There was much speculation as to the Scotsman's future, for he was still in the prime of life, and there were many well-paid posts which he could have had for the asking, but no one was prepared for his decision.

James Monro, the detective who had fought criminals in two continents, resolved to devote the rest of his life to preventing criminals being made. In other words, he became a missionary, and on his return to India he established at his own expense a medical mission, sacrificing a large sum of money in the cause, and labouring unostentatiously (until his strength failed him) in ministering to the ignorant natives.

When at last the infirmities of old age compelled his retirement he had the satisfaction of handing a flourishing mission to his successors. Then he returned home to die in the last week of January, 1920.

CHAPTER XII

M. Canler

When Canler was a child he lived within the precincts of the military gaol at Namur his father being the governor—and as soon as he was old enough to take notice he realised that evil-doing did not pay. He saw the cruellest punishments inflicted upon offenders, and long before he reached his tenth year he concluded a most solemn agreement with himself. This was to the effect that he would never do anything that would entail punishment, and, it may be added, he never broke that agreement.

The story—taken from Canler's own account of his life—is characteristic of the man. He tried several occupations before chance brought him into the ranks of the police, but he was always clearly intended to protect society against its enemies, and when he did reach the responsible post of chief of the police he revolutionised French detective methods, for he loved his work, and he had a good opinion of his own abilities.

As an ordinary member of the detective force he was never backward in coming forward. If others failed on a difficult case Canler would instantly recommend himself as more likely to succeed. And it can be said that he invariably justified his self-confidence.

But for years Canler had no idea that he would become a detective. As soon as he was old enough the French Army swallowed him up, and he fought at Quatre Bras and at Waterloo with courage and distinction. Perhaps Canler's encounters on the battlefield with British troops were responsible for his subsequent friendship with many Britons He in turn

was always admired and respected in this country, for he was really the first of the great French detectives with whom decent folk could associate.

When Canler left the army he was already a married man, and, being without private means or pension, he sought employment. He apprenticed himself to a paper stainer, but had to leave because of the brutality and coarse insults of his employer. Then followed a period of "odd-jobbing," ended by the inevitable bad luck and ill-health. He got better again, but apparently no one would have him.

In those days the great Vidocq was the head of the French detective force. On the principle that you must "set a thief to catch a thief," the French government preferred "reformed" criminals to honest men in its police force. Vidocq was the most successful scoundrel; accordingly he was placed in charge of the motley crew which was supposed to protect honest citizens from the criminal classes. Canler must often have seen Vidocq in the streets of Paris, but even in his wildest flights of fancy Canler could not have foreseen the day when he would be the Chief of Police, and actually arrest Vidocq himself on three occasions.

It was while looking for work that Canler found the opportunity that turned him into a detective. He left his lodging early one morning to make another attempt to earn a living, but he had no luck. Shops and offices required no assistance; livery keepers had no use for a soldier who had fought at Waterloo.

Canler turned homewards, sad at heart, to report failure again. He was walking down a quiet street when suddenly he heard a woman's cry for help. Looking across the road he saw her emerge from a house shaking with terror.

"There's an armed man in my room, and he's taking everything," she wailed. "I tried to stop him, but he only stabbed at me with a long knife."

Quickly her neighbours crowded round the door. A man ran upstairs, but returned panic-stricken. The sight of the knife had finished his desire for glory. Canler was now one of the crowd.

"Do you know who it is ?" he asked.

Someone mentioned the name of a certain man—about the most dangerous and ferocious burglar in all France. When his identity was proclaimed the last remnant of courage vanished from the excited crowd.

"Let him take what he likes," said a friend of the owner of the house. "It's better to lose your goods than your life. Besides, you must wait for the police."

But that advice did not suit Canler. Although he did not know it, those years in Namur gaol had left their mark upon him. He was instinctively, and by nature, an instrument of justice. He revolted against the idea of a criminal being allowed to go free.

"I will arrest him," he said, boldly, "even if I have to capture him with my bare hands."

He reached the door of the room, and, without pausing to hesitate, smashed it open. Entering with a rush, he expected to be attacked, and great was his amazement when he found himself alone. The burglar had vanished.

But Canler was not puzzled for long. He realised that the criminal could not have escaped by the window, because it was fifty feet from the street, and he had not emerged by the door. That left the chimney unaccounted for, and without loss of time Canler collected all the paper in the room, thrust it into the grate and set fire to it.

A shout from the chimney proclaimed that he was right. The burglar promised to surrender if the fire was put out. Canler accepted the offer, but he was waiting on the crouch for the first signs of the fellow,

and he took the precaution of seizing him by the legs the moment they appeared, and in this way he controlled his movements until the murderous knife was surrendered.

"You have done well, my friend," said the police officer, when Canler handed the burglar over to him. "And you are a brave man. What is your trade, may I ask?"

"I am out of work at present, sir," Canler answered, truthfully.

"Why not join us?" said the official. "You're certain to succeed."

Canler took him at his word and joined. That was how the famous Chief of Police began his career.

It was an era of reform. Vidocq and his gang of uniformed criminals were falling into disfavour. France was already dissatisfied with the methods of its police. Bribery and corruption were rife, and no honest person was safe who did not pay blackmail to the secret police. Detectives disguised themselves as workmen and haunted cafes where they plied certain customers with drink until they were intoxicated. Then they provoked and tricked them into declaiming against the state. The unfortunate toilers woke up next morning in a cell.

Canler kept himself from his ex-criminal colleagues. He hated them and their methods, and he determined to wipe them out of existence. The struggle lasted a few years, but he succeeded eventually.

It does not often fall to the lot of a detective to arrest the perpetrators of a terrible crime three times for the same offence. Canler had that experience, however, before he had been many years in the service.

One morning an old lady of the name of Houet, who lived alone in a small house in Paris, rebuked her daily charwoman vigorously for being late. The

latter went off grumbling, and Madame Houet retired indoors. No one ever saw her alive again.

She was a miser, was madame, and, naturally, in the neighbourhood she was reputed to be worth an enormous sum—at least fifty thousand pounds, all of which, rumour said, she kept in the grimy little house. She had no servant save the daily charwoman, who came early in the morning and left in the afternoon.

A week passed subsequent to the scene with the charwoman. The little house was still and lifeless. Folk began to talk. It was whispered that madame had died, or perhaps she was only ill. The police heard the rumours, and forcibly entered the house. Not a sign of the widow Houet could be seen. She had vanished completely.

Canler was told to investigate, and he set about his task with enthusiasm. Day and night he toiled with feverish energy, and he was able to find out all about the widow and her relations.

One evening he walked into the office of the Chief of Police bringing two men with him.

"These are the murderers of the widow Houet," he said, and presented Robert, a wine merchant, and the husband of Madame Houet's only child, and Bastian, a friend of Robert's.

"I will prove, sir," Canler continued, "that Robert wanted his mother-in-law to die because he wished to get her money. I can show that he actually discussed the question of murdering his mother-in-law with his friend, Bastian."

The chief listened patiently, and subsequently investigated his subordinate's statements.

"There is grave reason for suspicion, Canler," he said, finally, "but we have not found Madame Houet's body. Without that we can do nothing. The men must be released."

Three years later Canler brought the two men back.

This time he had more evidence, and evidence that would have convinced any jury.

Robert stood to gain two hundred thousand francs (about eight thousand pounds) by the death of his mother-in-law, and he had invited the widow to his house a few hours after her reproof to the charwoman. The chief of police, however, reminded the zealous detective that the body was still undiscovered.

"We cannot put these men on trial and perhaps guillotine them when there is the slightest chance that Madame Houet may be alive in a foreign country. Again, my friend, we must discharge them." So Robert and Bastian left the police office free men for the second time.

Several years went by. The time was rapidly approaching when according to French law no one could be charged with the murder of the widow Houet. After ten years the murderer could shout the story of his crime from the housetops and be immune from arrest.

Canler had scored numerous successes during those years; he had risen in his profession, and was gaining a reputation that was spreading beyond the frontiers of France, but he had never forgotten the case of the widow Houet, because he knew that he had arrested the guilty men.

And then at the last moment the complete proofs were placed in his hands. A recently released convict called on him.

"I am starving, sir," he said, bluntly, "and as I have no character I can't get employment. Give me five hundred francs (twenty pounds) and I will lead you to the spot where the widow Houet is buried."

Canler became intensely interested.

"She was murdered," he said, watching his man closely, "and by Robert and Bastian."

" That is correct, sir," said the convict.

He proceeded to relate an astounding story. When Robert finally came to the conclusion that the only way to inherit his mother-in-law's fortune was by killing her, he took Bastian into his confidence. A house with a garden was taken and a quantity of quick-lime was laid in it. Bastian bought a rope, and then called on the widow.

" Your daughter and son-in-law wish you to spend the day with them," he said, pleasantly, and the widow readily accepted the invitation. After all, she thought, a day with them will save me the expense of providing food for myself for that time, and I'll be able to add a few more coins to my store.

She entered the cab with Bastian, and they were driven to the side door leading into the garden. The moment the door closed behind her Bastian strangled her with a rope, and she was immediately buried in the quick-lime in the garden.

The murderers kept their secret, and passed through the ordeal of two arrests without betraying themselves. Shortly after their second narrow escape Bastian went to his friend.

" I want the money you promised me, Robert, for I am penniless."

The wine merchant shook his head.

" It is impossible, because my wife has not yet received her mother's money. The cursed Government won't permit Madame Houet's money to be touched for ten years unless her body is discovered in the meantime or her murderers convicted." He shrugged his shoulders. " You and I my friend, do not wish to have her body found, and so we must wait ten years."

Bastian was furious.

" Can't you borrow the money ? " he asked, with a frown.

Robert laughed. "I have already borrowed and spent every franc I can extract from my friends and acquaintances. No, my good Bastian, it is horrible luck, but we must wait. I am hard up, too."

Such was the tantalising position. Robert spoke the truth, but Bastian did not believe him, and the fellow actually carried about with him for years a plan of the garden where the widow Houet was buried, a black cross marking the position of her grave.

A series of misfortunes drove Bastian desperate. He wrote a note to Robert in order to frighten him into paying his debt.

"Remember the garden at 81, Rue Vaugirard, you know. Fifteen feet from the end wall and fourteen feet from the side wall. The dead may sometimes return."

That was the startling letter Robert received one morning, and it drove him panic-stricken from Paris to a provincial town. Canler's informant handed the actual note to him.

The rest was easy. Under the direction of the detective, the grave was opened, and the unfortunate woman's body discovered.

For the third time Robert and Bastian were arrested, and their punishment was penal servitude for life.

A clerk on his way to work stumbled upon the dead body of a young man. The corpse was naked, but near by was a pile of clothes containing everything from a cap and a collar to a pair of socks. Further search revealed a blood-stained hammer. The young man had been murdered, but why was he not wearing his clothes?

They sent for Canler, as they always did now, and it was the work of a day for the detective to discover the name of the victim and his last lodgings. He called on the landlady.

"What do you know about a man of the name of

Sechepine ? " he asked. " He slept here last Saturday night, didn't he ? "

" Yes, he did," answered the landlady, promptly. " I recall him easily. He left the house on Sunday morning at nine o'clock."

Canler looked astonished. " Are you sure about the time ? " he said, suspiciously.

The landlady called her daughter, who confirmed her mother's statement.

" That is strange," said Canler, thoughtfully, " for Sechepine's body was found at seven o'clock, two hours before you swear you saw him alive."

On his way back to his hotel Canler decided that Sechepine was not the name of the murdered man, and pursuing his investigations, he learnt from the landlady that her lodger had told her that he worked for a local boat builder. To him, therefore, Canler went. Here was another surprise, for the man declared that he had never even heard of Sechepine.

" But Sechepine had a friend of the name of Drouin, whom you recently employed," said Canler. " Do you know him ? "

The boat builder answered at once that he did.

" Have you recently lost any man who has worked for you ? "

The other took a few minutes to think.

" Yes, there was one, a young man of the name of Salmon," he said. " He was here long enough to become fairly well known."

Canler now felt that he was on the right track.

" Salmon and not Sechepine is the name of the murdered man," he told himself, and, with the boat builder's permission, he took half-a-dozen of his workmen who had known Salmon to the morgue to identify the body.

To his astonishment they were unanimous in tating that they had never seen the dead man before.

The landlady now came on the scene again, and she swore that the corpse was not that of her lodger Sechepine.

Here was mystery upon mystery, and it was deepened when a score and more of persons came of their own accord and identified the body as that of Sechepine. There were now two opposing camps, and Canler was left to decide which was right.

He secured a description of Salmon, and later, to his joy, found the owner of a servants' employment agency who had seen the two men together. Canler began to see daylight now.

" Salmon murdered Sechepine and exchanged identities with him," he said. " The pile of clothes beside the corpse belonged to Salmon, and he is now masquerading under the name of Sechepine, and using the murdered man's papers of identity."

All that remained was to trace Salmon and arrest him. Canler was at his best on a job of this nature. He seldom got off the trail, and he narrowed down his circle of inquiry until he was left with a small Parisian suburb to complete his search. He was now near Salmon, but he had yet actually to lay his hands on him.

A personal survey of every inn and lodging-house brought him nothing, and he went to the nearest police station.

" Here is the description of a man I want for murder," he said to the officer in charge. " He will call himself Sechepine, though his real name is Salmon."

The officer smiled and tugged at his beard.

" You will find Sechepine in cell fourteen," he said, blandly. " I will take you to him myself, sir."

Salmon, of course, declared that his name was Sechepine, but Canler made short work of him. He had him undressed.

"These clothes belonged to your victim, Sechepine," said the detective. "Here are bloodstains."

"Caused by my nose bleeding," retorted Salmon.

Canler smiled. "How could a bleeding nose stain the back of your shirt ?"

No answer was returned.

"You are Salmon, and I charge you with the murder of Sechepine," said Canler. "I understand you are already under arrest for trying to bilk a cabman. Well, we will not bother about that now."

Shortly before his execution, Salmon confessed that he had murdered Sechepine for the sake of the papers of identity his victim carried about with him.

Salmon was a man with a bad character, for he had been convicted of burglary, and he knew that he would never be able to obtain a situation under his own name. He, therefore, murdered Sechepine, who, like himself, had been a servant, and, appropriating his clothes and papers, had assumed his victim's name and character.

Jadin was a Parisian with a weakness for crime, and a personal acquaintance of M. Canler. When he had served a few years in prison he went, on his liberation, to the detective and informed him that he intended to become an honest man. Canler congratulated him on his reformation, for he believed that there was a considerable amount of good in the fellow.

The ex-convict found employment, but somehow did not feel quite at home in it. Crime had a glittering fascination for him. He sought out his old friends, and sojourned in cafés with them.

One night he broke into a mansion and secured about fifty pounds in cash, a sum representing a year's honest labour. Convinced by his success that crime did pay, Jadin planned other burglaries.

But he was a peculiarly kind-hearted thief.

Deceived by the outward appearance of a certain lodging-house, he visited one of the rooms soon after its tenant had gone out. To his surprise the apartment was sparsely furnished, and, although it was winter, there was no sign of any fuel.

It was evident, too, that everything pawnable had gone. Jadin's heart was touched. He could not bear to think that anyone was hungry and cold, and before he crept from the room he left ten francs on the shabby little table for the tenant on his return.

Another deed of benevolence traced to him was even more practical. He secured unlawful entrance to a room which ought to have contained booty worth his trouble. Here again he found evidence of extreme destitution, and on the mantelpiece was a notice to quit from his landlord unless the tenant could pay the arrears of twenty francs that day.

Jadin took the notice to the landlord.

"I have been sent by my friend to pay his rent," he said, politely, handing over twenty francs. "Be good enough to give me a receipt." An hour later Jadin posted the receipt to the tenant of the room.

This, then, was the man who murdered a lady's maid in the most brutal manner, though he confessed that his crime was unpremeditated. If he is to be believed, Jadin was the victim of his senseless generosity.

He met a friend in the street, and after a few moments' conversation each discovered that he was without any money. Jadin had recently had a meal and was not hungry. His friend, however, was starving.

"I cannot permit that," said Jadin, glancing at the house opposite. "You wait for me, Paul, at the Café of the Red Men, and I will presently bring you all the money you want. You shall not go without dinner."

Jadin thereupon crossed the road, darted up the

stairs of the house, entered a bedroom he thought must be empty, with the intention of stealing its most portable property, and was dismayed to hear a woman's scream for help before he had time to realise that he was not alone. In a fit of uncontrollable passion he killed her and ran away.

But the wife of the caretaker had caught a glimpse of a man ascending the stairs, and when the girl's body was found she recounted what she knew to Canler. The detective made his examination and went away, but near to his office he almost ran into Jadin. A sudden idea flashed across his mind.

"The wife of the caretaker described a man who slightly resembles Jadin," he said to himself. "Perhaps Jadin is the murderer."

He did not arrest him, but hurried back to his informant.

"Now, listen to me," he said to her. "I am going to describe a certain person. I want you to see if I can fill in the points you left out of your description of the man you saw on the stairs."

Canler described Jadin.

"That is the man to the life," the woman exclaimed.

Jadin paid the penalty for murder.

There was a burglary at a watchmaker's in the Rue St. Denis, and the police were in despair because the only clues—if clues they could be called—were half a candle with a piece of paper tied round it, and a chisel, a very ordinary one, with which the burglars had forced the lock.

They were given to Canler, who unwound the piece of paper from around the candle. On it was written the words: "Two pounds of butter."

"This is a piece of rare luck," said the detective, with a chuckle.

The others looked astonished.

" You'll never unravel this mystery with a bit of paper marked ' two pounds of butter,' " they said, with a smile.

Canler did not reply. He had no time for talking when on a job.

First of all he went in turn to every butter-dealer in Paris and exhibited the paper.

" I wish to interview the man who wrote this," he said, and scores of the dealers shook their heads in disappointment. They could not help.

Canler was not discouraged. " I'll find my man," he said, determinedly. " Not because I imagine he is a burglar, but because if I know where this scrap of paper came from I can fix the district where the chisel and the bit of candle were bought."

At about the hundred and first butter-dealer's he entered he was rewarded. This trader said he had written the words.

Canler was satisfied. He was in the district where the burglars had prepared their plans. Now he wanted to make the acquaintance of the chandler who had sold the candle, part of which he produced.

From shop to shop he went, but now, of course, he had only a small area to cover, and he was not surprised when he came upon the tradesman who identified the candle.

" I remember selling it to two young men, sir," he said. " They live next door. Oh, yes, I know them well. They are most exemplary young men, I assure you—so quiet and well-behaved."

Canler and a couple of subordinates at once arrested the " exemplary " young men in bed, despite the good character the tradesmen had given them. A search was made for the proceeds of the burglary, but nothing could be found.

Canler was looking at the ceiling thoughtfully, when he noticed that the whitewash was damp at a certain

place. Springing on to the bed he touched the ceiling with his stick. Instantly it broke, and a regular shower of watches and other articles of gold and silver descended upon him.

Every country has had its trunk murders, and Canler was concerned in one of the most sensational in France.

A dealer in bronzes and curios in the Rue St. Honore was murdered by his assistant, who placed the body of his victim in a trunk, and, with the aid of a porter carried it to the railway station, and addressed it to a house in the country. Then the murderer decamped with every penny he could lay his hands on.

The crime came to light when the trunk was returned to the railway company, because the name on the label was not known in the village to which it had been consigned. By now, of course, the dealer was missed.

The railway authorities communicated with Canler, as they did not wish to be bothered with the trunk.

Canler opened it, and quickly identified the unfortunate man as Poirier, the dealer in bronzes. Clearly the murderer was his late assistant, Viou, but the fellow had vanished.

Canler was afraid lest Viou should leave the country. He guessed that he was hiding in some provincial town in France. The detective wrote a report of the case for the newspapers, and purposely added to it the untrue statement that the police knew that Viou was in Spain, and that they were looking for him there.

"That'll bring him back to Paris," he said, "for Viou will realise that in a big city he'll stand a better chance of escaping observation than in a village. The announcement that we are looking for him in Spain will make him think that Paris is the best place for him."

His deductions were based on a complete knowledge of the criminal class. He knew, for instance, that

murderers delight in reading about their crimes, and that they devour every newspaper reference to their deeds. In this particular case he was right. Viou ventured back to Paris, and was arrested. He was guillotined for his atrocious crime.

One of his cases Canler never forgot, although it proved one of the simplest he was ever engaged on, was that of the murder of Mademoiselle Ribault and her companion. The former was a fashion artist on a Paris journal, and on the last day of every month a clerk from the newspaper office called on her and paid her two hundred francs on behalf of her employers. Mademoiselle was well over sixty, and her companion and friend about seventy-four.

The tenant of an adjoining apartment discovered their bodies and raised the alarm. M. Canler, now chief of the police, attended in person, and began his examination. The poor old ladies had been battered to death.

Was there a clue ? The detective searched every part of the room inch by inch. Suddenly his eyes lighted up.

"Look ! " he cried. "The mystery is solved."

It was. Mademoiselle Ribault's body had been found near the fireplace and some distance from that of her companion's, and now the horrified detective read in letters of blood the name of the murderer, for mademoiselle as she lay dying near the door had made one final effort, and dragging herself across the room had dipped a finger in her own blood and written on the fender the words—"The assassin is M. Thierry's clerk."

M. Thierry was the proprietor of the paper she had worked for, and his clerk was the man who had called to pay her the two hundred francs to which she was entitled every month. The fellow, whose name was Laforcale, was executed.

CHAPTER XIII

Eugene Vidocq—Detective and Criminal

In the annals of crime there is no more remarkable record than that of Eugene Vidocq, convict and detective, the famous "police spy," who was the terror of the criminals of France. He has been the subject of innumerable legends, but there is no need to rely upon the unproven to establish his fame, for despite many mistakes and a certain unscrupulousness, Vidocq undoubtedly was a very successful detective.

His real career began in a prison, where, with hundreds of other convicts, he was awaiting transference to the hulks. This was in 1810, when Vidocq was thirty-five years of age, with an apprenticeship to crime extending over fifteen years.

He was popular with his fellows, because he was never downhearted, and did many of them small services; while his tall, strong figure, handsome face —the blue eyes were a little too close perhaps— marked him out as belonging to a superior type. The others looked up to him as their leader.

He had been the hero of many exploits against the government, and it was considered something in the prison to be on friendly terms with Vidocq, and Vidocq, always vain and greedy for praise, accepted their homage, and became their confidante. They told him of jobs successfully carried out, which were now classified by the police as unsolvable, and they talked of their future plans, inviting Vidocq to join them in contemplated robberies when they were free. He promised readily, and added his advice as an expert, entering with enthusiasm into their discussions.

But by now Vidocq was beginning to realise that

crime is a very badly-paid profession. He had worked at it for years, and here he was a pauper and a prisoner. Twice had he escaped from gaol, only to be retaken each time.

Victor Hugo has said that society distrusts two classes—those who attack it and those who protect it. Vidocq had tried his luck at attacking, and now he decided to join the protectors.

He asked to be allowed to see the prison governor, and was conducted into the presence of the official. There he offered to act as the spy of the police if he were set at liberty and paid a salary.

The offer was not accepted at once. It had to be well considered, because Vidocq's reputation was of the worst, but he advanced numerous cogent arguments. He was personally acquainted with hundreds of notorious criminals, and he knew their methods perfectly. Then he declared he could solve many mysteries which had puzzled the authorities, and he swore that unless he was taken into the detective service several startling crimes would be committed which he could now prevent.

After some delay the offer was accepted. Vidocq was to be paid a salary of one hundred francs a month (about a pound a week), and he was to guarantee to catch a certain number of criminals per month. A minimum was fixed, and he agreed that if ever his number of convictions fell below it, he was to go back to prison.

It was a curious arrangement, but in those days the general opinion was that a thief could only be caught by a thief. Naturally Vidocq was determined not to return to the chain-gang, and he devised peculiar methods of his own to avoid failing as a police spy.

Shortly after Vidocq was accepted for special police service the convicts at the Bicetre Prison were astonished to see their favourite roughly seized by four

gaolers, loaded with chains, and flung into a waiting coach. Had there not been a strong guard on duty that morning there is no doubt that the prisoners would have attempted to rescue him, but all they could do was to shout encouragement.

It was rumoured in the prison that the authorities had become exasperated at Vidocq's repeated escapes, and that they were taking precautions to prevent him ever again seeing the outside of a gaol until he had served his sentence. The sympathies of the convicts were entirely with Vidocq, and when the news filtered through to them that he had actually escaped for the third time they nearly went mad with delight. The poor fools had to wait some time before they learned that Vidocq's "escape" had been arranged by the police to hoodwink his friends.

The turncoat began his official career with the vilest act of his whole life. When a hunted and hungry criminal he had been befriended by a leather-dresser of Paris, who had taken compassion on him, and had given him not only food and shelter but money. Now he repaid him by denouncing him as a coiner, and on the flimsiest of evidence, wholly manufactured by the ex-convict, the tradesman and a friend were executed. This accomplished, Vidocq considered that he had earned his first month's salary, and he retired for a week to perfect his plans.

There was an average of a murder a week in Paris alone, and Vidocq was able to name half-a-dozen of the murderers right away. Two of them were in prison for other offences, when they had boasted of their crime to Vidocq. Now they were put on trial again and condemned to death, and as Vidocq had to give evidence against them it became known who he was, and every criminal in the country swore that he would avenge his dead comrades.

Vidocq, however, was not dismayed, mainly because

he was intimately acquainted with the type of man who lives by crime. He knew that the average criminal is a mean-spirited coward, and Vidocq, whose bearing was that of a monarch, and whose vanity would have sufficed to stock a dozen musical comedy queens, moved openly amongst them, inviting the attack which never came.

One of his earliest successes was the discovery of the murderer of an old miser in a miserable suburb of Paris.

Jules Simone had been left twenty thousand francs by an uncle, and as Jules was only a labourer the unexpected inheritance affected his brain. He retired into a single room, and kept the money in a box under the floor, starving himself in order that the treasure might not diminish too rapidly.

One morning he was found dead with his head battered in. The weapon had disappeared, and the only clue was a small glove which at first was deemed to belong to a woman.

Vidocq was put in charge of the case.

"The glove is a man's," he said, after examining it closely. "And as it is new and of the finest quality it can only belong to one of four men, the dandies of their profession. But the glove is very small, and there is only one man I know whom it could fit. I am sure it belongs to my old friend the Marquis. That's the name we gave Henri Polksi, the Russian. His mother is French, and lives next to the wineshop in the Avenue Verdun. He will probably be there now. Henri spends most of his earnings on his clothes."

Vidocq proved to be correct in every detail. But had he not been a personal friend of the murderer he would not have solved the mystery so easily. It was a triumph of this nature which convinced the chief of police that he had done right in permitting a noted thief to turn detective.

The case had the effect of considerably raising

Vidocq's status. He was allowed to form a detective corps of his own, and the authorities undertook to pay the salaries of twelve assistants. All of them were notorious criminals, and Vidocq enlisted their services by offering to pay them a regular salary in advance of their usual earnings at the most hazardous of occupations.

With his brigade of ex-convicts Vidocq created a reign of terror in France. No one was safe unless he or she paid tribute to the chief of the detectives.

Whenever crime languished Vidocq sent agents to tempt released prisoners into fresh crimes. Sometimes they disguised themselves as servants who had been dismissed, and who now wanted an expert's help to burgle their former employer's house. The hungry criminal in nearly every case succumbed, only to be arrested in the very act of stealing. In this way scores of dangerous persons were removed to places of safety, and despite the blackmailing and other terrors of the new regime the general body of opinion was that Vidocq was worth it.

It is not easy to distinguish between Vidocq's genuine successes and the bogus cases he created in order to enhance his reputation and gratify his vanity. But the affair of the murder of Madame Constant was undoubtedly a tribute to his acumen.

Madame Constant was one of that numerous class of small shopkeepers who live so frugally as to gain a reputation for wealth. The type has always been common in France, where thrift is carried to extremes.

Madame was old, and had kept a chandler's shop for over forty years. Everybody in the neighbourhood was positive that she was rich, for she never spent money and her customers were numerous. Then the inevitable happened, and Vidocq was informed that Madame Constant had been stabbed to the heart, and her cash box emptied.

There was no clue this time not even a footprint or a fingermark ; indeed, the murderer had been extraordinarily careful to avoid detection. He must have worn gloves when breaking in by the back window, and there were signs that he actually brushed the floor of the room after committing the crime by dragging a broom after him in his retreat. It was not known how much money had been stolen.

Vidocq brought his usual methods to bear, and drew up a list of former acquaintances likely to have used a dagger to kill. Most of them could prove the best alibi of all—presence in a prison far away from the spot where the crime was committed—and the others produced evidence that they were not in Paris at the time of the murder.

All were held to be blameless in the matter, and, greatly to his chagrin, Vidocq realised that there was a danger of failure. This would not do, because the more reputable members of the police force were always waiting for the opportunity to discredit him, and even the Chief of Police was ever distrustful. He would not, of course, associate with Vidocq, and generally treated him as a police official might be expected to treat an ex-convict. This hurt Vidocq's vanity, and he neglected other matters to devote himself to the case of Madame Constant, fearing that failure might lose him his position. The detective's secret ambition was to be a gentleman, and to be received in the best society. To achieve this he was saving, hoping that if he became very rich society would forget his past. He was certain that he had the ability to shine in society, for he was fully conscious that his handsome appearance was in his favour. Those who served under him were required to behave in his presence, as though he was somebody of the very greatest importance.

Once more Vidocq, therefore, studied the murder

of Madame Constant, again going through a list of likely murderers. But every name he ticked off failed in one or more respects. Then he had a brilliant idea.

"Why, there's only one man who could have planned and executed a murder in such a way, and that is Eugene Vidocq!" he exclaimed, with a laugh, as he sat in his office. "There's not another man in France with my brains. Now, I didn't do it, so it must have been done by someone who has been trained in my methods. The murderer is one of my twelve detectives. But which one?"

From that moment he shadowed in turns his own men. He had taught them how to look for a murderer, how to examine the body and the surroundings of the victim for clues and how to differentiate between the relative values of such clues when discovered. Now one of them had committed a murder, and had seen to it that not a clue was left behind.

There were three "possibles" amongst his men, and as he was unable to obtain adequate proof he tackled each of the three men alone.

The first man gave himself away the moment Vidocq, having locked the door of his office behind him, calmly asked how much he had stolen from Madame Constant's shop.

The man stammered, denied his guilt, and then collapsed in amazement and fear.

"How much did you take?" said Vidocq, with a grim smile. "Where is my share? Come, how much?"

The murderer, believing that he could bribe his chief, thereupon admitted everything. He had found about fifteen thousand francs in the shop—as a matter of fact, he had known where it was hidden before he broke in and murdered the old woman—and he offered half to his chief.

"Bring the money here and we'll divide it," said Vidocq. "Hurry, for I may change my mind if you delay."

The detective returned with the spoils, and was immediately arrested by Vidocq. The fifteen thousand francs were never seen again, and no one, except possibly Vidocq, ever knew what became of them.

The solving of this mystery was considered a great triumph for Vidocq, and he made the most of it. There was nothing he liked better than to take a stroll through the streets, fashionably dressed, with an inscrutable smile on his features, and observe the fear he created or the admiration he evoked. In broad daylight he would parade alone the streets where criminals and their families lived, and no one as much as offered him an insult, although they had all sworn vengeance against him. It was due entirely to his vivid personality.

He had announced that he feared no one, and that he would welcome the attentions of his old associates. They, no doubt, remembered enough of him to make them feel that he would not be an easy victim, and that he would return every blow with interest.

But he did not always come out on top. On one occasion he was examining a candidate for membership of his detective force, and as Vidocq's supreme test was cleverness in crime—in his opinion a man must be an expert thief before he could know enough to be expert at detecting it—he made him demonstrate his ability to steal. Vidocq sent him to buy a couple of fowls. He returned with the fowls and the purchase money, plus thirty francs he had stolen from the shop.

Vidocq asked him to illustrate his success, which the fellow did so realistically as to earn an engagement on the spot. He was told to call in the morning

to be formally enrolled, and with numerous expressions of profound gratitude the thief took his departure.

When he had gone Vidocq discovered that his gold watch and chain were missing. Of course, the thief did not appear again, and Vidocq never recovered his property. The incident affected him greatly, for it hurt his vanity, and he could not bear ridicule.

One of the most successful thieves of the period was a huge, powerful fellow of the name of Paul. He travelled about the country robbing lonely cottages and houses, and often treating with the utmost brutality anyone who resisted. Paul gained a reputation for ferocity which kept even the officers of the law at a distance, and as he was known to believe in the principle of shooting on sight, his company was avoided. Whenever he put up at an inn he was received with respect by the landlord, and the best room reserved for him.

Paul, however, was not satisfied with success. He had one intense longing, and that was to meet Vidocq and shoot him. He told everyone that he would not be happy until he had murdered the police spy.

But Paul did not neglect business to indulge in thoughts of what he would do to Vidocq. Almost daily a fresh outrage was credited to him, and the provincial police appealed to Paris for help. Vidocq himself decided to tackle the robber.

One evening Paul was drinking heavily in a deserted inn by the lonely countryside when a stranger entered and sat down near him. The robber addressed a few words to him, and presently they were chatting like old friends.

The stranger introduced himself as a bit of an expert in the thieving line, and he impressed Paul so favourably that he offered him a share in a contemplated attack on a mansion in the neighbourhood.

Under the influence of the wine Paul disclosed all his plans.

"You're the man I want," he said, with a laugh. "Come from Paris, have you? Well, I'd give you everything we steal to-night if you'd only get me a sight of the traitor Vidocq."

Vidocq laughed, and drank another glass of wine.

"You've never seen him then?" he asked, in surprise. The other man shook his head.

"But I'm on my way to Paris now," he announced, "and don't be surprised if you hear Vidocq is dead very soon."

"That'll be a surprise for him, my friend," said Vidocq, who throughout the interview never let his right hand stray from the pocket where his loaded pistol was. "Perhaps you may see him sooner than you think."

On the pretence that he must prepare for their midnight expedition, Vidocq withdrew. He did not intend to tackle Paul alone, for the fellow's gigantic strength would easily have gained the mastery, and, although Vidocq was neither a coward nor a weakling, he was not fond of taking unnecessary risks.

A few hours later he set out with the robber in the direction of the mansion they were to rob, but on the way half-a-dozen men fell on Paul and made him a prisoner. Then Vidocq revealed himself.

"You have met Vidocq at last, my friend," he said, with a smile, "and instead of going to Paris to seek him he will now take you there at his own expense. I am afraid that you'll never leave Paris alive."

Paul made a desperate effort to free himself, and he very nearly succeeded despite the odds against him, but he was conveyed to Paris, tried, and convicted, and Vidocq gained fresh laurels.

The capture of the famous robber excited universal admiration, and Vidocq took good care that his

meeting with Paul in the inn was embellished with numerous additions, all glorifying himself, and widely circulated. He was anxious to keep the public on his side, because he had to fight against the jealousy of the official police, who resented his successes.

Carefully fostered by him, the Vidocq legend grew until there were very few persons outside the police who did not believe that Eugene Vidocq was the greatest detective in the world.

But when a new chief of police was appointed, after Vidocq had been in the detective service seventeen years, rumour reached him that there was a plot to bring about his dismissal. As by now he had accumulated a considerable sum of money, Vidocq preferred to resign. He started a paper mill, employing only ex-convicts and their families.

The venture, however, proved unsuccessful, and Vidocq, remembering the ease with which he had made money when a detective, tried to get taken back. The chief of police, however, would have nothing to do with him, and Vidocq remained in retirement until a sensational burglary brought him into prominence again.

The residence of a wealthy and popular Parisian was broken into, and valuables worth fifty thousand francs were stolen. The reformed police department did its very best to find the thieves, but failed. By now, of course, only men of good character were retained in the service, and this had meant that all Vidocq's men were compulsorily retired.

The burglary remaining a mystery, someone suggested that Vidocq should be sent for. He readily agreed to investigate, and he arrived on the scene in a carriage, and was conducted into the mansion like a conqueror.

He declared that he would lay his hands on the burglars, and from the moment he examined the

various marks left by the thieves he was in his element. He pointed out half-a-dozen clues overlooked by the police, discovered an old hat hidden in a chimney, found footmarks in the garden, which he traced on to the high road.

The next day he drew up a detailed report, and gave a list of persons likely to have burgled the mansion. At his instance they were all arrested, and finally two of them confessed. Indeed, Vidocq's evidence against them was so complete that their confession was hardly necessary.

His brilliant success led to a clamour for his re-appointment to the post of chief of the secret detective force, and the head of the police had to ask him to accept his old position.

Vidocq flushed with success, was generous, and he once more took up the task of fighting the law-breakers, bringing with him his old associates.

Paris felt safe when it heard that Vidocq was back again. There was no one with the brains of the man who had solved the mystery of the burglary at the country mansion. For months after the detective's return it was a subject of general conversation and the official police were ridiculed into silence. They had failed. Vidocq had succeeded. No wonder they were intensely jealous.

And then the truth came out suddenly. Vidocq had himself arranged the burglary through an agent; he had had the "clues" placed where he could find them; and he had arranged the whole affair so that it would lead to the popular demand for his recall to the police department. It was a friend of his agent's who revealed the whole story, and when the delighted police asked where the agent was he was discovered amongst the detectives under Vidocq, where he had been drawing a generous salary in order to keep his mouth shut.

Vidocq was dismissed, loudly protesting his innocence, and to show his contempt for his enemies he started a detective department of his own, being the first of the private enquiry agents. He also invented the "Trade Protection Society," undertaking for an annual fee to supply the character and record of every customer of a trader.

He had many thousands of clients, and both his businesses required the entire services of over a hundred clerks. He lived in luxurious style and became a personage. If the official police failed to find a thief or the goods he had stolen, more often than not the victim came to Vidocq, and was overjoyed by the return of his property.

Thieves who operated on a large scale would notify Vidocq that they were prepared to negotiate with the legal owners of the stolen goods, and in this way their return was effected for a consideration, half of which Vidocq pocketed. It was cheaper than trusting to the police, and, consequently, they were aroused, and Vidocq was persecuted in a vain attempt to make him give up his private agencies. He treated them with open contempt, and it is certain that he would never have been ruined but for his own passion for money. In the long run it brought about his destruction.

There was a retired general in Paris who had a wayward son. This boy got involved with a gang of gamblers and thieves, and having lost a large sum of money to them, he forged a cheque in payment, using the name of his employer, a well-known banker. Now the gambler who was handed the cheque saw at once that it had been forged, and he took advantage of his knowledge to blackmail father and son. It happened that there was a quarrel between the banker and the general, and so it would have been no use appealing to the banker for mercy.

Vidocq was consulted when the old general had paid

thousands of francs in blackmail. The detective guaranteed to checkmate the blackmailer, who was an old convict of his acquaintance. The general handed Vidocq ten thousand francs to buy back the cheque, and the detective paid a visit in person to the blackmailer.

" I want that cheque at once, my friend," he said, fixing the fellow with a stare. " No, I won't pay you anything. Refuse to hand it over and I shall have you taken back to the chain-gang to complete the sentence of twenty years you owe the state. You escaped from Marseilles six years ago. Do you wish to go back ? "

This was enough, and the cheque was surrendered. Vidocq kept the ten thousand francs for himself, and then began to blackmail the general on his own account. When he had extracted most of the old man's fortune he returned the cheque.

But if the general was now a poor man he was a most influential one, and one of the principal judges was his brother-in-law. He swore to be avenged, and although he had to wait a little while, the day came when he was able to fulfil his vow.

In 1842 the police raided Vidocq's offices and took him to prison. He was not frightened, because he knew that they could have no evidence against him, but the old general used all his influence to spread reports about concerning his character and methods, and the prisoner's trial was postponed for three months, long enough, as it proved, to ruin his business.

The public, who had been his admirers, turned against him, and if ever a man entered a court with the certainty of conviction that man was Vidocq. He was charged with being an accessory to various murders, encouraging blackmail, receiving stolen goods, and even plotting against the state. There was very little evidence to support these charges, but the judges were determined to secure his conviction, and

he was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. Vidocq promptly appealed, and won his case.

He came out of gaol financially ruined, and as he was within a couple of years of seventy it was hardly to be expected that he would begin all over again, especially as his reputation was such that he dare not show himself too openly in public.

With the remnants of his fortune he paid a visit to England, where he made the acquaintance of some of the leading men of the time, who were convinced by him that he was the victim of the French police. His most famous exploits were well known over here, and he was regarded as the greatest detective in the world.

When his money was exhausted he lectured in London, appearing on the platform both as convict and detective—in the first character wearing his chains and in the second showing his various disguises.

Vidocq was a master of the art of disguise. His strong, mobile face lent itself readily to the numerous changes of appearance his profession entailed He would have achieved success as an actor, and certainly his methods smacked of the limelight. He had the swagger of a popular tragedian, and he was never lacking in self-appreciation.

The lectures enabled him to return to Paris and to live in some comfort for a year or two, but the last years of his life were full of vicissitudes, and he experienced every humiliation extreme penury entails. When he died in 1857 he was eighty-two, and his death was due more to lack of food than to old age.

CHAPTER XIV

George Blin—Prison-Breaker

Had George Blin devoted half as much ingenuity to earning a living as he did to effecting his numerous escapes from gaol he would have died a millionaire, but he was a born criminal, and no amount of punishment or privation could induce him to reform. He was a man of undistinguished appearance, being under medium height, with a narrow face and foxy features. But he was wiry and tenacious, and he proved himself capable of undergoing the most terrible hardships when his liberty was endangered.

The notorious criminal's first offence was robbing a carter after midnight of a small sum of money, and for that he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment in an ancient gaol near Rouen. Blin honoured it with his presence for forty-eight hours, and then, by the simple expedient of making a dash into the country, when working in a field, returned to his haunts in the back streets of Paris. He was not at the time known to the police, otherwise he must have been recaptured, and it was not until Blin committed an assault on a drunken pedestrian, who declined to surrender his money without a struggle, that the authorities renewed their acquaintance with Blin. At his trial he was given five years' penal servitude, which included the unexpired portion of his previous term in addition to an extra dose for having escaped from prison.

But it did not matter to Blin what the judge said. The length of the sentence was immaterial so far as he was concerned. Had he been given a month he would have tried to break bounds with the same zest

and cunning that he would have employed to run away from a five years' sentence.

With a special mark on his convict clothes to indicate that he had once made his escape, Blin was carefully watched by the warders, and every day his cell was inspected, to make certain that he was not up to any of his tricks. The prisoner bore these "persecutions," as he termed them, with a sort of sorrowful indignation that proved he had a sense of humour, and he constantly asked his gaolers whether they were not wasting their time, seeing that escape was now out of the question.

"You are too clever for me," he said, without a trace of sarcasm in his voice. "I am an ignorant man, and I am no match for you. You are worrying needlessly about me."

The warders, however, were not to be fooled, and they did not allow themselves to be bamboozled. Blin's cell was situated at the end of the corridor furthest from the door leading to the prison yard, so that if he did break out he would have to run the gauntlet of a hundred convicts, several of whom would have instantly raised the alarm, knowing their sentence would be reduced if they helped the staff to prevent the escape of Blin. What with the daily inspections, the close supervision when he was at work, the employment of fellow-prisoners as spies, and other precautions, it seemed on the surface to be impossible that Blin could leave the gaunt old building before the expiration of his sentence.

But not for a single moment had Blin forgotten his first resolve to escape at the earliest opportunity. He was a man who found confinement a torture, and the only method by which he could sustain himself was by planning escape. In ordinary circumstances he would have experienced no great difficulty, but in view of the measures taken to guard him he had

to alter his plans, and meet cunning with cunning.

He saw at once that it would be madness to try and repeat the details of his first escape. Two warders always stood guard over him when he was engaged on work outside the prison, and they had orders to shoot him down like a dog if he attempted to run away. And Blin knew that the authorities would not be sorry if they heard of his death.

The only other exit was through his cell, and that without opening the door. He must vanish without having to use the corridor outside, and that meant that he must either go by way of the wall at the back, or down through the floor. Now the cell was paved with stone flags, and every evening at five o'clock, when he was locked in for twelve hours, Blin was first stripped and searched for weapons likely to be of use to one known to be a prison-breaker.

But weaponless, and without implements, he had decided that he would get away by raising some of the stone flags and digging a path to safety. Of course, he knew he would have to do all within a few hours, and without making the slightest sound, and as he was liable to a keyhole inspection at any moment, it was obvious that the only portion of the floor he could attack was that concealed by his rough plank bed.

One night, therefore, he began to work with his bare fingers, and by extraordinary perseverance and strength, he actually succeeded in raising one of the flags under his bed. That accomplished, the removing of a few others was not difficult, and when he had cleared a space sufficient to take his slim body, he lifted the earth out in handfuls, using his hands as though they were spades. For two hours he worked in feverish haste, listening to the patrolling of the corridor by the warder on duty. Once the slowing down of the footsteps indicated that the officer was inspecting the cells through the spy-hole in each door

and Blin quickly lay down on to his bed and covered himself with the blanket, and was snoring in the most lifelike manner when the warder glanced in. The official saw enough to convince him that George Blin, at any rate, would not give him any trouble that night.

Another hour's strenuous digging, and Blin was able, by stretching himself on the floor, to touch the outer foundations of the prison wall. It was old and dilapidated, and having been rotted by centuries of rain and mud, it almost yielded to his pressure. All he had to do was to strike it with one of the stone flags from his cell, using the earth to deaden the sound, and it gave way. Then he thrust his body half-way in, and with his fingers widened the cavity until he could see the stars shining in the sky.

With amazing cunning and thoroughness he returned to his cell to tidy it up and remove all traces of the digging. He piled the earth under the bed, arranged the blanket as though he were under it, and having satisfied himself that the warder could not suspect that anything was amiss, he silently disappeared.

Once in the yard of the prison he found no obstacles in his path, and by five in the morning, when his absence was discovered, he was ten miles away, and better than that, had discarded his prison clothes, and was wearing the garb of an agricultural labourer.

The chagrin of the prison authorities when they realised that despite their precautions and their boasts Blin had outwitted them, was comic. The governor lost his head completely, and dismissed the entire staff on the spot, forgetting that he could not himself look after four hundred convicts until the arrival of new warders from Paris. He had to apologise to his subordinates before they would consent to go on duty again. They were greatly disturbed, too, and the unfortunate official who had

been on duty near Blin's cell was severely censured. In vain did he declare that he had not neglected his work, and that once every hour at least he had inspected Blin's cell from the outside.

"Our only consolation is that he'll be back again soon," said the governor, when the first shock of surprise was over. "Even if our police do not recapture him he will commit another crime, and you may be sure, my friends, that he'll not escape a third time." If the well-meaning governor could have been told that Blin was to add twenty-seven more escapes to his record before his death he would have had a fit.

But he was right in one particular. Blin did betray himself to the police by his infatuation for crime. Although he was aware that everybody in the service of the state was on the look out for him he celebrated his second escape by a daylight robbery in Paris. There was a little wine shop in the Rue de Lamartine, where once Blin had been in the habit of taking a glass or two and discussing the events of the day, and a fortnight subsequent to his exit from gaol he entered the saloon and called for a bottle of wine. He had just enough to pay for it, and he handed the coin over with a laugh, for he had come, not to drink, but to rob the till which he now watched growing fuller and fuller.

Madame, the proprietress, was doing a big trade that afternoon, and Blin's eyes glistened with greediness as he saw that she had taken several gold coins. It did not alter his determination when the saloon filled up rapidly. His plan was to make a dash for the till, scoop it with both hands, and then disappear amid general astonishment. Once he was in the street, which was narrow, and led into a score of others equally puzzling to strangers, he thought he would be safe,

He waited until three o'clock, knowing that with

plenty of customers about her and a policeman not far away, madame would not contemplate an attack on her property. She was a big, plump woman with rosy cheeks, and she had a welcome for everybody. She walked amongst her customers and chatted with them, leaving the till unguarded, because there was no reason why she should not trust her customers and friends.

At last the moment came for which the convict had been waiting, and rising from the table he walked as if towards the door. No one took any notice of him, and not an eye was turned in his direction when he suddenly swerved to his right, leaned over the counter, pulled the till out and plunged his hands into it. In doing so, however, several of the coins fell on the floor, and the noise they made attracted general attention. Madame uttered a shriek of horror as her customers rose as one man to pursue the thief. But, outnumbered as he was, Blin would soon have left them far behind had it not been that on the pavement outside the wine shop a small boy was playing with a toy horse. The convict did not see the child, and before he could save himself he had tripped, and was on his back in the gutter.

Always a philosopher, Blin realised that he was outnumbered, and he gracefully surrendered to the dozen excited friends of madame, who handed him over to the policeman when they made certain that he had none of madame's money left in his possession. The officer promptly recognised him, and his joy was intense. Here was a chance for which he had been praying, for the order had gone forth that whoever re-captured the notorious prison-breaker would receive two steps in rank. It was, therefore, easy to understand the state of the policeman's mind when he triumphantly produced George Blin before his inspector.

It was necessary, of course, that the convict should be tried for the offence for which he had been arrested, and he was accordingly in charge of the police for three weeks. They made no mistake, and took no risks, and, besides keeping him in chains day and night, he was visited in his cell by an officer every quarter of an hour. When he was taken to the court a dozen armed soldiers accompanied him, and six of them sat in the dock, while a small army of police surrounded the building. Blin was conscious of all this trouble, and took it as a personal compliment. But his impudence to the judge cost him a harsher sentence than he would otherwise have received, and the final decision was that he must go to gaol for seven years for his latest offence plus the unexpired portion of his previous term, and an additional two years for having escaped from prison. Had Blin thought for a moment that he would serve the sentence he might have asked what the sum total was, but not caring he left the court without any clear idea of the exact number of years he had been given this time.

"You're in for it now, Blin," said the inspector, before seeing him into the van which was to take him to prison. "Be wise and behave yourself. Escape is impossible. You must know that now."

Blin bowed politely.

"If I ever do escape again I will pay you a visit, monsieur," he said, with a grin, as he raised the chain which bound him.

About eleven weeks later Blin burgled the inspector's house, and took away with him thirty pounds, leaving a receipt duly signed to prove that he had once again made his way out of gaol. The officer was astounded, having forgotten George Blin when he had heard of the precautions that were taken to keep him in gaol. He now wrote for further in-

formation, and learned that Blin had escaped from the prison infirmary, after the doctor had certified that he was very ill. The convict, however, had only been shamming, and he had stolen a coat and cap belonging to one of the staff, and had walked out of the infirmary in the dark, the warders he met believing him to be the assistant governor.

Blin had a long spell of liberty, and for close on a year he pursued his career of crime, committing many burglaries in Paris, and, when the city became too hot for him, visiting small provincial towns, and keeping his hand in there. He had phenomenal luck, and it was only his stupidity and vanity that betrayed him eventually. He had the audacity to try and hold up an inspector of police near Lyons, and the officer, being armed, promptly shot him in the leg, and effected an easy capture. Then followed the usual trial and sentence, and Blin was led back to prison heavily manacled. He had now twenty years to serve, and the French Government had issued special orders that day and night he was never to be left alone again. It was the only way to prevent his escape, and Toulon prison was chosen for his incarceration, because it was fronted by the sea, and was considered the strongest gaol in the whole of France. Moreover, the governor, a retired colonel, was a notorious martinet, who had trained his staff to such a degree of perfection that during his term of office, which had now extended over twenty years, not a single attempt to escape had been made.

The convict might have been expected to succumb to all these precautions and preparations. His chains were heavy, and his cell the last thing in security, but his spirits were ever light, and he declined to be depressed. He treated the governor with respect but he could have laughed at the pompous old man, and, despite chains, warders, governor, double-locked

cell, special signals, and all the rest of the measures adopted for him solely, he again determined that before long the colonel would be mourning his absence.

It was not intended, of course, that Blin should remain idle. He did not look strong, but he was tough, and his previous exploits proved that he could stand any amount of fatigue. He was accordingly put to work with the other convicts on the construction of the great underground sewage system, and day after day, with one armed warder all to himself, he worked like a slave.

Any other man would have been broken by the system, but Blin was no ordinary person, and nothing could weaken his resolution. It was very comforting to him to know that he was regarded as a hero by his fellow-comrades, who never ceased to talk about his achievements.

The fact strengthened his courage and determination, and conscious of his popularity he took the bold step of confiding in a score or more of his comrades that he was going to make another bid for liberty.

They expressed their approval, and volunteered to help him. All of them wished to see the governor humiliated. He was so fond of openly boasting that escape was impossible that each one of the convicts in whom Blin had confided was desperately anxious to give him a fall, and when the famous prison-breaker told them of his resolve they felt that it was a personal matter affecting them that he should succeed.

The way of escape seemed obvious. Every day the prisoners worked in the ditches and the tunnels, and to save time they had their dinner at twelve o'clock where they laboured. When Blin announced his decision to bolt, his friends agreed to save as much as they could of their dinner in order that he might be provided with several days' rations. Within three

weeks they had accomplished their task, and sufficient food to last Blin was concealed in a certain spot in the ditch. Furthermore, with great ingenuity the convicts fashioned a few tools for him for use later on, and when both food and tools were ready the word was passed to Blin that his chance had come.

The day selected for the exploit was a Friday, because there was then a chance that Blin might not be missed at once, owing to the fact that the warders were paid then, and inclined to relax their vigilance a little. As usual, at six in the morning the men were marched to the works, and the labour of the day began, but at a quarter to twelve Blin, as previously arranged, made his way to a certain part of a deep ditch, and concealed himself in a dug-out, two of his friends covering it over with turf and earth, leaving him, of course, an outlet for breathing. While this was being done four armed warders were walking up and down a short distance away, but as the two convicts seemed to be working on their prison task no particular notice was taken of them.

Having accomplished their task the two men resumed their work, only to be stopped by the signal for the mid-day meal. Immediately several hundreds of convicts were squatting on the ground, munching their scanty allowance of bread and meat. It was a very animated scene, but there were many who were too excited to feel the pangs of hunger. They were wondering if Blin's dodge would succeed or if the colonel would have the laugh of them. Everything depended on how soon Blin's absence was noticed. If an hour elapsed all would be well, because then the warders would believe that he had got clear away, whilst if discovery came at once it would be guessed that the missing man was simply hiding within the precincts of the works.

Luck had favoured Blin before, but it failed him

now, for less than five minutes after the summons to dinner one of the warders suddenly missed Blin, and raised the alarm. No time was lost. The character of the convict was too well known, and every member of the staff, including the colonel, was ordered on the scene. A message was despatched to the nearest barracks for reinforcements in case the prisoners should become insubordinate, and the order was given for every man to discard his food ration and fall into line.

There might have been trouble had not the governor been a man of stern and prompt decision, and one the convicts knew would not allow or pass over the slightest breach of discipline. Every order was obeyed with machine-like promptness. The prisoners quickly formed up and stood exposed to the loaded rifles of the fifty warders, and the governor announced that any man who attempted to move without instructions would be shot dead.

"Blin can't be far off," he said, confronting the rows of broken and debased men. "He is hiding in one of the ditches, and we'll soon have him out. For your own sakes I only hope that he had no confederate."

A curt order to march and the men moved off, and when they were all safely locked in the cells, and a sufficient number of warders left to mount guard over them, the others returned to confer with the governor and to receive his instructions.

When they rejoined him the colonel had found a solution of the problem. He had decided to flood the ditches and tunnels, realising that there was just a possibility that Blin might be armed, in which case he would undoubtedly inflict serious injury upon any warder who attempted to take him. An easier and safer method, therefore, was to compel him to surrender or else die like a rat.

The order was given for the flooding of the ditches, and armed warders stood at vantage points to cover Blin should he appear.

Blin's feelings may be imagined as the water came towards him, but he was so quickly engulfed that he had little time for thought. His carefully-prepared covering of turf at once floated to the top, and he was in danger of being drowned, or if he showed his head above water shot. Frantically he grabbed a piece of grass, and worked it in front of his face and head, just managing to balance himself on his toes. The water did not rise higher than the banks of the ditch, and he was about an inch taller than they. He could, therefore, lift his mouth above the torrent and breathe, while with one hand he kept the heavy lump of turf over his head.

But the question now was how long would the warders wait before coming to the conclusion that he was not in the ditch. Some hours of daylight remained, and there was just a chance that they might walk along the banks and investigate the drifting garbage. They did not, however, do that, for the governor, after half an hour, announced that it was plain that if Blin was in the ditch he was already a dead man.

The convict had, of course, to remain where he was until darkness set in, and a terrible time he had of it, too. He was cold and in pain, and the strain on his body was terrific, but with liberty dangling before his eyes he did not despair.

When darkness came he crept out of his perilous hiding place on to the bank, and shook himself like a dog. Then he crept across the barren plain, and entered a wood, and although from weakness he had to rest every half hour, he was six miles from the prison before dawn. He wanted a chance to exchange his convict attire for a more respectable

suit, and it came almost immediately in the person of a farm hand dressed in his Sunday best, who was about to call on his sweetheart.

The yokel was so terrified at the damp apparition in prison clothes that he was paralysed into inaction, and tamely submitted to being stripped. When Blin had donned his clothes he advised the man to get into his discarded clothes as quickly as possible.

"I won't take all your money," he said, graciously, feeling very pleased with the "fit," and after pocketing a few francs he resumed his journey.

He had his first meal at a lonely farmhouse, and when in the middle of it, was horrified to see the farmer suspiciously scrutinising his clothes. He was more than amazed when the owner of the place abruptly expressed the opinion that the suit had once belonged to his nephew.

Blin had no time to argue. He simply took to his heels and ran as if for his life, and although the farmer promptly mounted a horse and started in pursuit, the moment Blin reached the wood he was safe.

The fellow's escape was the talk of the day, and the governor of Toulon prison was so chagrined that he resigned and retired into private life. Blin, however, found his popularity a drawback. Everybody was talking about him when he wished to be forgotten. The papers printed pictures of him when he desired to pass unrecognised. A few days after his departure from Toulon he was eating in a workman's restaurant in a provincial town, when he was accosted by name by some criminals belonging to the underworld. Blin thought they meant to betray him, and earn the reward that had been offered for his recapture, but he was mistaken. Their only wish was to offer him their homage. Later they helped him on his way.

But Blin eventually died in gaol, despite his thirty escapes. For a mean theft he was taken, identified, and condemned to what was practically solitary confinement for life, and an hour or so before he expired he confessed to the chaplain that the game had not been worth the candle.

CHAPTER XV

Charles Chambrey, of Devil's Isle

The brave old woman who owned the little wine shop in the Rue de Montmartre did not hesitate when she heard the stealthy footfalls below her bedroom floor just after midnight. It was obvious that a burglar, attracted by the absurdly exaggerated reports of the money she kept hidden in the house, had broken in with the intention of robbing her, and Madame Roget, determined to protect her property, seized a poker and went downstairs.

Pushing open the door leading to the shop, she confronted a thin-faced man of about forty, who was furtively regarding her from behind a barrel. When he saw that it was only a woman he regained his courage and approached her, uttering threats against her life if she did not surrender her savings quietly.

Madame Roget instantly raised the poker and aimed at his head with it, but the burglar deftly caught it, and wringing it from her grasp, struck her a fearful blow that sent her senseless to the ground. In falling, however, she shrieked and aroused the neighbourhood, and when the would-be thief emerged he was instantly arrested.

A brief examination at the police-station elicited the facts that the prisoner was Charles Chambrey, that he was thirty-five years of age, and that for nearly half his life he had been engaged in thieving. This was his first attempt at burglary, however, for Chambrey had never aimed so high before, his speciality being the robbing of shop tills.

The fellow was of medium height, and looked consumptive. His hair was a light brown, and his

moustache was reddish, and altogether he presented an unprepossessing appearance. He cowered in his cell whenever a warder entered, and when told he would be remanded to see whether Madame Roget would recover from his attack on her he gave a display of abject terror which sickened the warders.

After a seven weeks' wait, during which the courageous old lady was often near death, the doctors announced that she was out of danger, and greatly to his relief, Chambrey was placed on trial for burglary with violence. He pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude, and while he was congratulating himself upon having escaped the guillotine he was ordered to prepare himself for departure to the notorious French convict establishment, known as Devil's Isle.

The prison authorities there were favourably impressed with Chambrey. He never gave them any trouble, and he was so deferential to the warders, and seemed so anxious to please them that he was allowed considerable liberty and semi-officially engaged to spy on his fellow-prisoners.

Devil's Isle completely changed the character of Charles Chambrey. He had landed a coward. Within six months he was as desperate a villain as could be found anywhere. Penal methods had awakened his hitherto unused brain. He began to think of escape, and now no thought of danger unnerved him. He was absolutely unafraid, and his attitude towards the prison staff was merely inspired by cunning and not fear.

Devil's Isle is a rocky promontory off New Caledonia, of which it forms part for the purposes of a convict establishment. Life there is the last thing in dreariness, and the terrible loneliness and monotony has driven more than one prisoner mad or sent him to a suicide's grave.

A sudden passion for reading seized Chambrey, and he asked for the loan of some books. The chief warder contemptuously flung at him the first volume he laid his hands on. It proved to be an old French grammar, and because he had nothing else to do during the long evenings, Chambrey read and re-read it. Shortly afterwards he was given another volume. It was an out-of-date peerage popular in the days when France had been a monarchy and not a republic, and Chambrey was fascinated by it.

A year went by. There had been, of course, many attempts at escape, one of which had succeeded. The governor and his staff thought they knew the men to be feared, and Charles Chambrey was not amongst them. "He is the biggest coward on the island," they said of him, and in their hearts felt contempt for the one convict who gave them no trouble.

Chambrey, however, was only biding his time. . He was by now principally employed looking after the boat which was used by the warders in going to and fro between the rock and the mainland of New Caledonia. He had become an expert oarsman, and he was secretly learning how to read the compass. He was also familiar with the geography of that part of the world, an apparently innocent request for a book on geography having been granted by the governor.

But before he could carry out his plan of escaping in the boat he had to provide himself with food, drink, and a compass. The weather was in his favour, and if he should be compelled to row for some hundreds of miles he did not mind that. Anything was better than Devil's Isle, and Chambrey thought that he would row to Australia if necessary. His plan, however, was to land on one of the Pacific Islands, and when the first ship called there pose as a shipwrecked mariner, and ask for his passage to Europe.

At last the night came which seemed most favour-

able to Chambrey. He had, by saving from his rations and by stealing, enough food to provision the boat for ten days, and in addition he took from the warders' hut a stone jar, which he filled with water, and a couple of dozen tins of preserved meat. With these he went down to the beach, and after a last look round he jumped into the boat, and began to row towards the horizon.

The weather had by now changed, however, and a gale was blowing from the north. Chambrey, although the odds were against him, did not hesitate. He would rather be dead than compelled to spend his life in Devil's Isle.

For many hours he struggled with the tempest and the darkness, and when dawn came he was drenched to the skin, but he was thankful to be alive, and a great joy filled him when he saw that the storm had blown him out of sight of land.

It was night again before he ceased to row, and it must have been about two in the morning when he was startled by feeling the boat strike some small rocks. He leaned over and touched them with his hand, and the next moment was laughing hysterically, for he knew that he had reached land and was safe.

As quickly as he could he got out, and then with one push he sent the boat and its few contents back into the sea, where it was carried out to the ocean, and lost for ever.

The escaped convict was still wearing prison garb, and he was not sorry that he had landed during the night. It was very difficult, of course, to see his way about, and it took him several hours to find any sign of a human habitation. Then it was that he experienced that luck without which no escape has ever been accomplished.

He came upon an isolated hut, evidently recently occupied, but with no sign of any living person in it.

When he emerged from the hut he was munching the last mouthful of a meal of bread and meat. Under his arm he carried the clothes he had brought with him from Devil's Isle, for he did not wish to leave any clues for the owner of the suit he had stolen. But he appreciated most of all the half-dozen fat cigars which he had found in a drawer in the bedroom. Chambrey thought he had never tasted anything so delicious as the cigar he smoked while he tramped back to the beach to hurl his tell-tale garments into the sea.

He was refreshed now, and had all his wits about him. So far he met with extraordinary luck. But he wanted to know where he was. What was the name of the island upon which he now stood ? Could it be one of the Pacific group ? He hoped that it was, and that it was far enough away from Devil's Isle to make his future plans certain of success.

Once he had got rid of the prison clothes he commenced to tramp inland, and he was many miles from the hut when he threw himself on the ground and slept the sleep of the exhausted. The sun was high in the heavens when he awoke, and he had risen to his feet and was rubbing his eyes when he saw a woman working in the field beyond. Assuming a careless attitude, he went towards her, and began chatting about the crops. He was delighted to find that she was a Frenchwoman.

"Yes, monsieur, but New Caledonia is not all a prison," she said, when he had expressed wonderment at the fruitfulness of the earth. "In this part we never see a prisoner, and we don't do badly."

It was with difficulty that Chambrey controlled himself, but his heart was bitter as he realised that he had only been rowing round New Caledonia all the time and that he was still in the region of the penal settlement. With a courteous bow to madame he

withdrew, and she did not resume her work until he had disappeared amongst the trees.

Noumea is the capital of New Caledonia and the seat of the French government of the island. It has always prided itself on its respectability, and the fact that it is some hundreds of miles away from the great prison, and the town is more interested in its commerce and its social doings than in the worries of the authorities who have charge of the violaters of the laws of France.

One day, about nine months after Chambrey's escape from Devil's Isle, a well-dressed stranger appeared at the best hotel in Noumea, and registered as the Count de Nerac. He had what the manager of the hotel called " a military air," and his charming manners quickly became the talk of the town. French counts were not plentiful in Noumea, and this specimen of the order was so fascinating and learned that the leading residents hastened to add him to their visiting lists.

The hotel was an expensive one, but the count paid his bills regularly, and they were never small. Whenever he was invited to spend a week at the house of an acquaintance he kept his suite of rooms on, and the banquets he gave ensured a prosperous season for the proprietor, who naturally became one of the most devoted admirers of the nobleman.

When the count was in the society of friends, and they got him in a chatty mood, he would tell them stories of his ancestors, and how they had fought for France from the Crusades in the tenth century to the war with Prussia in 1870. He entered into details, too, giving names and places, and the principal doctor in Noumea, who possessed a peerage, was able by referring to it, to confirm the count's statements.

The doctor had a very pretty daughter of marriageable age, but if she or her father had any hopes

regarding the Count de Nerac they were destined to be disappointed. The nobleman was not a marrying man, and when the son of a wealthy storekeeper fell in love with Annette, and was accepted by her, the count was the first to offer congratulations. He sent the happy pair a costly wedding present, and he made them the proudest persons in New Caledonia when he volunteered to act as best man at their wedding.

The presence of the Count de Nerac made the wedding the leading social event of the season. All the best people, including the principal officials, rallied round the bride and bridegroom. Even the fact that two nights before the wedding the safe belonging to the storekeeper had been rifled, and the sum of four thousand pounds abstracted from it, did not prevent the count being the most talked of subject at the ceremony.

He had a great triumph, and his speech at the banquet was rapturously applauded. The Government officials were aware that the private secretary of the governor had written to Paris asking for particulars of the Count de Nerac, and had received a reply to the effect that he was said to be travelling in the Pacific. That finally established the count's genuineness, and no one ever harboured a doubt concerning him.

The robbery at the storekeeper's was soon followed by an attempt on a local bank, which failed. Then two private houses were entered, and several hundreds of pounds stolen. The police, amongst other solutions which they propounded, declared that the robberies must be the work of an escaped convict, and they telegraphed to the governor of the prison, asking if any notorious malefactors had broken bounds recently. They were informed that three men had decamped within a year, and that two of these had been shot by pursuing patrols, while the third, " a Paris pick-

pocket," had foolishly ventured out to sea in an open boat, and had been drowned.

The police thereupon gave up the notion that there was a convict in hiding in Noumea, and proceeded to a house-to-house visitation of those persons likely to be tempted by poverty. Of course, they never thought of the Count de Nerac, the wealthy nobleman, who had recently presented a thousand francs to the treasurer of the local hospital.

The count was in the habit of calling at the police station, the inspector being by now a personal friend. Three or four times a week it was de Nerac's habit to drop in to hear the latest news from France, that is, official news. On the occasion of one of his earliest visits he had been chatting with the inspector when the governor of New Caledonia came in. The count was presented to him, and the two became so friendly that the governor invited the count to walk to his official residence, and share an informal lunch with him. De Nerac hesitated, but, having no excuse handy, consented, and the two men left the station together.

It was the beginning of a close friendship, and ever afterwards Government House was at the disposal of the Count de Nerac. His intimacy with the leading personages in New Caledonia added immensely to the count's prestige, and when he found himself nearly penniless it was without any inquiries that the banker with whom he dealt advanced twenty thousand francs on his note-of-hand. The loan was repaid about a month later, and, of course, nobody remarked that the count had come into funds twenty-four hours subsequent to a daring attack on a bank messenger, who had been robbed of twenty-five thousand francs in gold.

It was the custom of the governor to give a dinner and ball on the anniversary of the establishment of

the French Republic, and when the time came for the celebration of that particular year a cordial invitation was sent to the Count de Nerac. It was accepted, of course.

The dinner was a great success, and the count's patriotic speech was the event of the evening. When the governor rose to give the signal for the close of the proceedings he put his arm through Count de Nerac's and led him into his private room.

When they returned the governor had to take up a position near the door to receive his guests, and the count stood just behind him, watching the arrivals. Suddenly he was seen to grow pale, and a friend caught him by the arm, but he recovered instantly. The footman had just announced "The Governor of the Prison of New Caledonia," and for one moment the count stared at the one man who could have exposed him, for the Count de Nerac was Charles Chambrey, escaped convict.

At the critical moment, when he had realised his peril, Chambrey nearly betrayed himself by his agitation, but when he casually walked into the ballroom, and was out of sight of the governor of the prison from which he had escaped, he regained his composure. He knew, however, that unless he got away at once he would be taken. The governor of the island was bound to introduce "his distinguished friend, the Count de Nerac," to the head of the French penal system in New Caledonia, and that was the last thing which Chambrey wished to happen.

Realising that if he hurried he would excite attention and suspicion, he seized the first opportunity to slip out of the ballroom and make for the door leading into the garden surrounding the house. It was a dark night, and the roadway was blocked with a weird collection of vehicles. Chambrey caught a glimpse of half-a-dozen servants standing in a group,

but he thought he had nothing to fear from them, and, carelessly lighting a cigar, he strolled out as though to have a quiet smoke in the cool of the evening.

He was slowly advancing down the drive when one member of the group detached himself and came up to him. Chambrey stood his ground, ready to bluff if danger arose.

" A thousand pardons, monsieur," began the man, when he started back with an exclamation of amazement. " Why, it's Chambrey ! " he cried, too astounded to be cautious. " I——" A fist shot out of the darkness and caught him between the eyes as he fell like a log. Immediately there were cries and the sound of running feet, The Count de Nerac, clad in the conventional evening clothes of a gentleman, was flying for his life and liberty.

It was useless pursuing him, for by the time the warder who had come to Noumea in attendance on the governor of the gaol had returned to consciousness, the convict was a mile away. All the warder could do was to send for his master, and tell him what had happened, but when the latter informed the governor of the island he was met with frank disbelief.

" Impossible ! " said the governor, with a short and unpleasant laugh. " Do you suggest that an illiterate convict could impose upon me ? Are you aware that when I first heard of the count's existence I wrote to the Chief of Police at Paris, and asked him for details of the Count de Nerac, and I was informed that he was travelling in this part of the world."

" That may be," said the warder, " but I know my man. Why, he was under me for a year. But if you don't believe me why did he knock me down and run away ? "

" The count was justified in resenting your accusa-

tion," said the governor, sternly. "He is in the house now."

A careful search was made, but no sign of the count could be found, and the governor was reluctantly compelled to order a couple of policemen to pay a visit to his hotel. When they arrived they were told by the manager that the count had just left, having changed his clothes and packed a bag, and that he had informed him, the manager, that he was going on a visit to his friend, Dr. Picot, at the latter's country house, which was thirty miles from Noumea. "He will be away a week," said the manager, who was very proud of the count's patronage, "and I am to forward any letters."

The hue and cry extended over a month. It was obvious that the man who could escape from Devil's Isle was capable of giving his pursuers a long run once he had a fair start. He was now provided with money and clothes, and he knew the country for fifty miles around, and thus he had everything in his favour.

The authorities, however, were determined to capture him. They knew the criticism they would have to face if the "Count de Nerac" continued to be at large. How the world would deride them if it became known that an escaped convict had actually dined at Government House, and had completely fooled the staff of officials responsible for the maintenance of law and order.

A big reward was offered, and hundreds of detectives, amateurs mostly, were pressed into the service. Every day a score of fully-equipped parties searched the woods and the river banks, and for a long time had not the satisfaction of finding even a clue.

But Chambrey's daring gave him away in the end, and he was traced to a lonely hut, where he had

stopped for an hour, and had dined with the owner, a farmer. Twenty miles further on they came upon the convict entrenched behind a couple of fallen trees, with a rifle and a revolver, both fully loaded.

There were fifteen armed men against him, but he rejected with contempt their invitation to surrender, and the first man who advanced towards him was shot dead. The others retired behind trees, and commenced a fusilade, knowing that if Chambrey replied he would quickly exhaust his ammunition. After ten minutes' firing he ceased to respond, and they were about to rush towards him when they heard a solitary shot. They paused and listened.

"He must have shot himself," said the leader. He was right, for when they came upon the dead body of the "Count de Nerac" his revolver was clasped in his right hand. He had committed suicide rather than go back to Devil's Isle.

CHAPTER XVI

The Romantic Cockney

Ned Rider was a genial little cockney who never lost his good spirits no matter how grave his position may have been. He was a typical " Artful Dodger," and there was always a glint in his eyes that proclaimed that their owner always saw the humorous side of everything.

When Rider was eighteen, he happened to be walking down Ludgate Hill with his hands deep in the pockets of his dilapidated trousers, which were half-concealed by the shabby overcoat which he wore. He was feeling very dejected. That morning he had been kicked out of the timber yard in which he had been working for nearly a month, and as the irate manager declined to pay him a penny, he was looking forward to spending the day without tasting food. Ned was built on the small side—his features were tiny, his eyes close-set, and his mouth broad and mobile.

Suddenly he bumped into an elderly gentleman, whose huge watch-chain instantly attracted Rider's attention. The next moment he had grabbed it, and was racing down Ludgate Hill with a score of excited pedestrians following in his wake.

But he had no chance of escape, and he could hardly have been surprised when he landed in the outstretched arms of a policeman, who immediately took him across the road to the station. The next morning, while he stood grinning in the dock, he heard the magistrate sentence him to six months' hard labour. Perhaps Rider might have got off with less, but his audible remark concerning " the

fishy whiskers of the old 'un" made the magistrate his enemy at once.

As he afterwards declared, however, he served the sentence "standing on his head," a term which means that the convict found his detention not inconvenient, and it was the same merry rogue who shuffled out of the prison gates six months later to be confronted by his father. Old Rider knew Ned too well to condescend to listen to any explanations.

"You're just coming with me to the docks," he said, sharply, "and after you've had a good feed I'll put you on board the 'Haïlsham,' which sails to-night for Australia. The captain is an old friend of mine, and I've asked him to give you a rope-end if you worry him."

There was only one person in the world of whom Ned Rider was afraid, and that was his father, and so in sullen silence he trudged alongside his parent, and in silence ate the meal that was provided for him. A few hours afterwards he was on his way to Australia, leaving behind him a sorrowing father, who hoped that in the new world his son's better qualities might develop themselves.

But luck was against the young immigrant, and forty-eight hours after he landed he fell into bad company. Three burly stockmen, on their way to work for a cattle trader in the interior, persuaded Rider to join them. Each one of the trio had been convicted at least four times of highway robbery and other crimes of violence, and the leader, Jackson, was known to have actually killed two men.

Jackson was a tall, stoutish man of forty, who was reputed to be the finest shot and the best horseman in Victoria. The police kept out of his way as much as possible, leaving Jackson to roam about the country, blackmailing the farmers and sheep-breeders into employing him.

Rider and Jackson became great friends. The latter was a man of action. Rider was clever with his tongue, and proved to be a most amusing companion. He lost no time in becoming proficient with horses and firearms, and as he could acquire anything easily upon which he set his heart, before they reached Murray's sheep farm the little, street-bred Cockney was able to manage a horse and shoot with a gun from any position.

Old Murray employed about thirty hands, some of them women, and amongst the latter was a pretty eighteen-year-old Irish girl named Kate O'Brien. She was like a young fawn, and her slim figure and delicate complexion, her dark eyes and winsome manner, fascinated Ned Rider at once. Kate seemed utterly out of place on the rough farm, but she had managed to make the men respect her, and she was a general favourite. Her father had only just died, and she was alone in the world, but in Mrs. Murray, the wife of her employer, she had a good friend.

From the moment Ned Rider fell in love with the Irish girl he was a changed man, and the Londoner who had hitherto hated the sight of green fields, and who felt that he would be unable to live anywhere but in a crowded city, resolved to turn over a new leaf, and win Kate's love in return.

The cynical old farmer was astonished at the fellow's industry. For a town-bred youth he displayed marvellous aptitude, and there was no trouble too great for him to take. In the evenings round the fire he was the life and soul of the gatherings, retailing innumerable stories and jokes until it was a proverb on the farm that Cockney Ned, as he was nicknamed, was the cleverest of them all.

And then most unexpectedly the situation changed. One night he had just finished a story, which had been received with applause, when one of his com-

panions made a remark which indicated that Jackson was after Kate O'Brien. For a moment Ned Rider's heart seemed to stand still. He recalled all that Jackson had told him of his past, and he shuddered as he thought of the fate that would be Kate's if she was unlucky enough to fall into the hands of the ex-bushranger.

Rider swore something between his teeth as he rose and left the hut. He had to walk a mile before he found Jackson's hut, but he was still in a fury when he walked in unannounced, and bluntly demanded of Jackson if it was true that he was forcing his attentions on Kate.

Jackson, with a coarse expression, admitted that gossip had not done him an injustice. "She's a pretty thing," he said with a grin, "and I'm going to ask her to-morrow to marry me."

"But you've got a wife already," exclaimed Rider, who was not at all afraid of the big bully. The light of hatred came into Jackson's eyes, and he came close up to his former friend.

"What's that got to do with you?" he shouted into his face. "You mind your own business, my lad, or it'll be the worse for you." There was murder in the fellow's horrible expression.

Cockney Ned laughed contemptuously. He might be afraid of a girl's dark eyes, but certainly not of this murderer, whom he despised.

"If I hear anything more about you and Kate," he said, quietly, "I'll tell her that you've a wife living. You know then what'll happen. She's got some spirit, has Kate O'Brien."

Jackson realised that he was in earnest, and he changed his tactics.

"I was only boastin' when I said I was married," he said, going back to the stool before the fire. "Wanted you to think more of me. But I've never been

married in my life, and I'm glad, because I'll be able to make pretty Kate O'Brien my own."

Rider wanted to take him by the throat, but he refrained. What restrained him was a sudden notion that after all Kate might prefer this hulking scoundrel.

He departed abruptly, and in the morning took his usual place with the other workers in the field, but he avoided them on the return to the farmhouse for meals, and when the day's work was done he left them and went for a walk by himself.

He was moving through a clump of trees which formed a tiny avenue, when he heard a woman's scream, and instantly he rushed through the undergrowth and came out into the open. Then he was horrified to see Jackson clutching Kate by the arm, while she was regarding him with abject terror.

The instant he appeared, Jackson released his hold and Kate fled like a frightened deer, but she could not have been far away when the two men were fighting hand to hand. They had no opportunity to draw their weapons, and Rider confined himself to preventing his burly antagonist using his revolver. Had the contest proceeded on these lines, however, Rider must have been beaten, for Jackson was twice his strength, and it was only a question of time for him to win.

But the Cockney had brains and Jackson had not, and by means of a feint he put him off his guard for a fraction of a second. Rider was being forced back by Jackson, who had both his hands round his throat, when he suddenly fell limp. Jackson, believing that he had rendered him unconscious, slackened his grip. Immediately Rider drew his pistol and emptied it into the body of his enemy.

It was murder, of course, for he should only have covered him and led him with his hands up back to the farm, but in his, Rider's opinion, killing was too

mild a punishment for the man who had insulted Kate O'Brien. When he saw Jackson lying dead at his feet a feeling of exultation seized him. A little later it was succeeded by one of fear.

He was a murderer, and hitherto his only essay in crime had been the stealing of a watch and chain. Murder meant death. They always hanged murderers at home in England. His heart sank as he admitted to himself that he would not be able to return to the farm and tell Kate that Jackson would never trouble her again. Yet how he longed to listen to her thanks and see those alluring eyes at close quarters.

But he must take steps to save his life by getting as far as possible into the interior. With luck and cunning he ought to make good his escape, and having appropriated Jackson's revolver and money, he set out on his journey.

There is little doubt that he would have got safely away had it not been for his infatuation for Kate O'Brien. Not that she betrayed him. When Jackson's dead body was discovered she breathed not a word of what she knew. The death of the bully created a sensation of relief at Murray's, and when news of it reached the police they felt easier in their minds. But the law of the land had to be carried out, and notices were circulated describing Ned Rider, and offering a reward of fifty pounds for his capture.

No great pains, however, were taken with the search. The police had more important matters to attend to, and Rider would have remained at liberty for the remainder of his life had he not decided to get an interview with Kate, and explain to her why he had killed Jackson. He was by this time over a hundred miles away from Murray's, but he made his way back on foot, and one night he had the joy to meet Kate herself on the road, and listen to her thanks, and see

that she had not forgotten him. Somehow there could be no formalities between these two. They had never spoken a word of love in their lives to one another, and yet now they came together like lovers, and it was the most natural thing that they should kiss at parting.

He whispered that he would be at the same place the following night, and he kept his promise, but when he arrived there was no sign of Kate, and he was turning away sadly when two men sprang out of the darkness and made him their prisoner. They were policemen, and they carried him off to the local gaol, and locked him in a cell.

A week later he was taken to Victoria, and placed on trial, and when he went into court he was his old self again, chaffing the warders and cheeking counsel. The judge failed to impress him, but he was advised by his lawyer to keep quiet. The advice was good and profitable, for owing to Jackson's record it was decided to reduce the charge to manslaughter, and on Rider being found guilty he was sentenced, not to death, as he had expected, but to seven years' penal servitude.

"Seven years is not much," whispered the lawyer. Ned's mouth twisted into what he took to be a smile, for he did not know the convict was in love, and that seven years of separation from his sweetheart in the circumstances were equivalent to as many eternities.

Rider was removed to Pentridge prison, and a week after his arrival was the most popular person in the place. No one could resist his good humour, and he became known as the only convict who never grumbled. His frail figure and impudently humorous expression attracted the attention of visitors, who marvelled when told that the distinguishing marks on his clothes indicated that he had been convicted of

manslaughter, for Ned looked as though he would not hurt a fly.

Yet in his heart he was suffering. Every moment of the day he wanted to see Kate. At night he ground his teeth with rage as he thought that she might take up with someone else in his absence. To her as well as to him seven years would seem like a lifetime.

" Will she wait for me ? " he asked himself again and again, as he looked round the prison walls and cursed his ill-luck in having been brought to a prison from which it was practically impossible to escape. Pentridge was said to be the safest and best-guarded convict establishment in all Australia, and its governor, Mr. Price, could boast with truth that not a single successful escape was recorded in its history.

In Pentridge at the time were some of the most dangerous criminals in Australia, and in turn they had invented the most ingenious methods of getting past the prison walls. All had failed ignominiously and now they were being chaffed by their fellow-convicts. Could he succeed where they had failed, even with help from the outside ? Cockney Ned shook his head sadly, but he remained outwardly cheerful as ever.

Yet he was nearer freedom than he thought. One morning the chief warder entered his cell.

" The governor's wife wants an extra servant," he said, pleasantly, " and as you have given us no trouble I have recommended you for the job. Be sure you do your best. If you don't I'll see that you go back to stone-breaking."

Ned could have shouted for joy. The very moment the warder had spoken he had guessed the possibilities of his new employment. He would have free access to the governor's house, and as it was situated on the north side of the prison, and within a few hundred yards of a thick forest, it seemed that if he only got

out of the window unobserved the rest would be easy.

With a cheerful grin he went off to the house, and at the first opportunity took a glance out of the back window. Then his face dropped, for he saw that there was a warder with loaded rifle on guard. Clearly escape that way was impossible.

Without allowing his depression to be noticed, he did his work thoroughly, and every day Mrs. Price found something new and interesting about him. He never took advantage of any act of kindness on the part of his employer or her servants, and he was always willing. Every day at four o'clock he had to return to his cell, but the six hours spent in Mrs. Price's house were like heaven to him.

The residence of the governor formed part of the buildings enclosed within the high wall that ran round the prison, and there was no private exit from it to the roadway. Mr. Price had decided that anyone leaving his house must go out by the big gate of the prison, where a warder was always on the alert.

Rider had been in Mrs. Price's service for three weeks when he was sent to clean the windows in her bedroom. While he worked he was left to himself, and there was nothing exposed which he could steal. All the silver had been locked up, and clearly bed-clothes would be useless to a man who was searched on his return to his cell every day.

But the convict had a brilliant idea, and when he closed the door of the room behind him he had in his possession a lady's skirt. Two days later he had stolen a hat belonging to Mrs. Price. It was one he knew she would not want for some weeks. Then daily for a week he searched for articles likely to help him. Once he found a lady's veil, which he concealed about his person with a chuckle. On another occasion he was delighted to come upon a pair of lady's shoes which fitted him. It was lucky for him that he was on

the small side, for had he attempted to escape wearing prison boots he would have been instantly detected. A convict's footwear always gives him away.

Every night on his return to the prison Rider was stripped, and his clothes minutely examined. Occasionally they were ripped open in order to make sure that they were concealing nothing in the lining. Not a single thing was found on him, and the governor's wife was greatly pleased when she received a report to the effect that Edward Rider was the only convict servant on the establishment who never took advantage of the liberty allowed him to pilfer.

It may be asked where Rider kept the stolen goods. The answer is simple. He hid them in the governor's house. They could be of little use to him in his cell, even if they escaped the vigilant-eyed warders. By leaving them in Mrs. Price's house he earned a reputation for honesty for himself, and thereby increased his chance of success.

The convict laid his plans with the utmost care. He was feverishly anxious to see Kate O'Brien again, but he never allowed his emotions to weaken his preparations. It was characteristic of his shrewdness that he put off the fateful day until it was the turn of a certain warder, who was notoriously short-sighted, to be on duty at the gate.

The last two articles he stole were a small black bag, which every warder knew to be Mrs. Price's property, and a parasol. These served to complete his disguise, and it was well for him that he thought of them, for otherwise he would have been challenged at the gate and discovered.

At the time appointed Rider quickly assumed the female clothes, and, with his face veiled, the bag in his left hand and the right daintly carrying the parasol, he set out to walk the distance between the governor's house and the prison gate. He proceeded

slowly, imitating Mrs. Price's gait so successfully that, although the sentry at the gate had orders to test everyone passing out by addressing them, he was so absolutely certain that the person approaching was the governor's wife that he instantly stood at attention, and did not speak.

Rider came forward calmly, and when opposite him gave him one of the little nods of recognition for which Mrs. Price was known.

It was a critical moment for the convict as he came face to face with the warder. He wanted to hurry, but for his own sake he had to be very cautious and wary. Every minute he expected to hear footsteps behind him and feel a hand on his arm. Supposing the governor himself appeared and addressed his " wife ! " Cockney Ned shivered as he contemplated his state of feeling should his elaborate attempt to escape fail at the last moment.

For a second or two it seemed that the sentry would speak to him, but the fellow was so certain that " she " was Mrs. Price that all the time " she " was in sight he remained rigid.

Rider passed out safely, and walked across the road. A warder off duty was standing near, and he respectfully touched his cap. Again the figure in Mrs. Price's clothes nodded amiably. Everybody liked the governor's wife, for there was no side about her.

He knew that the warder was glancing in his direction, and, to avoid any chance of arousing his suspicion, the convict did not plunge into the wood. Instead he kept straight on in the direction of the township, where the store was situated where Mrs. Price dealt. Only when he was quite convinced that he was out of sight of both gaol and warder did Rider become alert, and as time was very precious now he did not stop to discard his clothing.

Two hours later he arrived on the outskirts of a small town, and feeling that he had a good start, he stopped and took off his feminine garments, and making them into a bundle buried them behind a hedge. Then he entered a deserted house and stole the " Sunday best " of a farm labourer, leaving as some compensation the clothes which the Government had provided him with on his conviction. In addition to the change he got a hasty meal, and refreshed and strengthened, set out for the place where he had last seen Kate.

When his absence was discovered at the prison the other convicts burst into cheers. By that time Rider was a long way off, and the odds were in his favour. Nevertheless, the governor of the gaol resolved to spare no effort to secure his recapture. He realised that it would demoralise the other convicts if Cockney Ned was not taken.

But Ned Rider was too sharp for them. He covered the ground at an amazing rate, occasionally with the help of a friendly carter, but mainly on foot, and if he was exhausted when he stole up to the farmhouse at Murray's, and succeeded in catching Kate's eye, he did not show it. She followed him through the darkness, and amid the wild stillness of that Australian night he told her that he had escaped to see her, and that if she had forgotten him he would return and give himself up.

She had not forgotten, however. He knew that when he looked into her eyes and felt her warm hand between his. Kate had refused half-a-dozen offers of marriage since she had last seen him, for he was the only man she could think of marrying.

His position was, however, a most unenviable one. Every policeman and warder in Victoria would soon be hot on his track. His name would be posted up in all the towns and villages, and there would be

plenty of people only too willing to earn the Government reward by betraying him. Alone he might have a chance of keeping his freedom, but if he hampered himself with a girl his difficulties would be increased tenfold.

Kate O'Brien was a daughter of the bush, and she knew she could trust the man she loved. She had saved up a goodly sum, and when she had agreed to go away with him she suggested that she should buy two horses from Murray, and that they should ride until they found a town where his escape had not yet been notified. There they could get married, and then try to leave Australia.

He had to wait some hours before she returned, but when she did she was leading a couple of fine horses. With a cry of delight Rider sprang upon the back of one and Kate mounted the other.

That day they came upon a small village where there happened to be a resident clergyman, and as he had never heard of Rider's escape the lovers were married under their real names.

A month later they were in Tasmania, and ten years subsequently there was a prosperous farmer near Hobart Town who was known as Cockney Ned, for Rider, after his escape, never saw the inside of a gaol again, and he always said that he owed his success entirely to the girl who had unwittingly been the means of sending him to the prison from which he made so sensational an exit.

CHAPTER XVII

Annie Lloyd—Adventuress

If there was one thing more than another that Annie Lloyd prided herself upon it was her respectable appearance. She had received a good education, and after leaving school she was smart enough to pick up considerable information as to the ways of persons in society during an engagement as maid in the house of a lady of title. But Annie was too ambitious to stay for long in a situation. When she was helping to clean a drawing-room she wanted to own it, and her greedy spirit was roused by the sight of lovely clothes and all the things that go to make luxury. Annie felt that she ought to be a lady, too, and, as has often happened, she came to the conclusion that the quickest way to obtain the money she needed was by turning thief.

When she resigned her situation she took with her a nice collection of clothes with which her late mistress had presented her, and a few days afterwards Annie, fashionably attired, and looking extremely well-bred, entered a leading London hotel and calmly proceeded to walk upstairs to the first floor. A servant noticed her at once, but there was something so perfectly respectable about the stranger that she did not challenge her, deciding that she must be a guest or friend of one.

Annie, who had guessed that the wealthiest patrons of the hotel would be residing on the first floor, went into a room and examined it. There was nothing worth purloining there, however, and she passed on to the next. Here she was more fortunate, and a diamond ring deposited by its careless owner on the

dressing-table was quickly concealed in a pocket she had made near the hem of her skirt. Seeing that it was very valuable, Annie did not trouble to explore further, and with her usual self-possession she calmly proceeded downstairs and out into the street and to safety. Her initial theft had proved an easy success.

The diamond ring was soon in the hands of a receiver of stolen goods, and the thief was the richer by twenty-five pounds. On the whole her exploit seemed to justify her new profession. She knew that in the ordinary way it would take her two years to earn twenty-five pounds in service, and she loved handling hard cash.

The woman was clever and nimble-witted, and her good figure, tall and lissome, and her pale and attractive features were decided advantages. Her expression was soft and kindly, and in well-made clothes she looked like the wife or daughter of a professional man. Her voice, too, was refined, and did credit to the perseverance of one who had been born and reared in the East End of London. But practice had made perfect, and Annie Lloyd was confident that she could shine in any society.

Needless to say, she did not wait long before she descended upon another hotel, and obtained more booty. The papers had contained a good deal about her first theft, and it amused the woman to read the different descriptions members of the hotel staff had given of her. It was with intense self-satisfaction that she saw the statement in print that she was "of ladylike appearance, and was, undoubtedly, refined." It was worth all the risk, and even the censure of the papers to be called that, and to her last days Annie carried about with her a cutting from an evening journal which described her as "aristocratic."

The active careers of thieves are nearly always the same, and Annie Lloyd's was on the usual lines. She

started with half-a-dozen successes, grew bolder each time, until at last she became over-confident, made an error of judgment, and was nabbed.

The scene of her arrest was the vestibule of a West End hotel, and had she escaped on that occasion she would have been the richer by several hundred pounds. But Annie had been too active of late, and as she made the mistake of committing three thefts in hotels within a fortnight, every hotel employee was on the look-out for the fair thief.

And yet she very nearly got away, for when she walked into the huge building, and wended her way to the nearest floor, she was observed by guests and servants without any of them suspecting her. On the first floor Annie found in a bedroom a small jewel case. She could not wait to open it, and when she had suspended it from a button inside her coat she turned to leave the place.

She was actually stepping out on the pavement when a page boy raised the alarm, and Annie, attempting flight, was easily captured with the jewel case in her possession. She did not trouble to protest her innocence, and when she was in the cell, thinking of her appearance before the magistrate the following morning, she made up her mind to plead guilty, and to ask not to be committed for trial, but to be sentenced by him. It was a clever bit of strategy, for Annie was aware that the magistrate could not give her more than twelve months, whereas the judge at the sessions could send her to penal servitude for ten years.

But had it not been for her lady-like appearance and evident distress at finding herself in such a disgraceful position, his worship would have declined to deal with the charge. She seemed, however, so heart-broken and penitent that although the police presented several other charges against her the

magistrate would not commit, and there and then ordered her twelve months' imprisonment. It was with difficulty that Annie prevented herself expressing her glee, but she bowed respectfully to the bench before she was hurried out of the dock.

She was, the same afternoon, taken to Milbank, the penitentiary that used to stand on the Embankment near the Houses of Parliament. It was hoped that this special gaol would help to prevent persons convicted for the first time becoming professional criminals, and only when its complete failure was realised was it demolished twenty odd years ago. An art gallery now occupies part of the site.

When, however, Annie Lloyd was entered on the books of the establishment it was in full swing, and a large staff of matrons and wardresses looked after the prisoners. The lady in supreme control was a kind-hearted philanthropist, who did her best to convince the convicts that crime did not pay, and she undoubtedly had many successes to her credit before the day Annie, the hotel thief, was brought into her presence for inspection.

The superintendent was at once struck by the woman's well-bred demeanour and obvious sense of shame. The latter was, in her opinion, a very good sign. Experience had taught her that shame is one of the greatest deterrents to crime in a female convict, and that when they are no longer capable of feeling their position they are hopeless. Annie Lloyd had never seemed so respectable and penitent, and the superintendent felt very sorry for her.

"I will keep an eye on Lloyd," she said to herself, "and I will try to help her to reform."

Annie was a shrewd judge of human nature, and she quickly saw how to take full advantage of the benevolence of the superintendent. She had no intention of serving a year in gaol. To her twelve

months appeared to be an eternity, and she determined to escape.

Six weeks after her conviction the superintendent entered Annie's cell, and told her that, as a reward for her good conduct, she was to be her servant. Her quarters, were, of course, part of the prison building, and the freedom they gave consisted merely in being able to walk about several rooms unwatched and unguarded. But to leave the gaol altogether a convict had to pass through two gates, which were guarded day and night by warders.

However, it was a beginning, and when Annie had hysterically declared that the superintendent's kindness was an answer to prayer, she was escorted to the scene of her new duties.

The matron kept all her clothes in a small room off her bedroom, and when Annie was quite sure that she was completely trusted by her she gave a few minutes each day to inspecting the wardrobe. Her object was to collect in one drawer or cupboard all the garments she would require to effect her escape. She realised that she could not hope to be able to discard her prison attire before leaving Milbank, and her notion was to find something light in the shape of a skirt which she could just put over her own clothes, with a cloak and a hat to finish it off. There was never any danger that she would not get what she wanted. The superintendent had a great many clothes, and Annie, after a little consideration, put aside a light grey cloak, a striped skirt, a pair of suede shoes, and a prettily-trimmed hat.

The morning succeeding the completion of the selection of clothes was a most anxious one for Annie. She had chosen that afternoon for her unofficial departure from Milbank, and she was greatly annoyed when the superintendent mentioned that three friends of her's were coming to take tea with her. That

meant that the rooms would be occupied all the afternoon, and she would be constantly under supervision. However, she did not betray her disappointment, and she was as respectful and as hardworking as ever. The kind-hearted head of the prison expressed her pleasure that the neatness of her rooms should be due to Annie's thoroughness as a servant.

At half-past three the superintendent's friends arrived. Annie was still on the scene, for she had found a job that reqired immediate attention, and as it could be done in the room adjacent to the scene of the tea-party, there could be no objection to her setting about it. She begged hard not to be sent back to her cell to pass a profitless afternoon.

"I love work, ma'am," she said to the superintendent, respectfully. "It keeps me from thinking and getting depressed."

"Very well, Lloyd," said the head, amiably, "you shall do the work, though you must be tired already. But don't make any noise. My friends must not be disturbed."

While the four ladies, all interested in social work amongst women, were talking over their tea, Annie Lloyd was preparing for her escape. But somehow she could not make up her mind. The voices of the ladies were too near, and she was aware that if she failed she would never have another opportunity.

The problem was solved in an unexpected way. The ladies suddenly emerged from the room opposite, and Annie overheard the superintendent consent to conduct them over the prison. That suited the convict admirably She knew that it would take an hour to inspect the building, and during that time she would be alone with the contents of the wardrobe at her disposal, and no one to fear except the man on guard at the inner gate and the warder who held the

approach to the outer one leading on to the Embankment itself.

She did not hesitate now. Her chance had come, and she was clever enough to seize it. She darted into the bedroom and was soon arrayed in the borrowed plumes.

She was quickly in the corridor again, and now she knew that the most difficult trial of all had to be faced. It was a walk of less than a hundred paces to the inner gate, but it might have been so many miles, though to outward appearance she was quite calm and collected.

The warder on duty was a retired soldier, who boasted that he could penetrate the disguise of any convict, and when he saw the well-dressed young lady advancing towards him he came forward to have a good look at her. A glance at her feet revealed the suede shoes. That convinced him that she was not a convict. His experience told him that escaping prisoners always forgot to change their footgear.

"Good afternoon, miss," he said, touching his hat. "I didn't notice you when you came through the gate to-day." It was really a question, and indicated that the warder was on the alert, but Annie was quite at her ease.

"Then you have a very bad memory, my man," she said, in a most lady-like voice. "My name is Miss Walsh, and less than two hours ago you admitted me and two friends to see the superintendent."

A new light dawned upon the gatekeeper, and he frowned.

"Of course," he said, reproaching himself. "What a fool I am. I beg your pardon, miss," he added, as he went back to unlock the gate, "but I have to be careful."

"I understand," said "Miss Walsh," genteely, "and I appreciate your devotion to your work. What a sweet mistress the superintendent must be. I have

known her many years, and I've never seen her in a temper."

"Ay, she is good to the women," the gatekeeper returned, as he fumbled with the lock. Annie Lloyd could have cursed him for his slowness. Every moment she kept glancing over her shoulder expecting to see the superintendent and a host of wardresses in pursuit, but despite her agitation, she contrived to maintain the same level of unconcern in her voice. The gatekeeper was a loquacious person, and loved to talk, and Annie had to humour him.

"We have some rare characters over yonder, miss," he said, just as he drew back the gate. "There's Camberwell Moll—y'know she nearly killed her husband, and is in for life."

"How awful!" Annie remarked, with a shiver. "I'm glad I've nothing to do with such wretched creatures." She wished that she had some money to tip the warder, but of course she was penniless. However, he did not seem to mind, and apparently attracted by her amiability, offered to escort her to the outer gate.

Annie dared not decline, and side by side for about twenty yards they walked, the ex-soldier as voluble as ever.

"It's all right, Jim," he called to his colleague at the gate that opened directly on to the Embankment. "It's a lady who's been to see the superintendent."

The convict was now very glad that the warder had accompanied her, because the second gatekeeper was a surly, suspicious person, who would assuredly have subjected her to a cross-examination that must have resulted in discovery had she not been vouched for. As it was he gave her a look that plainly meant that he objected to the superintendent receiving any visitors. Then he drew back the bolt and opened the gate.

She had been gone some time when hurried voices and rushing feet were heard. Simultaneously a bell commenced to ring.

"A convict's escaped!" said the ex-soldier, in astonishment. "Well, she deserves to if she's managed to climb the wall."

The wardress was now beside them.

"Has anybody gone out this way?" she gasped, and before he could answer several other members of the staff arrived.

"You mean one of the convicts," said Jim, surlily. "No, you bet none of 'em would attempt to get past me." A slight emphasis on the last word indicated that Jim had a notion that his reputation for cleverness was not unknown amongst the gaolbirds.

"But has anyone gone out?" said the wardress, as the superintendent herself appeared. "You must make a list of all those persons who have passed the gate to-day."

"Only one's gone out since midday," said Jim, doggedly, "and she was a friend of the superintendent."

"What was her name?" asked the head of the prison.

"Miss Walsh, and—" Jim was interrupted with a cry of: "You silly man, she was Annie Lloyd and she's managed to trick you."

In a brief time Jim told all he knew, and was, of course, corroborated by the keeper of the inner gate. Then it was seen how Annie Lloyd, the model convict, had escaped. She had been fooling all of them all the time, and now she was in a fair way to create a record, and become the only woman who had successfully broken out of gaol.

The superintendent at once called in the aid of the whole of the staff, and the police-stations were telephoned to and given a description of the woman, who had by now a start of several hours.

The escaped convict had, of course, some things in her favour. Had she decamped from a country prison she would easily have been found and taken back, but Milbank was right in the heart of a crowded district, and it would be akin to looking for a needle in a haystack to search every dirty tenement house for her. Her usual haunts were known, and they were speedily visited, without any success, of course, for they were the last places the woman intended to go to. Another point in her favour was that no reward was offered. Hence the few intimates who saw her the night of her escape had nothing to tempt them to betray her.

It was in the house of a friend in Chelsea that Annie discarded her convict clothes and exchanged the superintendent's cloak, skirt, shoes and hat for second-hand garments, which altered her appearance considerably. The police description of her mentioned that she was wearing certain articles belonging to the lady superintendent of Milbank penitentiary, and so when Annie had got rid of them she was fairly safe.

The chase lasted weeks, during which the convict hid by day in a garret, and at night ventured into the streets for exercise. She had the usual narrow escapes, particularly when she was compelled by hunger to patronise a coffee-stall near King's Cross. She was just finishing a hasty meal when a stranger joined her, and whilst he gave his order, scrutinised her features closely.

"Going far?" he asked her, laconically. Annie did not hesitate. In a flash she had realised what his game was. He had not quite convinced himself that she was Annie Lloyd, and he had made up his mind to hear her speak first before doing anything.

"Not 'arf, you bet," said Annie, with a pronounced Cockney accent, "seein' as how I ain't got the price of

a bed it looks as if I'll be walkin' the whole bloomin' night."

The detective drank his coffee, and was immediately lost in the gloom. Annie lingered on for a little while longer, watching the owner of the stall cleaning his crockery.

"Wonder what he wanted?" she said, intending the words only for herself. The coffee-stall man overheard her.

"Most likely a 'tec," he said, with a know-all air. "I often gets 'em round here, and they're all busy trying to find that gel wot escaped from Milbank. Well, I 'opes they won't. She was a real sport to get away with so many paid to keep her in prison."

"I says the same," cried Annie, delightedly. "I read a bit about her in the paper I found t'other night. So long!"

She walked off, and determined that no accidents should happen, went three miles at least out of her way. When she was quite certain no one was shadowing her she went back to the house in which she was hiding.

But she was not to have any rest that night, for her friend met her on the staircase, and whispered that a policeman had called to make enquiries about the lodgers.

"You'd better clear off, my dear," was her advice. "I'm thinkin' the copper will be round 'ere again presently."

Annie needed no second warning, and with surprising agility she ran downstairs, and into the cold, dark street. A mile further on a policeman flashed his lantern into her face, and muttered something about the folly of being out at that time. Annie hurried on, and when dawn came she was in a green lane, and six miles from London.

Had the woman reformed she need never have

experienced gaol life again, but she could not keep her hands off other people's property, and with incredible folly she resumed her career as hotel thief when the hue and cry had died down. She was convicted again several times before her death, but to the end she was proud of the fact that she was the only woman in England who had escaped from prison, and she gloried in it all the more because she had accomplished the feat without any help.

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