PIPCUB EDITIONS

The Green Ribbon

Edgar Wallace

THE AUTHOR



Edgar Wallace

1875 - 1932

AI-created interpretation after Agence Rol press photograph, June 1928, Bibliotheque nationale de France, Rol 130561.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edgar Wallace

Edgar Wallace was a British journalist, novelist and playwright, born in London in 1875. Raised in the household of a fish porter, he experienced working life from an early age. Newspapers became central to his career, first as a source of employment and later as a training ground for his writing.

He served in South Africa and subsequently worked there as a correspondent for Reuters and the Daily Mail. Reporting encouraged attention to striking incidents, compressed explanation and the need to hold an audience. Those habits remained visible in his popular fiction.

Wallace became an exceptionally prolific writer of crime and adventure stories, as well as plays and other works. His books reached a large readership, and adaptations helped carry his plots into other media. Commercial success did not remove his financial difficulties. He died in 1932, leaving a large and varied body of work.

Readers can follow the distribution of information: what an investigator knows, what a suspect conceals and what the reader has been allowed to see. A brief conversation or sudden interruption may change the direction of a scene. Wallace's pace makes it useful to pause over the assumptions behind an accusation, particularly when a character's public position seems to offer an easy explanation of guilt or innocence.

Biographical references: Edgar Wallace Society and National Library of New Zealand. Portrait source: Agence Rol press photograph, June 1928, Bibliotheque nationale de France, Rol 130561. Full source records retained in the edition archive.

CHAPTER I

WALKING up Lower Regent Street at his leisure, Mr. Luke saw the new business block which had been completed during his absence in South America and paused, his hands thrust into his trousers pockets, to examine the new home of the wealth bringer.

On each big plate-glass window of the first and second floor were two gilt T's intertwined, and above each a green ribbon-twisted scroll in the form of a Gordian knot.

He grinned slowly. It was all so decorous and unostentatious and businesslike. No flaming banners or hectic posters, no shouting lithographs to call attention to the omniscience of Mr. Joe Trigger and his Transactions. Just the two gilt T's and the green ribbon that went so well with the marble doorway and the vista of little mahogany desks and the ranks of white glass ceiling lamps above them. It might have been a bank or a shipping office. He took a newspaper out of his pocket and opened it. It was a sport-

ing daily and on the middle page was a four-column advertisement:

TRIGGER'S TRANSACTIONS

Number 7 will run between September 1st and 15th.
Subscribers are requested to complete their arrangements before the earlier date. Books will close at noon on August 31st and will not be reopened before noon September 16th.
Gentlemen of integrity who wish to join the limited list of patrons should apply:
The Secretary,
Trigger's Transactions, Incorporated,
At the Sign of the Green Ribbon,
704 Lower Regent St., W. 1.

He read the few words which occupied so large a space, folded up the paper, replaced it in his pocket, and resumed his walk.

"Gentlemen of integrity" was the keynote of Mr. Trigger's business. It was much easier to join an exclusive West End club than to enrol your name in Mr. Trigger's card indexes.

He came to Piccadilly Circus and crossed over, glancing at the big clock in a jeweller's window. Mr.

Luke prided himself upon his perfect timing: he had a margin of five minutes.

There is a restaurant in Wardour Street which enjoys a very good supper trade, but attracts few patrons at the lunch hour, since lunchers prefer the noise and bustle of a busy dining room rather than the discreet seclusion of a private room. There are no less than three entrances to this small establishment and Mr. Luke knew them all. He wasn't quite certain of the room, however, but a waiter, who thought he was a fourth and expected member of the luncheon party, showed him the door of the apartment.

He went in without knocking, and three men, who were sitting over the little luncheon table, looked up simultaneously.

One was a red-faced giant of a man, with broad shoulders and a mop of gray hair. The second was also a big man, sallow-faced and as gloomy as his sober suit. The third was fat and small, with the tiniest black eyes that ever looked from so expansive a face.

"Good-morning and God bless this congregation," said the visitor, closing the door softly behind him and dropping into the vacant chair. "Rustem can't come: his boat's held up by fog in the channel. Why

he doesn't come overland is a mystery to me. If I had his money——"

"Listen, Luke, who the hell asked you to come in?" exploded the big, red-faced man.

"Nobody, Doctor," said Mr. Luke.

He was lean and brown, a lithe and lanky figure of a man with smiling eyes and an air of boredom.

"Nobody asked me to come in. Hello, Trigger," he addressed the fat little man. "How go the Transactions? That's a posh office of yours. I nearly went in to get a folder. I thought you'd like to hear that I'd got back from the Golden South. Cheerio, Goodie! How are you? Goin' to Doncaster or a funeral?"

The sallow-faced Mr. Goodie said nothing but looked pleadingly from one to the other of his companions.

"This room is private," roared Dr. Blanter, his face purple with rage. "We don't want any damned policemen here. Get out!"

Mr. Luke looked round the table.

"Enough sin here to stock hell for years," he agreed pleasantly. "What's the conference about? Fixin' up the Doncaster programme? What's the swindle, Trigger! I like your new place in Regent

Street—green ribbon appliquéd on the window. True lovers' knot—that's an idea."

Dr. Blanter, who by his attitude and speech proclaimed himself the dominant member of the party, succeeded in controlling a temper which was not always susceptible to control.

"Now, see here, Sergeant——"

"Inspector," murmured the other. "Promoted for exceptional merit and devotion to duty."

"I'm sorry, Inspector." Dr. Blanter swallowed something. "I don't want to make any trouble for you or for myself. You've no right whatever to force yourself upon me or any of these gentlemen. I don't want to know you. Policemen are all very well in their place——"

"They have no place, no home, nobody loves 'em," said Mr. Luke sadly.

"Been on vacation, Mr. Luke?" The stout Trigger sought to infuse a little geniality into the discussion.

"Yes, South America. Nice country—you ought to go there, Doctor."

"I dare say," Dr. Blanter forced a smile, "but I'm a busy man, old boy. I'm trying to get a living out of racing and so are these gentlemen——"

"I could get a living out of racing, too." Mr. Luke

had a maddening trick of breaking into the conversation and spoiling the most carefully prepared speeches. "I could have had a thousand a year from you for not being too observant."

"Have you ever found us—me out in any dirt?" demanded the doctor, his voice rising. "Have you ever known me to put a foot wrong? Look here, Luke, I'm getting a little bit sick of you and your interference. To-morrow I'm seeing the chief commissioner and there's going to be trouble!"

"Trouble? What have you been doing? Just mention my name to the commissioner and all will be well."

Dr. Blanter leaned back in his chair.

"Well, what is it?" he asked, resigned.

Luke shook his head.

"Nothing, just being a bogey man to scare naughty boys into being good boys. Thought you'd like to know I was around—active and intelligent. What's going to win the Leger, Mr. Trigger?"

The stout little man forced a smile. There were beads of perspiration on his forehead which he did not attempt to remove. Possibly he did not wish to advertise his perturbation, though such an advertisement was unnecessary.

"Burnt Almond looks like the pea," he said conversationally. "They're pretty sweet on his chance at Beckhampton, and they *know!* I shan't have a bet on the race."

"Wise man." Luke nodded approvingly. "Betting is a curse. It has ruined more homes than the talkies."

He got up laboriously from his chair.

"What is Transaction No. 7? One of Goodie's?"

The sallow-faced man shook his head.

"No, Mr. Luke; at least, I hope not. Mr. Trigger is too good a friend of mine to use—um—information I give to him for his—um—business."

"He's a 'gentleman of integrity' too, is he?"

Luke smiled, moved at snail's pace to the entrance, and stood there for a moment, the edge of the door in his hand.

"I'm around—that's all," he said and went out, closing the door noiselessly.

None of the three spoke until—

"Take a screw outside, Trigger," said the doctor, and the fat man made a reconnaissance.

"He's crossing the street." Mr. Goodie was staring out of the window which commanded a view of the thoroughfare below.

"Lock the door; sit down. What the hell's he come

here for?" rumbled the doctor. "That fellow makes me sick!"

"Rustem hasn't come back then?" asked Trigger. "His clerk said he'd be in this morning. Pity we didn't ring him up."

Dr. Blanter marked something and made a silencing gesture.

"Now about this horse, Goodie——" he began, and thereafter they were not interrupted.

CHAPTER II

THERE used to be a brass plate on the door of Mr. Rustem's office inscribed:

ARTHUR M. RUSTEM,
Solicitor
Commissioner of Oaths.

One day the plate was unscrewed and there was substituted one that was smaller and less imposing.

Mr. Rustem was on vacation at the time, was, in point of fact, staying at the Danielli, where he occupied a handsome suite commanding a view of the Grand Canal and the beauty which is Venice.

He had received the news in the form of a telegram which ran:

YOUR CASE HEARD COURTS TO-DAY. STARKER ARGUED CASE BRILLIANTLY BUT JUDGE ORDERED YOUR NAME STRUCK OFF ROLLS. REGARDS. PILCHER.

He was eating an ice cream on the Piazza of St. Mark when the telegram was brought to him by the

hotel courier. He read it through without the least sign of emotion, and, calling for a telegraph form, wrote·

CHANGE DOOR PLATE TO A. M. RUSTEM. THANKS.

He gave five lire to the messenger and went on eating his ice cream. He was not distressed by a happening which before now has driven some philosophical lawyers to suicide.

It had been a foregone conclusion that the court would strike him off; he had been lucky to escape a prosecution. A great fuss to make over a miserable few thousand pounds extracted from a silly old woman's estate. She was dead anyway, and her heirs were stuffy people in the Midlands who were so rich that it was indecent of them to make a fuss at all, especially as the money had been refunded. But there it was: the Law Society had adjudged him guilty of unprofessional conduct in making irregular investments with trust funds, and the brass plate must go.

He administered only one other estate and that was so unimportant that it was hardly worth while to a man who was worth considerably over a hundred

thousand pounds and had an assured income of ten thousand a year. Why on earth he had allowed himself to fool around with the Apperston funds, heaven knew.

A month later he came back to London, approved the plate on the door, and passed into his luxuriously furnished office. Mr. Pilcher, his clerk, greeted him with a grin of welcome. Mr. Pilcher was a young man, a sharp, h'less young man, who wore an air of prosperity not usual in solicitor's clerks. He enjoyed a good salary, made quite a lot of money on the side from betting, patronized Mr. Rustem's own tailor; they shared a common hosier and went to the same barber, for Mr. Pilcher had taken his employer as a model and hoped one day that he would own an expensive car and be in so strong a financial position that he could afford to be struck off the rolls without blinking.

"Bad luck, Pilcher; I'd better transfer your indentures to Doberry and Pank," was Mr. Rustem's greeting.

He sat down and glanced at the urgent correspondence awaiting him.

Pilcher's small and homely face twined into a contemptuous smile.

"What's good enough for you, guv'nor, is good enough for me. I'm chucking the law."

He pronounced it "lore." Mr. Rustem had long since given up all attempts to purify his subordinate's English.

"Chucking the lore, are you?" murmured Rustem good-naturedly. "Well, you're wise. There's nothing in it and you stand to be shot at all the time. Phone to Gillett's and ask them to send a manicurist over—the blonde one—what's her name? Elsie."

"She's on her 'olidays," said Pilcher, "but there's a new girl—a peach."

He went to the outer office to telephone. Mr. Rustem frowned and smiled through his correspondence. He smiled rather readily, this very good-looking man of forty. He did not look forty. His olive skin was flawless and unlined. His black hair, brushed back from his forehead, was thick and polished. His linen was immaculate, his clothes perfectly cut—no man had ever seen him wear the same suit two days in succession. It was generally believed that he was of Oriental origin: "Rustem" was distinctly a name that came from southern Europe. He had many traits which were most peculiarly Eastern—as a linguist, for example, he was unique in his profession.

Old Pervin, K.C. (that untidy cynic) once said:

"Rustem could suborn witnesses in ten languages and blackmail in twenty."

As a youth he had been the lifeboat of every big swindler in the country, securing acquittals in the face of overwhelming evidence. There was not a professional thief in Europe who had not, at some time or other, sat *vis-à-vis* this youthful-looking man and "told him the strength." He had defended murderers and sold their confidences to newspapers after they were well and truly hanged. His big safe had held stolen property worth thousands of pounds against its illegal owner's release from prison. When Mrs. Lamontaine was acquitted of poisoning her husband she came to Arthur Rustem's office and he showed her the packet of arsenic he had taken after a private search from a secret drawer in her desk. If the police had found this packet she would have gone to the gallows. It cost Mrs. Lamontaine half the little fortune she inherited from her husband to buy his services and the other half to buy his silence, for she was ignorant of the fact that a murderess cannot be tried twice for the same offence.

Mr. Pilcher came back.

"The girl's coming over," he said. "She's a bit

refined—but she won't last ten minutes with you, guv'nor."

Mr. Rustem smiled at this tribute to his fascinations and turned to his papers.

"Edna Gray," he tapped a letter. "That's the girl who came into old Gray's property, isn't she?"

Mr. Pilcher nodded.

"She's been up once—there's one for you, Mr. Rustem. Pretty! Gawd bless my life, she's a picture. *And* a lady! Young? About twenty-two, I should think."

Mr. Rustem heard without a great deal of interest. Pilcher's standards of beauty were notoriously odd: he had deceived his employer before by enthusiastic descriptions which were never quite realized in the flesh.

"I want to get rid of this Gray estate," he said. "It isn't worth more than a few thousand. She is sole heiress, isn't she?"

Pilcher agreed.

"I'll get the schedule," he said.

He came back with a foolscap folder and Rustem glanced through its contents.

"Gillywood Farm—um. I'd forgotten that—but Goodie has fifteen years' unexpired lease. Longhall House, where is that?"

"On the farm, don't you remember? About ten acres. You tried to get old Gray to lease it with Gillywood, but he wouldn't. He was born there or something."

Mr. Rustem nodded and smoothed his little black moustache absently.

"She might lease it," he suggested. "Mr. Goodie spoke about it the last time I saw him. Naturally, he doesn't want anybody there overlooking the training ground——"

"The gallops are 'ers too," interrupted the clerk. "About a thousand acres of downland. Gray only gave a five-year lease of 'em and that's nearly expired."

Mr. Rustem closed the folder and looked thoughtful.

"It's curious that I should have forgotten all about it—but I've been so used to bossing the estate that I've almost forgotten it was the property of somebody else."

In this sentence he epitomized his attitude toward all trusts.

"No, that must stay in our hands obviously. Pretty, is she?"

"As a picture," repeated the other with relish.

"Not a big girl—on the small side. English too. I mean, though she's lived in South America she's not a bit foreign. And she's got 'eaps of stuff. Old Gray was her uncle, wasn't 'e?"

Mr. Rustem believed so. He was interested now. He knew little about the late Donald Gray, except that he lived in the Argentine and owned cattle ranches. Mr. Rustem had never met him—the English estate of the dead man had been handled by his late partner in the days when the law firm of Rustem was called Higgs, Walton, Strube & Rustem, and was a respectable business.

"Yes—she's probably rich. These South American ranchers are millionaires, some of them. Pretty, eh?"

The arrival of the manicurist suspended the discussion, and Mr. Rustem was so engrossed in the mental discussion of the Gray estate that he made no effort to challenge her refinement.

"What makes you think she's rich?" he asked when the girl from Gillett's had gone.

Pilcher smiled.

"She's got a Rolls, suite at the Berkeley, an' she's so 'aughty. You know what I mean? I tried to get friendly, asked 'er 'ow she liked England an' whether she'd come over to get a nice 'usband——"

Mr. Rustem stared at him coldly.

"Oh, you did, did you? What a lousy little pup you are, Pilcher! Got all fresh and friendly, did you? I suppose you didn't ask her what she was doing that evening?"

Pilcher smiled: he was not hurt. Quite a number of people had tried to hurt the feelings of this young man without any conspicuous success.

"All wimmin are alike to me," he said with easy contempt. "No, as a matter of fact, I didn't. She's one of these cold women. 'Ard as nails, I'll bet you. No, I just passed the time of day."

"Phone her and tell her Mr. Rustem has come back especially from the Continent to see her and ask her when it will be convenient for her to call."

"Why not pop round and see 'er——" began Pilcher.

"Do as you're told, you poor little rat," said Mr. Rustem without emotion.

Pilcher did as he was told, leaving Mr. Arthur Rustem to the consideration of a problem.

He had hardly time to marshal certain conflictions of interest before Pilcher was back, his mean face beaming.

"Coincidence. She's——"

He jerked his head toward the outer office.

"Miss Gray?"

Pilcher nodded.

"She's got an old boy with her—foreigner."

Rustem thought for a while.

"Will you ask her to come in," he said.

Pilcher went to the door, opened it, and closed it again.

"What about the old boy?"

"If he wants to come in, he must come in," said Rustem with admirable patience.

Pilcher disappeared and returned in a short while, ushering in the visitor with an elaboration of politeness which might have passed as an example of Old World courtesy, but probably did not.

Rustem stood by his desk, very sleek, very much the man of affairs, wondering whether that unfortunate dispute of his with the Law Society was the reason for this visit.

For once Pilcher had not lied. This lady was more than pretty—she was beautiful even to so discriminating and fastidious a connoisseur as Arthur Rustem. The suns of South America had not destroyed a complexion which was without fault, her figure was completely satisfying. He began to take a new interest in

the Gray estate. A grave-eyed young woman, very self-possessed, utterly oblivious of the physical attractions of her agent.

"Mr. Rustem?"

Before he could do more than nod:

"I am Edna Gray, Donald Gray's niece. My banker wrote to you from Buenos Aires and my uncle's lawyer . . ."

Mr. Rustem had seen her seated, had glanced Pilcher out of the room. Now he himself sank into the deep chair and was giving her his profound and deep attention.

"Naturally I remember," he said, in his best family-lawyer style. "Your estates in England, Miss Gray, are not very expensive, but they are, I think, valuable, and you would be well advised to hold them, although I have received one or two tempting offers, especially in regard to the Gillywood Farm. I think the Longhall estate you might very well have——"

"I have come to see you about Longhall," she said. "I intend living there and I understand that part of the grounds has been used by my tenant, Mr. Goodie."

Rustem frowned.

"Of course!" he nodded quickly. "I am afraid I am responsible for that. Mr. Goodie asked permission to use the barns and the stables——"

"That's all right." Her smile was quick and rather sweet. Her incisive and businesslike tone was not quite in tune with her romantic possibilities. "Only he can clear out now, because I want to go down there and put the place in order. Who has the keys?"

Rustem was staggered by the decisive note and thought it was a moment to assert himself.

"Mr. Goodie has the keys. I can get them in a day or two," he said. He shook his head. "But I am not so sure that you will like Longhall, Miss Gray. Have you seen the place?"

She shook her head.

"It is rather a rambling sort of house, and, I am inclined to think, not very healthy. You would perhaps be better advised—I am speaking more as a lawyer than an estate agent——"

"But you aren't a lawyer, are you, Mr. Rustem?" There was nothing offensive in the question, unless her innocence was assumed. "I understood that you had left the practice of the law."

He recovered himself quickly and smiled.

"There was a little disagreement between myself

and the Law Society, but nothing of any great consequence," he said airily. "We have a rather old-fashioned code in this country, and it is very easy to step over the edge."

He was angry with himself, to find that he was apologizing to this pretty stranger, more angry that he, who invariably led all situations and had held his own in some that were infinitely delicate, should find himself floundering behind. If she had been less pretty it would have been more easily borne; he would, at any rate, have been spared the confusion which was now his. She gave him little chance to recover.

"Where is Mr. Goodie now?"

"He has, I believe, gone to Doncaster," said Mr. Rustem, a little ruffled. "I was to have met him yesterday, but my arrival in England was delayed by fog. Doncaster is a town in the north of England——"

"I know where Doncaster is," she said. Again that smile came and went. "He has the keys?" She looked thoughtfully at the carpet. "There's a race meeting, isn't there—of course, the St. Leger. I may go up and see him. Do you know where he's staying?"

Mr. Rustem did not know where this young lady's

tenant was staying. His interest in Mr. Goodie was not to the extent of keeping track of his movements.

Edna Gray rose unexpectedly. She was nothing if she was not abrupt.

"I should like to see you next week, Mr. Rustem, about the estate, I mean. Perhaps you will take the question up with my lawyers."

She opened her bag and took out a card, which she laid on the table. Before Arthur Rustem could recover from his surprise she had left him with a little nod, opened the door before he could reach it, and, picking up her companion, who had been sitting gazing soberly and solemnly at a royal calendar hung on the opposite wall, she passed out into Lincoln's Inn Fields, so quickly that Pilcher, who was checking up a schedule in his little office, did not see her go.

Edna Gray stopped on the sidewalk and looked at her companion. He was a man of some age, dressed in sober black and a soft black sombrero which would have revealed his identity in Buenos Aires, but had an eccentric look in the streets of London. A patient, sad-eyed man, older than his years.

"Well, Mr. Garcia, he was right."

Mr. Garcia looked blank.

"Are you sure?" he asked almost pleadingly. "It is wrong, perhaps, my dear Edna, to jump at conclusions. This man on the boat—he was, I grant you, a very pleasant gentleman, but he may have made a mistake—who shall not make mistakes? You must not jump to conclusions, my dear child."

She smiled ruefully.

"I can't get to them any other way. He is not a nice man. Very sleek, very—what shall I call him?—like one of the characters in a Dickens book, very oily and suave—and dangerous. I am glad he is not my lawyer."

She had signalled the car; it drew up noiselessly to the curb and she entered, followed by the old man.

"I am going down to Berkshire to look at this home of mine," she said determinedly. "I am sure there is some swindle in it. And then I am going to Doncaster. Will you come?"

He shook his head and pulled nervously at his little white beard.

"No, my child, I must go to Germany. I simply ache to see my dear Vendina. Perhaps they will let me buy him back," he said wistfully. "It was madness to sell. But then they told me, my studgroom, my

nephew, everybody, that I am impracticable and will end in bankruptcy, but the sum offered was too good for me to refuse."

He sighed heavily, for Vendina, by Craganour out of Vendira, was something more than a thoroughbred three-year-old that he had bred and nursed from ugly foaldom to four-year-old maturity. He was (in the eyes of Alberto Garcia) the supreme colt in the world, and when he had been sold to a German stud farm one half of his life had been blotted out.

"Sentimentalism is stupid—I am stupid. It is generally acknowledged." He spoke slowly with only the slightest trace of a foreign accent. "I should have raced him myself."

He looked sadly out of the window and shook his head at some unspoken thought.

"Perhaps they will let me buy him back. Think of it, Edna, not one letter have they sent to me about him. Is he well? Is he ill? Did he endure the voyage? Were they astonished at his beauty when he arrived at the Heras? They are completely heartless, these German buyers."

The story of the tragic sale of Vendina was familiar to the girl. From any other person in the world these everlasting references to his lost horse would have

been tiresome and boring, but she loved this old man, her uncle's closest friend.

"Have you seen Mr. Luke?" he asked, and she almost jumped, for she too had been thinking of that shipboard acquaintance.

"No, I haven't seen him since we left the ship." Then suddenly, "Will you come now? It is little more than an hour's drive. They may have the keys at the house."

He looked at her, almost frightened.

All his life old Garcia had followed the dictates of his blood—he was pure Spanish on both sides of his house.

"*Mañana, mañana!*" he murmured. "Tomorrow is also a day, my little friend. You must not hurry me. I am an old man and I am not used to this —hustle is the word, is it not? I must go to Germany."

In the end there was a compromise. They lunched together at the Carlton and left for Berkshire in the early afternoon.

When Edna Gray was very young she had conceived a wholly unjustifiable aversion to lawyers and bailiffs. Learned writers on infant psychology would discover the foundations of her prejudice in the type

of story she was permitted to read in the days of her childhood, stories in which innocent orphans and credulous widows were swindled out of their heritage by sinister men who had their musty offices in Lincoln's Inn Fields, or surly and beetle-browed agents who, in the absence of the rightful owner of the lands, manœuvred their employer's property into their own possession.

It was the type of story most favoured by her indolent governess, who was only too happy to conceal the limit of her competence behind the child's own inclinations.

Edna did not like Mr. Rustem, had been prepared to dislike him even before that amusing man on the ship had expressed his opinion so libellously. She gave her impressions of the lawyer on the journey down.

"I'm sure he's a horrible man," she said.

Old Garcia sighed.

"I did not see him—but I understand your prejudice. Alas! I myself am unreasonable about people. When that unpleasant Englishman came to take away my dear Vendina——"

She listened to the oft-reiterated story of Vendina's sale. If she had not known otherwise, she would have thought that the old man had never bred

any other horse. He had, as she knew, bred thoroughbreds all his life. But Vendina was different.

"He would follow me about like a dog. I could never bear the thought of his going into a racing stable, to be beaten by these terrible jockeys——"

"This must be the place," she said, and slowed the car.

Gillywood Cottage was invisible from the roadway. Two high red walls, one of which, as she afterward discovered, surrounded her own property, turned at right angles here and formed a lane which led to the cottage. The entrance to this lane was barred by a high steel gate which, to make sure of the complete seclusion of Mr. Goodie's training establishment from even an adventurous dog, was covered with a thick wire netting.

She got out and pushed the gate; it opened, and she drove the car down the drive. At the end of fifty yards the drive turned sharply to the right and there was another iron gate, and beyond that, at a very little distance, the cottage, all white and green. This entrance was closed and locked, but there was a hanging bell, and this she pulled.

As she stood waiting, Edna looked round, puzzled. At the top of the high walls was another "run" of

wire mesh held in place by stout steel uprights, evidently fixed in the brickwork. Looking through the bars of the gates, she saw that where the brick wall ended a fence of wire netting began, so that the house was enclosed in a sort of huge cage.

Another curious circumstance which struck her was the heavy iron bars which covered all the windows in sight. It was more like a prison than a country house.

Yet, she could admire the perfect order of the place, the weedless semicircle of gravel before the cottage, the trim lawn, the scarlet geraniums that filled green-painted tubs. To the left she saw the corner of the new stables, and beyond, the white escarpment of the quarried downs. Perrywig Caves must be there: Uncle Donald had often spoken of them, told her stories of their past mysteries. The green crest of the downs swelled over them; there were little tree-filled ravines, and, somewhere beyond, a human community, for she saw the top of a church spire.

A pleasant place. Longhall itself was out of sight behind the chestnuts which marked the southern boundaries of Gillywood Cottage.

She saw the green door open and a man came toward the gate, but did not attempt to open it. He

was big, bullet-headed, blue of jowl, a heavy, forbidding man who eyed her unfavourably.

"What you want?"

He spoke awkwardly, like a man speaking in a foreign language.

"I am Miss Gray. I want to see Mr. Goodie—he has the keys of Longhall."

He glowered at her stupidly: evidently he found her difficult to follow. Then he shook his head.

"No, sen—Mister Goodie is not—she is in——" he paused to rehearse the word and she saw his lips moving. "Don-cast-ro."

"Doncaster?"

He nodded.

"*Sí*—yes. Doncastro."

In an odd, uneasy way his face was familiar to her. She associated it with something that was ugly and a little terrifying. One fact she had learned for certain.

"I am the owner of these lands." She spoke this time in Spanish. "That is my house." She pointed toward the chestnuts. "The Señor Goodie has the keys of the house."

He blinked at her, but the expressionless face remained blank.

"The patron is away, señorita; he has gone to buy

horses in Doncastro. I am the servant of the house; I cannot speak with you."

He walked back to the house and slammed the door.

She stared angrily at its green-painted surface and went back to the car.

"Who is that man?" Garcia's voice was unusually vigorous. "Surely I have seen him! Manuel Conceptione! A rascal who was on my *estancia*—did he seem Spanish?"

"He spoke Spanish," she said. "I think he is a half-breed——"

"Manuel! He disappeared this year. I kicked him off the farm. A thief and worse! Here! Extraordinary!"

She had thought it a remarkable coincidence, but her mind was full of other matters at the moment. She drove the car round to the front of Longhall. The iron gates were closed but she could see the old house behind its curtain of trees. The place wore an air of neglect, weeds were growing in the gravelled drive, and the grass was knee high on what she supposed was the lawn.

"I am going to Doncaster to get the keys," she said finally.

She was rather like that; she would have started

off to the utmost limits of Europe to get those keys. This glimpse of the home which was hers and had held her ancestors was necessary to fire her determination. She was rich enough to buy any estate in England, young enough for a week or two to make no difference, but too young to wait.

As the car turned back to the main road she heard an exclamation from the old man.

"Look, look!"

Descending the slope of the downs was a string of horses. She counted twelve. They moved in single file and were making for the stables behind Gillywood Cottage.

"Stop, please!"

She pulled up the car by the side of the road, and Garcia scrambled out.

"Beautiful—eh? Not good horses perhaps, but they have the blood! Ah, such loveliness!"

She stood by his side, watching.

"Those are Mr. Goodie's horses, I expect," she said. "Why don't you come with me to Doncaster?"

She chatted on until the last horse had disappeared behind a plantation. Still her companion did not move, but stood staring at the trees which hid the walking horses.

"It was a mistake to show you any horses at all," she laughed. "You *must* come to Doncaster."

Without a word he went back to the car, and all the way to London he hardly spoke a word. Two miles from Gillywood Farm he peered out of the window.

"What place is that?" he asked.

It was a large, comfortable-looking inn, before which a motor charabanc was drawn up.

"The Red Lion," she said humorously. "Do you want a drink? You will find there is no good Amontillado in Berkshire."

He did not reply.

The next morning when she called on him at his hotel to tell him she was leaving for Doncaster she learned that he had left London on the night before for the country, taking with him a suitcase.

So he passed out of sight and out of life. . . .

Edna never saw him again.

CHAPTER III

DONCASTER was full, had been full since Monday evening. Every room in the few hotels that the town possessed had been booked since midsummer. An army of visitors had taken possession of such private apartments as were available, and every other house in the Thorn Road area was occupied by strangers to the town. Monday night saw the fair grounds crowded with visitors who wandered between the roundabouts and the side-shows. The same crowd filled the market place on Tuesday morning and gathered in thick groups about the vociferous and eloquent tipsters who offered their wares to their credulous audiences.

It was Leger week in crisp September—the last of the classic races was set for decision; the week of fascinating handicaps. North met South on common ground. The trains from Newmarket were arriving night and day discharging their blanketed passengers. Most of the big houses had been hired for the week by the notables of England; little knots of people gathered in Thorn Road to see royalty emerge in its

glittering limousine; the more popular streets were full of men and women hawking the local "butterscotch."

To Edna Gray the town was a bewildering pandemonium. There was a sort of dourness about it and yet there was a charm: stark commerce in ill-fitting gala attire. There was no blending of citizen and visitor, any more than there could be a blending between the great race course which she had passed and the gaunt pit gears that stood up upon Doncaster horizon.

She had not expected either the suavities of London or the luxuries of Buenos Aires, but it was a little shocking to arrive in a town which could offer her no hotel accommodation and where even garage for her car was hard to find.

Yet, by good fortune, she had secured not only a bedroom but the whole of a house for her use. The house had been let to a lordly owner, but he had—said the landlady—"disappointed." The poor woman welcomed the lady and provided garage for the dusty Rolls and sleeping space for the elderly chauffeur.

Edna was one of the people who thronged the fair grounds and in the morning made her way to the sales paddock. She was in her element, for she loved horses,

and, to her own amusement, found herself bidding for a beautiful Diophon yearling.

Vainly she searched the hundreds of faces about the sales ring for Mr. Goodie. She would not have known him had she seen him, but instinct might have helped her—she had faith in her instinct.

She herself came in for her share of scrutiny. She was more than ordinarily attractive and was, moreover, a stranger to the great racing family. She was twenty-four and looked eighteen. The South American sun had not spoiled the freshness of a complexion which owed nothing to art, though the red mouth seemed too good to be true. Even in her tailored dress she was something of an exotic.

When a buyer in the jargon of the ring said approvingly that she was "difficult to fault," he did her no more than justice.

It was natural that she should think of Alberto Garcia—old Garcia who loved horses better than life, and to whom every new foal that came to his *estancia* was dramatically described as the newest gift of the saints.

How he would adore all this—the brisk bidding that rose to thousands of pounds, the constant coming and going in the ring of these yearling thorough-

breds! She sighed. La Massillia was a long way off, and instinct failed her when she tried to distinguish the elusive Elijah.

She felt terribly lonely; she had never felt so lonely in the Argentine and she ached for the sight of a familiar face. Why had the old man gone "into the country"?—perhaps this was "the country." She looked round hopefully.

Strolling aimlessly down to the market place, never dreaming that relief was so near at hand, she stood for a moment on the outskirts of a crowd which surrounded a grotesque little figure wearing racing colours and a jockey's cap.

"I'm givin' yer the winner of the third race in the card . . . this 'orse has been tried a certainty. This 'orse will be worth a fortune to you. I 'appen to know that it's Trigger's Private Transaction an' when I tell yer that, people, you'll realize you're gettin' for a shillin' what costs the nobility 'undreds an' 'undreds of pounds. . . ."

"Liar!" murmured a voice in her ear, and she turned quickly.

The brown-faced young man standing at her side was a good head taller than she. His face was long and rather melancholy; he had an air of utter weari-

ness. Nevertheless, into his eyes at times came little ghosts of smiles that lit readily and faded almost reluctantly.

She stared at him unbelievingly.

"Yes, it's me," he said, almost sadly. "I know just what you're thinking; you're sad, and why shouldn't you be? There are some people you can't get away from. I'm one of 'em."

"Mr. Luke!" she gasped, and he smiled plaintively.

"I know what you're thinking," he said sadly. "You're thinking that on the *Asturia* you couldn't move without falling over my feet. I'm the world's hoodoo."

"But what on earth are you doing here?" she asked.

She had seen him last on the deck of the big ocean liner, leaning over the rail, staring moodily at the crowded quay. And yet he had been the most pleasant of fellow voyagers and the most useful. To meet him in mid-ocean and then to meet him here again in this sea of humanity seemed almost like fate.

She felt an unaccountable shyness, and remembered, in an odd, inconsequent way, how, the first time they met—it was the day they left Buenos Aires—she had looked upon him as almost elderly. He

looked quite young now, and the eyes which turned to the noisy tipster were alive with laughter.

"Liars amuse me," he said. "Good liars. This feller's a bad liar—I am not amused."

He took her by the arm in a proprietorial way which in any other man would have been offensive, and drew her from the crowd.

"Does he earn his living that way—by giving tips on horse races?"

He nodded.

"By his power of invention," he said gravely. "He's a novelist. Trigger! Good Lord!"

"Who is Trigger?" she asked curiously.

He scrutinized her swiftly before he replied.

"The king pippin of all the tipsters, the Mussolini of turf prophets. Notice the awe in that fellow's voice? Trigger's a phenomenon, and could belong to no other century than this. He's the ninth wonder of the world. Green Ribbon Trigger. Gosh!"

He smiled swiftly as though at some secret thought and then suddenly became grave.

"What are you doing in this arcadia?" he asked. "Buying yearlings? I knew you were keen on horses, but somehow I didn't expect to find you at Doncaster."

She shook her head.

"I've come up to see a man." And then, realizing the possibilities of their meeting: "Do you know him —Mr. Elijah Goodie?"

His face became suddenly a mask. There was no definite movement of muscle that she could detect; only she was conscious of a subtle change.

"Elijah Goodie!" he repeated. "Li Goodie—the trainer?"

She nodded.

"A friend of yours?"

He had a brusque manner, but she was not offended. The sixteen days of their shipboard acquaintance had accustomed her to what she had at first regarded as impertinence.

"No, he's a tenant of mine," she smiled.

He nodded quickly.

"Of course he is. Lord, I might have told you about him. I *did* mention Rustem. Goodie is one of the same crowd. There he is!"

He gripped her by the arm and pointed to a man walking toward them on the other side of the road.

He was a yellow-faced man of between forty and fifty. When she met him later she saw that his eyes

were big and protuberant and were of the palest blue.

The girl would not have guessed that he was a trainer of race horses from his garb or his demeanour. His suit was ill fitting and black. The low, white collar he wore gave him almost a clerical appearance. His movements were slow and laborious. As they watched, he took snuff from a small silver box he carried in his waistcoat pocket, and this was a leisurely process.

"That is Elijah," said her companion with a certain grim enjoyment. "Pretty, isn't he?"

If there was one description which did not fit Mr. Goodie it was "pretty." She stood watching him until he turned the corner, passing down a side street, apparently to his lodging.

He occupied a small room in a very small house, checked every item on his bill, and was regarded even by the most generous of Doncaster landladies as being "near."

"Was that Mr. Goodie?" she said.

"You are impressed—other people have been. A cheerful man for a cocktail party, providing the cocktails were so strong that you didn't notice he was there. Wonderful Mr. Goodie!" Then, abruptly: "Where are you lunching? On the course?"

She had not thought of going to the race course.

"If you will walk down town I will fix everything for you," he said, and although there was no reason in the world why she should walk down town with him, or be in any way dependent upon his help for "fixing" anything, she accompanied this masterful gentleman.

They went into an imposing building which, she discovered, was the Mansion House. He told her it was one of the few mansion houses in England. Leaving her in the hall, he disappeared and came back with a many-coloured ticket and a blue badge.

There was no Members' Enclosure at Doncaster, he explained; the exclusiveness was confined to stands all of which bore strange and unfamiliar names. There was a County Stand, and a Fitz-William Stand, and a Noblemen Stand.

"For the time being you are county," he said as he gave her the blue badge. "Where is our ancient friend?"

She smiled at his impertinence.

"Mr. Garcia? I don't know. He went into the country last night. I was hoping he would come up with me." Then, with a sudden realization of her helplessness: "Where can I lunch?"

He found a restaurant which was surprisingly empty.

"I don't know Doncaster too well. I only know this restaurant because it was on this historic spot that I found Mr. Sepfield, of whom you never heard. He was eating a hearty breakfast as though he had never poisoned a wife and buried her under cement."

He said this so calmly that she stared at him, but he was not joking.

"What are you, then?" she asked breathlessly.

"I am a detective from New Scotland Yard—if you find yourself swooning, put your head down between your knees; it is undignified but efficacious."

"A detective!" she gasped.

"A detective inspector. He is almost the same thing but more of a swell. Didn't you notice all sorts of people turning down side streets to avoid us? If you did, you must not take that as a poor compliment to your own personal attractions. I was the man they didn't want to meet, partly because they don't like me and partly because I don't like them."

She looked at him, stupefied.

"You never told me you were a detective—I mean on the ship. You seem to be——"

She was at a loss to put her thoughts into words.

"A gentleman," he said promptly. "I have cultivated the habit. No, I didn't tell you because I thought it was unnecessary."

"Are you here—on duty?" she asked.

He nodded, then looked at her seriously for a long time.

"I will tell you something that will amuse you," he said. "I have never taken any human woman into my confidence and yet I am taking you. I don't know why. I had a touch of sunstroke when I was in Rio—that may be the explanation. I got all queer and funny and wanted to fight the doctor. Yes, I am on duty; I am an interested spectator and something more. Did you see Trigger? You wouldn't know him, but you may have noticed a big yellow Deville coupé looking like a million dollars."

She had noticed the car, a shiny and radiant thing. It was impossible that it could have escaped her notice. It had filled the street in its lordly progress; lesser cars had made way for it; charabancs had drawn to the curb; even the clanging tramcars seemed to shrink aside, ashamed, as it passed.

"That was Trigger. Joseph Phidias Trigger. The J. P. at the beginning of his name will never be at the end."

"The tipster?" she gasped.

He nodded slowly.

"A prophet—not without honour in his own country. He is a man who is keeping three thousand families in affluence, perhaps more. To be a client of Trigger's is a cachet which will admit you almost anywhere except the county jail—you must have a judge's credentials for that. Trigger's clients are hand-picked, microscopically examined, tested for flaws."

She thought at first he meant that this stout man who had flashed past in the coupé controlled some disreputable organization. Somehow she associated racing with a specialized form of ruffianism, and she was not alone in her illusion. She expressed such a view and Luke chuckled.

"On the contrary: scions of noble houses, colonels in the army and out of the army, owners of country seats, eminent stockbrokers, honest and noble men all of them, and men of wealth and position; there is not one who is not renowned as an upright man *sans peur et sans reproche.*"

"I don't understand."

She was shocked by the revelation: she half wondered whether he was laughing at her.

"You are joking, surely?"

"You mean I am trying to pull your leg?" He shook his head. "No, I am telling you the truth. Do you know what deadly fear lies in the heart of every bluffing and genial bookmaker as he drives to the course to-day? It is that amongst the hundred and twenty horses that will be running to-day there will be a Transaction. That's Greek to you. I will explain it."

She listened entranced while he revealed the *modus operandi* of the Green Ribbon agency.

"The Green Ribbon is purely poetical. It is the only bit of poetry that Trigger knows. It was invented by an imaginative sporting writer to describe the race track—the green ribbon of the turf. Trigger has a number of clients. Those clients have a number of bookmakers in various parts of the country. To Trigger is sent from each a sheaf of telegraph forms backing a horse for from five to ten pounds. The name of the horse is not on the form. Trigger puts that in himself at the last moment. On the day of the race he despatches an army of commissionaires to the various towns and simultaneously these telegrams are handed across the counter. The wires usually arrive at the bookmakers' office after the race is run."

"But that's cheating," she interrupted.

"No, it's not cheating. It happens every day. On the course the horse is not backed at all, and as the starting price is regulated by the amount of money invested on the course, Trigger's Transactions usually win at a long price. He has taken years to choose clients who would not rob him. They send fifty per cent. of their winnings to him, and naturally the temptation is to keep a bit back, but he has weeded out all the bad men. New clients are only accepted on the recommendation of the trusted few. Hand-picked, every one of 'em. Even the commissionaires are hand-picked. He pays them six pounds a week and a noble percentage."

"But if a horse is not backed on the course why should it worry the bookmakers?"

He explained that most of the course bookmakers did an extensive office business—that is to say, they had offices in Manchester or London or Leeds or one of the great centres.

"At the first hint of a horse being a Transaction his price is cut down."

Luke told her of one horse that dropped from twenty to one to five to four in a few minutes on the strength of such a suggestion.

"But, bless you, it never leaks out. There was a

commissionaire once who betrayed his trust, and a horse that should have started at twelve to one became a hot and unbackable favourite on the course. Trigger has an interest in a dozen stables. Before now he has paid thousands of pounds for a horse, kept him a year, entered him in a selling race with his legs heavily bandaged, and the horse has come home by himself at a long price. Naturally, there being no money for him on the course, the people thought that the animal had deteriorated. When I say Trigger entered them, he entered them in somebody else's name; it is always easy to find nominal owners."

"Does he make a lot of money?"

Luke looked at her with a quizzical smile.

"Are you good at arithmetic?" he bantered. "Suppose two thousand clients put on an average of ten pounds—it is ever so much more than that—suppose a horse wins at ten to one. The net amount is two hundred thousand pounds, a hundred thousand of which goes to Mr. Trigger; and his horse always wins. There was once a race of seven runners at Folkestone. Every one of those seven runners was the property of Trigger. We can't prove it, but we are pretty sure we are right. He had bought them the moment the entries appeared. He sent a man down to Folkestone

to back three of them to make a market. A couple of thousand pounds wagered on the course brought those three to a fairly short price. The genuine pea started at very long odds and won in a canter. It was the only horse in the race that was fit to run. The others didn't have a gallop for a week. He's got half a dozen trainers who do as he tells them. He himself owns no horses in his own name. The Jockey Club would not allow it. Any trainer who took a horse of Trigger's would be told that he needn't apply for the renewal of his licence. Now, if you are finished, we will go up to the course and watch the Transaction materialize."

"Does it run to-day?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"Nobody knows. I am only guessing."

He had resources which she did not suspect. Before she realized what had happened he had put her into a big car and they were travelling toward the race course. By this time she had resigned herself to his guardianship and, possibly because of his profession, felt a little safer in a strange world.

"The car is not mine," he explained. "It belongs to my department. They probably pinched it from a plutocratic cat burglar."

She was interested in everything she saw: the endless procession of motor cars moving slowly toward the Town Moor, the thick stream of pedestrians on either sidewalk; the airplanes which buzzed overhead, advertising a popular newspaper; the hawkers who stood by the roadside offering packets of toffee. There were motor coaches in that mile-long procession, white with dust, coaches that had come from as far afield as Liverpool and Newcastle, tiny cars of low horsepower, whose engines went dead at exasperating moments, horse vans, resplendent limousines, ancient victorias—everything that went on wheels and was available.

"There is your boy friend," said Luke, and nodded.

She saw an open car and in the back two men. The first she recognized as Goodie. The second, who was a head taller, was a stranger to her.

"Dr. Blanter," said the detective. "He once doctored human beings, now he doctors bookmakers—amputates their bank balances and extracts their pocketbooks."

"What is he?" she asked.

"He is what is known as a professional backer. He calls himself that at any rate. That is to say, he backs horses for a living, and would be broke if it wasn't

for Trigger. His trouble is mental—he can't stop backing horses, even when he knows nothing about them. And yet he is a rich man."

The strange profession of Mr. Trigger occupied her mind to the exclusion of everything else.

"But surely the bookmakers would not lose such enormous sums without doing something?" she asked apropos of nothing, though he guessed to what she was referring.

"If it happened every week," he said, "they'd go sick, but it doesn't. Trigger never runs more than eight or nine Transactions in a year. This time it is sure to be nine, because the seventh is already advertised. There is generally a month or two between each. He gives the books a breathing space. And, besides, most of his clients are incorrigible bettors and probably have a bet every day of their lives; it is very difficult for them—the bookmakers, I mean—to detect when the blow is coming, and more difficult to cut off their clients. By which I mean to refuse to have any further business with them."

From time to time he glanced at the race card which he had brought in the car.

"I wonder if the Transaction is Ennisby—the horse is in Goodie's stable. He won a race in the

north three months ago and took a fortune out of the public pocket. No, not out of the bookmaker's. After all, the bookmaker is merely an agent who passes on to the winner the money he has taken from the loser. The fewer winners he has to pay the bigger his profit."

He gazed seriously at the massive doctor. He was talking in a deep voice to his companion, who sat with closed eyes; Mr. Goodie might have been asleep or might have been intensively receptive.

"He is a queer-looking fellow. By the way, his friend, Rustem, very seldom comes racing."

"Is Mr. Rustem——"

"He is of the gang," nodded the other. "Little Arthur is their legal adviser, and a pretty good one, too. That is why Trigger has never made a false step or, as the dear doctor says, put a foot wrong. The fact that they are at liberty proves that," he added after thought.

The car crawled round the open spaces before the stands at a painfully slow pace. Luke helped her to alight, pushed a way through the crowd, and in a few minutes she was walking across the wide paddock already crowded with racegoers. A man lifted his hat to the girl and spoke to Luke with that easy

friendliness which is part of the race-course atmosphere.

"What is pulling the trigger to-day, Mr. Luke?" he asked. "There's a rumour he's got something hot running. Goodie has one in the second race, but it hasn't arrived. It's a pretty good horse, too. I saw him win at Ripon."

"It won't be that one," said Luke.

A few minutes later he was stopped again.

"Have you heard a rumour of the Transaction to-day?"

The question was asked and answered.

Edna was amazed at the important part this extraordinary tipster played in the daily life of the turf.

She had always thought of racing in terms of beautiful horses and very kindly gentlemen who were associated as stewards. She knew, of course, that people bet, often bet beyond their means, but it was the first revelation of the enormous part which gambling plays in the national life of England. That morning had given her a view of an inner world of racing which had nothing to do with stud farms and was far removed from those learned discussions on breeding which she had heard over her uncle's dining table. The race course was a kind of frenzied stock

exchange where prices fell and rose and were attached to "stock" which, a minute or two after it had been bought, might be either valueless or pay magnificent profits.

She strolled into Tattersall's by herself at Luke's suggestion.

"Nobody will hurt you or be rude to you; although you will hear quite a lot of bad language. I hope that it will be unintelligible to you," he said. "The safest place in the world for a woman is the race course, and I will give you ten pounds for every man you see drunk in Tattersall's!"

It was her first visit to an English race course. She had expected to find rows of top-hatted bookmakers dressed in extravagant checks and wearing enormous watch guards. She found a few who were noisy, but none who might not have been duplicated from any first-class carriage that carried city men to work. Some looked so aristocratic that she could not believe they were bookmakers at all.

There were very few poorly dressed men in the ring, quite a number of clergymen, who, she discovered, were Irish priests.

Luke joined her after a while.

"It is extraordinary!" she said, shaking her head

helplessly. "Who are these people? Where do they come from?"

Luke looked round and nodded toward three men who were talking earnestly to the most aristocratic of the bookmakers.

"Give a guess," he said, "and tell me what their professions are."

She shook her head.

"I don't know. They wouldn't be very rich people, would they?"

"One of them is the head of——" he mentioned the name of a great financial house. "Another is the Earl of Trayce; the third man, who is now approaching them, and who looks rather like a duke, is the chief of the Cotton Trust, and is worth five millions. If you get a little closer to him you will hear him bargaining for thirteen to eight about a six-to-four chance. If I know Mr. Glowburn he won't get it."

The race started before she could extract herself from the ring. She heard only the great roar as the horses came to the distance, saw a flicker of silk caps pass above the heads of the people who fringed the rails, and the race was over.

Luke made an excuse and left her, and she saw him

going toward Tattersall's ring. He came back to where he had left her.

"I went to discover the price of this horse. Practically unbacked on the course—a weed from a northern stable who has won at a hundred to six! If that's not a Trigger Transaction I'm a Dutchman!"

He was right. Somewhere in London the name of the horse the astute Mr. Trigger had sent to two thousand clients was known. A frantic effort was made to reach the course in time, telephone and tic-tac men signalled a warning thirty seconds after the race had started—which was thirty seconds too late.

CHAPTER IV

"THAT's that," said Mr. Luke grimly. "The date in the advertisement was a fake to put everybody off. Let's come and see the horse sold."

He was a washy-looking chestnut, owned and trained by a north-county trainer. Consulting his book, Luke found that he had only run once and that as a two-year-old.

Bidding at the sale ring rose to twelve hundred guineas before the plater was bought in by the owner.

"That was one out of the bag," said Luke cryptically. "The fellow who is supposed to own him has never had twelve hundred guineas in his life! There's the owner."

He pointed to the rotund Mr. Trigger walking complacently across the paddock. He smoked a very long cigar and was as obviously at peace with the world as he was satisfied with himself. Blanter and Goodie were standing by the rails, deep in consultation, and presently Trigger joined them.

"They advertised this coup for some period follow-

ing Thursday. The advertisement was quite unnecessary as a bringer-in of new business; they get most of their clients by recommendation—you can't keep pace with the beggars," he added ruefully.

"You seem to have a personal grievance. Are they doing anything wrong?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"The actual tipping of horses and the winning of races is not only right but commendable. No, it's their method which interests me and the Jockey Club. In this case their conduct is probably unexceptionable. The horse that won was purchased as a yearling for two thousand guineas, ran once as a two-year-old, and nothing has been seen of him since—he has been laid by for this little ramp, just as other horses have been laid by. Trigger and his gang have learned the real secret of successful racing—which is patience, and patience, and then patience!"

As she looked at the group it disintegrated. Trigger and the doctor walked at a leisurely pace toward Tattersall's; Mr. Goodie was left by himself, chewing a half-smoked cigar. He was a picture of gloom and melancholy as he stood with his back to the railings, his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, his eyes fixed upon the ground.

"I want to meet him—will you introduce me?" she asked.

Luke hesitated.

"Yes, of course. I was wondering whether it would be wise for me to appear in the rôle of friend, but they have probably had me watched ever since I came here, and anyway it will be all to the good that they should know you are in touch with the police."

He walked with her toward Goodie, who did not look up, even when they stood before him. Yet Edna's rare instinct told her that the man had been watching them from under his lowered lids all the way across the paddock.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Goodie. I want you to meet Miss Edna Gray."

Goodie looked up slowly, withdrew one of his thumbs from his waistcoat pocket, and offered a limp hand. A closer view of him was even less attractive than she had thought. The yellow face was covered with a network of lines; it was like a yellow apple that had been left to shrink and dry. It was difficult to tell his age—he might have stood as a model of some ancient man who had outlived the oldest of his generation.

There was a peculiar look in his eyes—a sort of resentment, which she thought at first was for her companion but afterward found was habitual in him.

"How d'you do, Miss Gray?"

He spoke slowly; his pale, unwinking eyes seemed to search her mind.

"I heard you were coming home. You wanted the keys? I have telegraphed to Mr. Rustem to send them to you. He is staying—um—the week at my little place. I'm sorry you're going to Longhall—um—I am indeed. I'm afraid the place is overrun with—um—rats. It's difficult to keep them down near a stable, Miss Gray. You will find them a great plague."

He paused, licked his pale lips, never taking his eyes from her.

"They are big rats, extraordinarily fierce. One of my stable men was attacked by a drove of them last week."

She nodded.

"I like rats," she said calmly, and Luke, hardened man as he was to all surprise, gasped.

Only for a second was Goodie taken aback.

"You will have a great—um—opportunity of studying them," he said.

The butt of the cigar which was in the corner of

his mouth was unlighted; he made no effort to remove it when he spoke to her, but rather talked through it; and never once did he move his eyes from hers.

"My house man told me you had called. I am sorry I was not at home. Did you see my horses?"

It was so unlike Goodie to indulge in small talk that Luke was a little staggered. Yet, if he knew the man, not one word of what he was saying was purposeless.

"We caught a glimpse of them returning from the downs," she said, suspecting nothing as she added: "I took Mr. Garcia down with me. He's a breeder of race horses. He was delighted to see an English——"

"String," suggested Mr. Goodie. He nodded slowly. "Mr. Garcia, a breeder of race horses. . . . I am glad," he said. "I give my horses good corn and healthy stables. I hope you will get your keys safely, and anything I can do for you, Miss—um—Gray, you may command me. As I say, the rats——"

"I'm looking forward to the rats," she said.

She shook his limp hand at parting. As they walked across the crowded lawn Luke said:

"You really don't like rats, do you?"

"I loathe them," she said, with her quick smile, "but I refused to be intimidated. He doesn't want

me to take over Longhall and I'm determined to live there."

He stopped and stared at her.

"You're going to *live* there—in that house near Goodie's?"

She nodded.

"By yourself?"

"Of course—with servants."

For the first time she resented his interference in her affairs, but it was only a momentary spasm of antagonism and passed instantly.

"Why shouldn't I, Mr. Luke?"

"Because I jolly well say you mustn't!" said Luke emphatically. "I thought you wanted to see the place out of curiosity, and that you were letting it. I didn't dream you thought of living there. Do you know what Goodie was before he was a trainer of race horses?"

Before she could answer they heard a scream behind them; there was a quick movement of the people, and both turned simultaneously to witness the strangest sight that had ever been seen on a race course.

In some manner a dog had gained admission to the paddock; a long, hungry-looking wolfhound.

There was one horse in the ring, walking round with his attendant, and the dog, who had darted across the course through the paddock gates, leaped into the ring behind the horse's heels. The terrified beast lashed out, must have grazed the hound's shoulder. Turning with a snarl, he leaped straight at the horse's throat. In a second the horse went up on his hind legs, beating ineffectively with his paws, screaming with terror. Then into the ring sprang a man—Goodie. In two strides he had reached them, and, gripping the great mastiff with one hand and the horse's bridle with the other, with a quick jerk of his wrist he flung the hound into the middle of the ring and the dog lay there motionless. The horse, his shoulder streaked with blood, backed away, screaming and kicking, but Goodie had him firmly by the bridle, and in a few seconds was joined by the trainer of the horse. As for the dog, it did not move.

"Dead," said Luke laconically. "Goodie broke his neck! That old fellow's got the strength of an ox."

Edna stared at this unimposing man as he stooped under the rail of the ring and pushed his way through the throng.

"How amazingly brave!" she said, awe-stricken.

"That's his job," said Luke. "Before he was a

trainer of race horses he trained wild beasts—went into the cage with lions; eventually owned his own travelling menagerie. That's why you're not going to Longhall."

This time she was really annoyed.

"You're proprietorial, Mr. Luke," she said, shortly.

"That's my weakness," he said. "Come on the stand, if you haven't had enough excitement for one day."

She had made up her mind to leave Doncaster on the following morning, and it was hardly worth while quarrelling with the man who had been very good to her and whom perhaps she would not meet again.

They climbed the interminable stairs in silence, and joined the company at the top of the stand. From here she enjoyed an uninterrupted view of the race course, and he drew her attention to knots of men in the far distance.

"Playing pitch and toss," he explained. "It's not so prevalent as it used to be—they used to gamble for hundreds of pounds. They never see a single race and are wholly uninterested in winners or losers."

He pointed out the various landmarks, but she was more fascinated with the dense, moving throngs that packed the enclosures.

The second race was signalled and the horses were going down one by one to the post when she climbed up to the highest tier of the stand. Over the wall she looked down into the street below, saw the balcony of the Deaf and Dumb Institute crowded with little boys taking an excited interest in the unusual festival. As she glanced idly to the left she saw a big car swing round from the London road and come to a halt before the stand entrance. It was white with dust, and the two occupants, muffled in their leather coats, were indistinguishable. They got down stiffly, but as one opened his coat and pulled off his leather cap and goggles she saw with astonishment that it was the immaculate Mr. Arthur Rustem, more dishevelled than she might expect to see him.

His companion she could not recognize; he was a smaller man, and apparently a subordinate. She fixed her race glasses on his face and had no difficulty in identifying him. It was the objectionable young man at Mr. Rustem's office—the clerk. Turning toward the entrance, Rustem disappeared from view. She went back to Luke and told him what she had seen.

"Rustem here? He doesn't usually go racing."

He put up his glasses and searched the paddock, and as he did so he saw the leather-coated Mr. Rus-

tem threading his way through the people. The three men he sought were in the farthermost corner of the paddock. Dr. Blanter, the stout little Trigger, and Goodie. He saw the trainer turn to meet the approaching figure of the lawyer, and the little group closed in, head to head. It must have been something vastly important that Rustem had come to communicate, for through his glasses he saw Dr. Blanter's face distorted with anger.

Trigger, who was the scout of the party, looked round every few seconds, as though in search of possible eavesdroppers. When a group of racegoers came near them they moved a little farther along and continued their discussion. Once Luke saw the trainer pointing up toward the stand.

"I've got a hunch they're speaking about us," he said. "Do you see them?"

She nodded.

"I wonder if he's brought my keys?" she asked innocently as she put her glasses down.

"Your keys! Can you see Rustem coming up to Yorkshire——"

He broke off. Three of the men were coming rapidly across the paddock and presently passed out of sight. Running to the top of the stand, Luke looked over

the wall. The big dust-covered car still stood at the entrance, and Pilcher was walking up and down the pavement, smoking a cigarette.

The three came out. There was another little conference on the sidewalk. Pilcher reached into the car and took out a small attaché case, and immediately the others climbed into the car, which, with a roar of engine, swung round and went back the way it had come.

"Going back to London. I wonder why?" said Luke thoughtfully. "And why have they left Pilcher?"

"Do you know him?" she asked, in surprise.

"I know everybody," said the detective.

When he looked over again Pilcher had disappeared. He might have boarded one of the tramcars that were running into the town.

"I wonder what's the hurry?"

Luke was evidently perturbed and worried, and she could only wonder what exactly was his mission at Doncaster. It was very unlikely that Scotland Yard, which is never over-staffed, would detach an important officer to watch the operations of Trigger's Transactions.

"They may come back to-morrow. Probably some-

thing went wrong with the Transaction. It's important, whatever it is."

He drove her to her house before the last race, and when he offered to take her out to dinner and show her round the fair grounds, she could find no excuse for refusing.

She had tea in the sitting room she had hired, and in the course of the meal the landlady told her, with every evidence of satisfaction, that she had had another "let." A gentleman had taken the downstairs bedroom and sitting room.

"Still, it's only two, miss," she complained, "and I've had as many as ten in the house for t'Leger week."

Edna was no more interested in the "let" than she was in the landlady's account of her daughter's illness, which accompanied the clearing up of the tea things.

The girl had some pleasant work to do: she had brought big furniture catalogues from London, carpet and curtain designs, and spent an hour in the most delightful occupation a woman can devise—planning the furnishing of her house.

Edna Gray had been a shorthand-typist at the age of seventeen, when her mother died; she had lived

frugally on a small wage, and was entirely without prospect. She knew she had an uncle somewhere in South America but he had had no definite existence for her until that surprising cable of his came, asking her to join him. For six delightful years she had lived the life of her dreams, in the saddle every day, the mistress of a luxurious house; and on the death of her uncle, she became his sole heiress. She was a rich woman now and could afford to redesign her life.

Longhall she had visited as a child, and retained not-too-pleasant memories of its sombre magnificence. And now it was hers—that beautiful old Tudor house and its thousands of acres. It had been old Donald's wish that she should return to England on his death, and in a sense it was an easy request to fulfil, for she had very few friends in South America. Her uncle had lived an insular life, and the girl had seldom come into Buenos Aires except for periodical visits to her dressmaker or the theatre.

Mr. Garcia was almost her only friend, and it brought no great pang to cut herself adrift from that life she had lived on the *estancia*. In England were several old friends who might be picked up, acquaintanceships which might ripen into friendships, interests which her wealth could command.

When she was dining with Luke that night she told him her plans.

"You're going to own race horses, are you? Well, you might do worse—if you can afford it. I won't risk the snub which would come my way if I asked you how much money you've got. Besides, I happen to know it is a quarter of a million, and that you've got thirteen thousand a year to play with, and possibly a great deal more in a few years' time. But you're not going to live at Longhall."

"Why?" she asked defiantly.

"Because I don't want you to," he said. "It may seem rather an inadequate reason, but it is all I can give for the moment, because my real objection rests on a theory which has not been proved—at least, not to anybody's satisfaction but my own. You went there, did you? Did you see the bars on the windows, and the iron gates and the mesh-net fencing? And do you know why the new stables that Goodie bought are unoccupied, and why he had to build another lot half a mile from the house, on the slope of the downs? And have you seen Perrywig Cave? That is on the property he rented from you. It has two iron gates, and is popularly supposed to be haunted by the ghost of a lady who was murdered there about twenty years ago."

His look was a challenge, but his eyes did not waver nor did he smile.

"I'm serious—the villagers thereabouts will tell you that on certain evenings the screams of that unfortunate lady curdle their blood. Wonderful expression that, 'curdle their blood.' One of those perfect illustrations which could only be thought up by simple and pastoral people."

He paused.

"Well?" she asked, the challenge more definite. "Have you heard the screams of the 'unfortunate lady'?"

"I have heard them," he said simply, "and it was not pleasant."

She began to laugh, quietly at first, and then her merriment overcame her and she laughed aloud.

"Ghosts!" she said scornfully. "Rats!" and added hastily: "I am not being rude. I am merely referring to the little brown ghosts that are supposed to haunt Longhall. I don't believe in them, and I don't believe in your ghost either. Is that why you don't want me to go down?"

Luke spread butter on a piece of toast with great deliberation.

"Partly," he said.

"Well, I'm going." She tapped the table with her little fist. "I don't believe in ghosts or rats or anything. I'm going to live in Longhall because my grandfather, and his father, and generations of Galliwoods lived there—I don't know how they've come to turn it into Gillywood."

He looked at her for a long time without speaking.

"In that case you'd better let me come along and search the place for you before you take over," he said. "I am a great hunter of rats, human and rodent. And I'd like you to let me give you some advice about servants."

Her mouth opened in surprise at this staggering suggestion.

"You ought to have a butler and a footman and a handyman, whatever women you have about the place. I'm very serious. It's a terribly lonely situation, and menservants have got to be carefully chosen. Just now there's a plague of criminals wandering around England with false credentials."

"Why should you do this?" she asked.

"I get a commission on their salaries," he said flippantly.

He walked with her back to the house, and they arrived at the same moment a telegraph boy got off

his bicycle before the house and looked at the address on a brown envelope by the light of his lamp.

"Miss Gray?"

She felt rather than saw the detective's start.

"Who knows you're here?"

"The manager of the Carlton Hotel," she said solemnly. "I sent him a wire, telling him I should be back to-morrow and asking him if Mr. Garcia had returned to London. Why?"

"I'm just interested," he said.

He had many habits which she was not quite sure she liked, but was equally uncertain as to whether they were objectionable. He rarely shook hands; his parting gesture now was to pat her shoulder gently.

"Good-night. I'll give you the winner of the Leger to-morrow."

"I may be gone early in the morning," she said.

And then, as a thought struck her: "Where are you to be found?"

He was staying at the principal hotel, the Woolpack, a name which was as quaint as it was easy to remember.

CHAPTER V

EDNA's landlady opened the door to her and showed her up to her sitting room. A little fire had been lit, a welcome and comforting luxury, for the night was very chilly.

She opened the telegram and read. Mr. Garcia had not returned. Perhaps, after all, he had gone off to Germany and was already reunited with his beloved Vendina.

She sat for a long time before the fire, reviewing the odd day, which had started at the sale ring and had ended in a tête-à-tête dinner with a man who was almost a stranger to her and whom she had certainly never expected to meet again.

She was dead tired when she went to bed at eleven o'clock, and fell into an uneasy sleep. She dreamed that she was riding a horse across the broad pampas, and a great dog, with an ugly yellow face, had leaped up at her. She woke up suddenly, as one does from nightmares, a little tremulous. She switched on the

light and looked at the clock; it was half-past two.

Then she heard a faint sound in the sitting room, which opened from her bedroom. She sat up in bed and listened. There it was again—the scraping of a chair against the floorboards.

It could not be half-past two yet; the clock must be wrong. She looked round for her handbag, in which, earlier in the day, she had put her little diamond-studded watch which never lost a second in a month. The bag was not there; and then she remembered she had left it on the table in the sitting room.

She slipped her feet into her mules and, drawing on a dressing gown, crossed to the door and turned the key in the lock. As she did so, she heard a quick scurry of slippered feet, and at the moment she turned the key another door slammed.

Cautiously and more than a little nervously, Edna went into the sitting room and turned on the light. Her bag was where she had left it, but it was open and empty, its contents strewn upon the table. She saw the watch: the thief had overlooked that.

She thought the intruder had gone away empty-handed until she remembered that, just before she had gone to bed, she had put in the bag the telegram

she had received from London. That had gone; she found the envelope but it was empty.

Going to the sitting-room door, she locked it. The fire was out, but she rekindled it with wood that had been left in the coal scuttle in preparation for the morning, and sat down, very wide awake, to puzzle out this extraordinary occurrence.

Was she still dreaming? Had she imagined it all? Even as the thought occurred to her, she saw something under the table and, stooping, picked it up. It was a man's soiled wash-leather glove.

So it was not a dream! But if it weren't . . . She shrugged away the thought that she had been in any personal danger. Doncaster would be full of petty thieves just now; but why should any thief be so petty—and so stupid—as to leave behind a diamond-studded watch worth the greater part of two hundred pounds, a gold-and-emerald cigarette case worth another hundred, and take only a very prosaic telegram addressed to her by the manager of a London hotel?

The excuse that he was disturbed in his work would not hold. He had had ample time to turn out the contents of the bag and examine them; to slip the money and jewellery into his pocket would not have taken

a second. This midnight thief had time to take the telegram from its envelope, possibly read, and certainly carry away, the message.

The heat of the fire made her drowsy again, and she went back to bed and slept until the rattling of the dining-room door woke her, and she went out, with an apology, to admit a grumpy housemaid.

"You needn't have locked the dining-room door, miss. There's a key of your own. I have to come in mornings and make t'place tidy."

After a bath and a hot cup of tea Edna's inclination was to laugh at the events of the night. Luke called while she was in the middle of breakfast, and accepted her invitation to join her, though he admitted calmly that he had already had a very hearty meal.

Edna told him of what had happened in the night, and he was distinctly not amused.

"Do you remember what was in the telegram?"

She repeated it almost word for word.

"And they didn't take the money or the watch? That's queer. Is anybody else staying in the house —I mean, any other boarder?"

She remembered then the young man who had appeared so providentially, from the landlady's point of view, the night before.

Luke went down to make inquiries and came back in five minutes with the information that the lodger had left early that morning, having most generously paid the satisfied landlady four days' rent. He had carried his attaché case to the station, and had taken his departure at the extraordinary hour of half-past six.

"A train leaves Doncaster for London at six forty-five, and that's the way Mr. Pilcher went."

"Pilcher?"

He nodded.

"The landlady described him faithfully. Working-class Yorkshire people have no illusions and are not given to flattery. Yes, it was our friend Pilcher."

"The man who came into my room——"

"Was our friend Pilcher," repeated Luke. "He occupied the front room, was sitting up when you returned last night, and through the window saw the telegraph boy hand you the telegram. If the boy had arrived earlier it would have saved you a fright, for he would have opened the telegram and replaced it on the hall table. My impression is that he was waiting for that telegraph boy."

"But why should he? There was nothing in it. If he'd come to my room and asked me for it I'd have given him it."

The detective helped himself to a small sausage from the central dish and dissected it with great care.

"Why did Rustem make that journey from town?" he mused, without looking up from his plate. "It couldn't have been to place his mean-faced clerk in lodgings with you, because he didn't know where you were lodging. And anyway, Pilcher could have come up by train. And why have they all gone back to town? Not to count their legal gains and rightful loot, because King Trigger is still in Doncaster. He has a room next to mine, and there is nothing in his trunk, his suitcase, or his pockets which supplies a reason why he shouldn't be."

"How do you know?" she asked.

"He's a gentleman who eats well and sleeps rather heavily. Where has Mr. Garcia gone?" he asked abruptly.

She told him all she knew.

"He has probably gone to Germany; he has been aching to go ever since he arrived."

"Was Vendina a very good horse?" he asked.

She could speak of the perfect Vendina with an enthusiasm she had borrowed from the old man.

"I don't think it was ever raced. But both Mr. Garcia and his stud groom told me that it was the

greatest horse that was ever foaled in South America. The Germans paid an enormous price for it—fifteen thousand pounds, I think it was. My uncle used to say it was the most beautiful foal he had ever seen. Poor Mr. Garcia was rather silly about it—wouldn't have it touched with spur or whip. That is why the horse never went into training. Alberto hated seeing horses hurt, and for that reason he would never go to a race course."

Luke sat for a long time, looking down at his plate.

"Racing is a queer game," he said at last.

"You speak feelingly," she smiled.

He shook his head.

"I've never had a shilling on a horse in my life. I like 'em too much."

"Horses?"

"No, shillings. I'm Scottish. As a matter of fact, I was born in London and I'm not so mean as I sound, but I don't bet because it doesn't amuse me, and because I have a little income of my own and am never tempted by necessity. Are you going racing to-day?" he asked.

It was her intention to return to London that morning, she said, and he considered her answer as though it were of the utmost importance.

"What will you do when you get back to town?"

She had no very definite ideas for her immediate plans. The world was a flower garden which offered many choice blooms for the picking.

"I want you to promise me something. Don't go to Longhall alone."

Her lips twitched.

"I'm not being funny or melodramatic," he said earnestly; "I'm merely asking you as a friend. I want you to do something as a great favour to me. Will you ring me up at Scotland Yard—I shall be in town to-morrow myself—and when you go down to view this property, let me go with you?"

"Am I under police protection?" she smiled.

In a sense, he said, he thought she was.

"I don't know that you're in any particular danger or need protection, but I should like to bring a man down to vet the place. He's an authority on certain things, and together we might be of some help to you. As for going back to London——" He shook his head. "If you're advised by me you will see the Leger. It's one of the greatest races of the year, and you know enough about the course now to get along without my assistance. I'll see that you have a reserved

carriage to London, and possibly I'll come back with you."

She was amused.

"You might at least ask if I want you to come back with me, but I'm beginning to realize that you're not terribly conventional. All right, I'll see the race. It will be something to tell Mr. Garcia."

That afternoon she looked upon the greatest throng she had ever seen assembled. It was a fine day, and all England was represented in the overfilled public enclosures, and Yorkshire itself lined the rails ten deep. She detected something electric in the atmosphere she had missed on the previous day, and saw history made in a thrilling finish when a fifty-to-one chance squeezed home by a short head. The view was perfect from the top of the stands. Luke could not get up in time, but had a good view of the race, he told her, from the sloping lawn.

He was moving toward the stands to meet the girl when someone touched his arm, and he turned to meet the ingratiating smile of a little man who looked like a jockey run to seed. He was not over-clean; the shabbiness of his attire certainly did not advertise his wealth.

"You remember me, Mr. Luke—Punch Markham?"

Luke knew Punch very well. The little man had had the misfortune to pass under his official review and had been sentenced to three months' hard labour for obtaining money by false pretences.

"I'm going straight now, Mr. Luke. It's not a paying game, going straight. I come up from London stowed away on a charabanc. That'll give you a laugh! Got under the driver's seat. It wasn't half hot—it was right over the engine. That's a new one on you, Mr. Luke, stowing away on a charabanc! An old owner of mine gave me a free ticket on the course for old time's sake. They ain't forgot I had one of the best little horses in the country under my charge. Haven't seen anything of old Goodie, have you? I've been looking for him all over the place, trying to touch him for a quid—and I'm entitled to it, too."

"Why are you entitled to anything, Punch, from that eminent trainer?" asked Luke, not averse to the least scrap of information about Elijah Goodie.

"Eminent trainer!" said the little man scornfully. "I could train his head off! Lions and tigers, yes, but horses—no. Though I admit he's done wonders with that foal I sold him—the Blandford foal, Mr. Luke;

you know it? Won a race at Stockton the other day."

"Field of Glory?" said Luke, and the little man nodded.

"That's him! I'll bet they won a packet on him. It wasn't in Goodie's stable, but Goodie's got him now. You never know who owns horses in that crowd. I sold him for sixty-five guineas. He was bred by a farmer in Ireland——"

"Don't give me his history, Punch; I'm in a hurry."

"He's the only horse I know that had odd feet—three big 'uns and one little 'un. That's why the farmer sold him—said he was a freak. Goodie never found it out. I plastered his hoof round with cobbler's wax—it's a fact, Mr. Luke. The games I have got up to . . ."

"None of your villainous reminiscences."

He put his hand in his pocket and took out a ten-shilling note.

"I'm throwing this in the gutter, Punch. This half sovereign only means the difference between drunk and sober."

"I'll swear I never drink nowadays. Can't afford it. It's as much as I can do to get enough to eat," said Punch, his grimy paw closing on the bill. "You've

been a good feller to me, Mr. Luke. I always say that coppers aren't as black as they're painted, and busies are generally white when you get down to their better nature."

Luke did not stop to listen to the encomia. He had seen the girl come through the narrow passageway leading from the paddock, and joined her.

"A wonderful race," he said. "It would have done Trigger's heart good to have had that fellow on the wire—fifty to one! He would have had the Green Ribbon office painted red. And now, young lady, I'm ready. There's a good train coming down from Leeds: it stops at Doncaster, and I have reserved a compartment."

"Who was that little man you were speaking to?" she asked.

She had reached the stage of friendship with him when she could gratify her curiosity without apology. On the way to the station he told her Punch Markham's history. He had been a good jockey and a successful trainer, but had had too many friends. One day the stewards had evinced an interest in the running of one of his horses. Punch had duly appeared before the august stewards of the Jockey Club and had had his licence withdrawn; he was lucky to escape

being warned off. He made a living by buying and selling horses, was one of the most famous horse doctors in England, and it was generally believed that he had something to do with one or two big turf swindles, though in these he probably played a minor part. He was not greatly trusted, even by the people who employed him.

"You get quite a lot of people of that kind connected with the turf, but against those you've got to set the thousands of decent men and women who would never dream of breaking even a by-law of the turf. You never hear about those, but they are the backbone of the game. You're bound to have wrong 'uns who live on racing. Money is pretty easy for the rogue to get."

CHAPTER VI

On the journey back to town Edna had an opportunity of studying the man who had erupted into her life so violently and unexpectedly. He was not like any police officer she had imagined. His English was good, his voice gentle and cultured. She who, in the days when she was a stenographer, had met many types, and rather prided herself upon her ability to place even the most obscure, was a little baffled by this man. He sat in a corner of the carriage, his eyes closed, and she scrutinized him cold-bloodedly. He was not very good-looking, though she admitted to herself that he was attractive. In repose his face was sad; his mouth drooped; his long, thin nose seemed to grow longer. He had good eyes, and, except for the touch of gray at his temples, looked youthful. He was not her idea of a police officer at all.

In the course of the journey he mentioned casually that he spoke Spanish, and, thinking he was bluffing, she asked him a question in that language, to be instantly answered in faultless Castilian. Languages, he

confessed, came easily to him, and he spoke three or four.

"Not so many as brother Rustem—he's strong on the Oriental side. Greek and Arabic are his mother tongues—came from somewhere in Macedonia originally. I've never forgiven the Turks for not making him one of their high-class atrocities. He's not your lawyer any more, of course?"

"Why 'of course'?"

"Because he's been struck off the Rolls. Didn't you know?"

"You told me on the ship."

He nodded.

"So I did! I knew I'd done somebody a shot in the eye, but I thought it was Goodie. I wasn't aware you knew Goodie. Don't trust Rustem. And——" He hesitated.

"What?" she asked.

"Well"—it was the first sign of diffidence he had shown—"he's rather a lady killer."

He found himself on slippery ground, and floundered in his effort to make a recovery.

"I am not suggesting that he'll—er——"

"Make love to me? Why shouldn't he? Really, Mr. Luke, you're a little too protective!"

He grinned sheepishly at this, and even had the good grace to change colour in his embarrassment, to her intense amusement. She could forgive him.

He left her at King's Cross Station, but not until she had promised to notify him when she made her visit to Longhall. When she reached the hotel she found a long telegram awaiting her; it had been handed in at Southwest Berlin.

WILL YOU PLEASE PAY MY BILL AND SEND MY BAGS TO FRIEDMANNS AGENCY, FRIEDRICHWILHELMSTRASSE 719, BERLIN. AM GOING BAVARIA FOR SHORT HOLIDAY. MY BEAUTIFUL VENDINA IS WELL AND REMEMBERS ME. ADIOS. ALBERTO.

Mr. Garcia had a playful habit of signing himself by his Christian name.

So he had gone to Berlin, after all! That was a little load off her mind.

She went up to her suite and found a dozen letters awaiting her, and opened one little box, expecting to find that it contained the keys of Longhall. It was, however, a sample of cigarettes sent by an enterprising tradesman.

Now that old Mr. Garcia had gone, she was spend-

ing her first night alone in London, and it was rather a boring experience. She bought a seat for a theatre, and would have been glad had she had the moral courage to come out halfway through the performance.

It was wonderful, being rich in a city where she had suffered privations. Yet, as she drove back to the hotel, she looked at the girls climbing on to the buses with something like envy. A sensible proportion of them were also stenographers working for two pounds ten a week, and to-morrow would see them flowing in endless streams across the bridges on their way to innumerable offices. But to-night they had homes to go to, and people to look after them, and families that were interested in their movements and plans.

She went to bed that night feeling vaguely dissatisfied, and strangely missing the curious companionships of Doncaster.

She felt better in the morning, breakfasted in her sitting room, and was debating on which furniture store she should make a start, when the page brought her a card.

"Mr. Arthur Rustem? Show him up, please."

Mr. Rustem came smiling and bowing into the

room. He might have stepped from a fashion plate, he was so daintily attired.

"You were at Doncaster. Don't deny it, my dear young lady, I saw you." He waved his finger waggishly, was not only friendly, but dear-friendly.

"You have very good eyesight, Mr. Rustem," she said coldly. "I saw you—through my glasses. I rather doubt whether you could have picked me out from the thousands of people who were on the tops of the stands."

He changed the subject discreetly.

"Anyway, I knew you were at Doncaster. I saw our dear friend, Mr. Goodie. A good, hard-working man, who is just struggling into prosperity and happily has made a little money recently. I say 'happily,' because I like to see a good man get on."

"Have you brought the keys, Mr. Rustem?"

She was not inclined to discuss the worldly prospects of Mr. Elijah Goodie.

"Certainly."

He pulled up a chair, unbidden, and sat down; took from his pocket a flat box and laid it on the table.

"Here are the keys of the ancestral home," he said, almost gaily. "The question is, my dear young lady, whether you prefer living in that damp and lonely

house—I don't know any house more isolated—to accepting the very handsome offer which, by a curious coincidence, I received this morning from a client of mine, who wishes to buy the property for"—he paused impressively—"twenty thousand pounds! I think he's a little mad to offer such a sum——"

"Who is your client?" she interrupted. "Mr. Goodie or Mr. Trigger? Or is it Dr. Blanter?"

Mr. Rustem blinked at her, quite unprepared for this sudden attack. Then he shook his head sadly.

"I'm afraid, Miss Gray, you have been listening to mischievous gossip. I'm not going to mention any names, but there are certain disappointed people, if I may use the expression, certain revengeful people, who have had their knuckles rapped owing to misrepresentations——"

"Is this a roundabout way of describing Inspector Luke?" she asked.

"No, no," he answered hastily; "I have nothing whatever to say against Inspector Luke, a most intelligent man and quite a charming and an educated man. I wouldn't like it to go forth that I had said anything derogatory to Mr. Luke. But there are mischievous people——"

"I am not selling Longhall, Mr. Rustem," she said quietly. "I think it will save a great deal of discussion if I make that clear."

"You're being offered exactly twice its value."

"If I am offered four times its value it makes no difference. I am going to occupy Longhall, and at the expiration of the lease I shall probably take over Gillywood Cottage and the downlands."

He sat staring at her, drumming his white fingers on the table, and then he forced a smile.

"If you are determined, it would be stupid of me to offer you any further advice," he said. "Possibly you are right. I have a great faith in woman's instinct. So far as I can I will make things easy. I will go with you when you pay the house a visit, and give you every assistance I can."

"It isn't at all necessary for you to come. I have already arranged for an escort," she said. There was a certain quiet malice in her smile. "Mr. Luke, who knows the neighbourhood very well, has promised to show me round. Are those the keys?"

She took the little box and opened it, and he watched her curiously. She certainly was lovely, and he admired her spirit; but at the same time he had a very pressing duty to fulfil.

"I'm very glad you raised the question of the lease, Miss Gray. I handed all the documents to your lawyer, and he pointed out to me that Mr. Goodie's lease expires at the end of this year, and not, as I thought, in a few years' time. That is to say, you can exercise your option of determining the lease at the end of the year; otherwise it goes on for the full term of fifteen years. I'm afraid I gave Goodie my personal assurance that he would not be turned out, and that you would be the last person in the world to wish to ruin a man who is past middle age—one might almost say, in the evening of his life. And, knowing this"—he fished in his inside pocket, drew out a folded paper, and put it on the table before her—"I have drawn up a provisional extension, which will give him a year or so to look round for another place in the event of your deciding to evict him. It is a mere formality." He unscrewed a fountain pen and pushed the paper toward her. "You will see I have written in pencil where you sign."

He heard her laugh and looked up.

"Really, Mr. Rustem!" she said reproachfully. "You don't expect me to sign all sorts of odd papers that are sprung on me at a minute's notice? Or do heiresses do that kind of thing in the blessed innocence

of their hearts?" She shook her head. "Send it to my lawyer."

He was pained, folded up the paper with great deliberation and dignity, and replaced it in his pocket, screwed on the top of his fountain pen and, rising, took up his hat and gloves.

"You rather hurt me." There was a suggestion of tremor in his voice. "In all my professional career it has never been suggested that I have tried to take advantage of a client's innocence."

"In fact, Mr. Rustem," she said, her eyes alight with laughter, "the only suggestion that has ever been made against you is that you employed your clients' money for your own personal enterprises."

It was war, then, he saw as he faced her. Somehow he had never expected any other end, though her flippancy had come in the nature of a shock. Perhaps he did not know the little stenographer who had battled with life for three hard years, before the miracle happened and a glimpse of an old letter reminded Donald Gray that he had one relative in the world and that he was feeling very old and lonely.

Mr. Rustem saw only a very beautiful and very rich young lady, who was embarrassingly self-reliant. She was not a bit like the gentle heroine of his dreams,

for Mr. Rustem indulged himself in romantic fancies.

"Very good, my young friend." All the gentleness had gone out of his voice. "I see you've been hopelessly prejudiced against me and against my—clients. It's a great pity. I have advised you not to go to Longhall——"

"I've already been advised that, but for quite a different reason."

It was very like Luke to come in without the formality of knocking at the door, and not surprising that he should be in the room, the door closed behind him, and halfway to the table, and that neither of the occupants should have heard his entrance.

The girl looked round, startled.

"I offered the same advice to Miss Gray," said Luke again; "but she seems to be set on it, and I suppose she'll live there in peace with her neighbours, her late lawyers, and the Triggers and Blanters of life. If I have anything to do with it, it's a cinch. I'm going to do a lot to make Miss Gray comfortable at Longhall."

He was looking at, and speaking to, Rustem with drawling deliberation.

"It may mean that I shall have to shift a lot of

people to where the dogs won't bite them—quite high-up people, Rustem, who think they are so safe that they wouldn't take an insurance at decimal one per cent."

He saw Rustem change colour; the threat had gone home; and she imagined that, behind that smile of his, he was in a white rage of hate.

He stalked to the door without a word, and it was characteristic of him that he closed it very gently after him. Edna broke the silence.

"Do you ever knock at the door when you come into a lady's room?" she asked.

In his exasperating way he ignored the question.

"What did he want, besides bringing the keys? He got them this morning, by the way, from Goodie, who brought them up himself."

"He wanted me to sell the estate."

He nodded.

"Did he offer much?" and, when she told him, he whistled. "They are pretty keen—I wonder why? The downs are not the best in Berkshire, although they enjoy a certain amount of privacy, which a trainer doesn't get at places like Wantage."

He scratched his ear thoughtfully.

"Have you heard from Mr. Garcia?"

She showed him the wire, and he handed it back to her without a word.

"There's something in the wind and I don't know quite what it is. Mr. Green Ribbon Trigger has sent out a special circular to all his clients, asking them to utilize the next month in opening new accounts. Thorough! That fellow's got every government department skinned to death!"

He took from his pocket a sheaf of papers and extracted two.

"Here's the hurry-up call. Every client is asked to double the number of his bookmakers. And here's a supplementary and confidential list, showing the financial position of every big bookmaker in England and the best method of approach. Here are a few hints on opening accounts under family names—which are nothing but fictitious names. Trigger, as I remarked before, has brains. They're going for something colossal. Trigger is probably working two or three hundred accounts himself for this special coup."

He whistled softly to himself, his eyes fixed on the girl, his mind obviously many miles away.

"They'll offer you fifty thousand before they've finished," he said—a true prophecy, for he had not

been gone ten minutes when the phone rang and Rustem's voice spoke from the other end of the wire.

"Are you alone, or is our annoying friend still there? By the way, my client has increased his offer. He's an antiquarian with a taste for Tudor buildings. He's willing to pay a colossal figure—forty or fifty thousand pounds——"

"Longhall is not for sale," she said, and hung up the receiver.

CHAPTER VII

THERE were certain peculiar features about the present situation. Luke sat in his room and turned them over in his mind. Three months before, as he knew, Goodie had complained to the local authorities of the water shortage, and had begun negotiations for the purchase of a training establishment in Wiltshire. He had found touts on his training ground, and was anxious to hire or buy the Wiltshire property because of the freedom he would enjoy in this respect.

Why, then, had Gillywood Farm and the overlooked downs become so precious to him that he was willing to pay up to fifty thousand pounds? Was it the possibility of having Edna as a neighbour? Had Longhall a special mystery of its own? Or did this training establishment of his hold a secret which he feared she would surprise?

The most obvious of the secrets was no mystery to Inspector Luke. He had made investigations at close quarters and had made a discovery, and, in its making, had had the shock of his life. He was a pretty

brave man, but he would not have attempted to force Li Goodie's house by night. He knew the secret of the abandoned stables, why they had been rebuilt at such a distance from the cottage. Need the girl know? That was a problem he had not settled to his own satisfaction.

At any rate, it could wait until after he had made a personal inspection of Longhall and seen for himself all the possibilities for trouble. That there would be trouble was inevitable. He wished to reduce any real danger to the girl to a minimum.

Though nominally his headquarters were at Scotland Yard, his office was in a block of business buildings a stone's throw from that institution. He had a small staff of his own: a record department which was distinct from that at headquarters. He had been lent to the racing authorities for three years, and had been pursuing inquiries which led him into strange and fascinating by-ways.

He, who thought that the underworld had nothing new to show him, learned of grafts beyond the ken of the average Yard man. In his secret records were the names of innocent little stable boys, of austere, eminent men, of tiny and fairly innocuous confederacies, of other larger and more dangerous gangs, who

preyed not upon the public but upon bookmakers. In his lists were the names of not a few policemen.

He did not deal with the recognized criminals who visited race courses as they visited fashionable weddings. They were the incidentals, birds of passage who did not belong to racing, but came and went, and he left their care to that picked body of police which frequents all racing assemblies, looking for familiar faces.

In his card indexes were the names of every known employee of the Green Ribbon. The commissionaires, the clerks, the very charwomen who cleaned the offices in the morning were tabulated, and his agents had sounded most of them. They, however, were the mere hands and feet of the organization; the brains were represented by the fat little man who sat in a room panelled in rosewood, behind him a big steel bank safe let into the wall and protected by doors of six-inch steel.

The clerks did not even know the names of subscribers. Trigger employed nothing but girls; paid them each a salary which would make the average secretary's mouth water; chose them with greater care than the candidates for the Civil Service are chosen.

Each girl had her desk and her card index, but every card bore, not a name, but a number. That number was stencilled on every envelope that was sealed, before the sealed envelopes were taken to Trigger's office.

It was he who produced, from long, steel trays in his safe, the stencil plates bearing the corresponding number; it was he who fitted them into the addressing machine; and it was he alone who worked that machine. He posted the letters himself, carrying huge batches of them in a car from post office to post office, dropping a few in every mail box he passed. The operation usually meant three hours' driving, but it was one of the things he had to do himself.

His clients were, as Luke said, hand-picked and tested. Half their winnings came to him the week after a horse had won, in linen-backed envelopes, green of hue, and registered. Every client had a supply of those envelopes, and all such letters came to his private office, their contents being checked by him and noted in his private index. Before and after a coup he would work eighteen hours a day, sometimes sleeping in the office. All the money came in cash, and what happened to it Luke had never discovered. Large sums were paid into Mr. Trigger's banking

account, and this was necessary because his running expenses were extraordinarily heavy.

It was certain that the accounts he kept for the purpose of Inland Revenue were faked. The real amount of his profits was never discovered. When a coup was projected it was Mr. Trigger who stamped the name of the horse on every telegram, put the telegrams, twenty or thirty of them, in sealed envelopes ready for the morning of the race. These envelopes were carried to all parts of the country by his commissionaires; the seals were broken at a post office, sometimes in the presence of a second commissionaire, unknown to the first, and the telegrams passed across the counter. The second batch of helpers were called inspectors. They had their headquarters in another office in London, and never met the uniformed men of the Green Ribbon until they met them at the telegraph office.

Luke suspected the presence on every race course of a small gang of watchers, whose business it was to read the messages of the tic-tac men who signalled from a distant telephone the news which passed daily between London and every race course.

Once, news of a coup had leaked out through a faithless commissionaire, was phoned to London to

the agency which makes it a business to transmit bets to the course, was instantly phoned through to the nearest point, which was a mile from the race course. From here a chain of signallers would have passed on the news to the ring; but hardly had the word "Trigger" been signalled when somebody lit a smoke bomb a hundred yards from where the telephonists were signalling. Instantly there was an impenetrable veil between Tattersall's and the telephone, and the warning did not arrive.

The fat little man was a general, a corps commander. He left nothing to chance, and left nothing important to his subordinates.

In the course of the next few days Luke met the girl twice, each time by accident. Although she had not seen the house, she was already choosing furniture; more, he suspected, as a gesture of her determination to take up residence at Longhall than for any other reason. Then one morning he had a phone call from her, telling him that she was going down to see the property. She picked him up in her car and they headed for Berkshire.

"I thought you were bringing a friend?" she said.

He nodded.

"I have telephoned to him to be there waiting for

us," he said. "He lives at Reading, which makes it simple."

"Another detective?" she asked, and he hesitated.

"In a sense, yes."

She had heard from Garcia again: a telegram from Munich, inviting her to join him in a "long tour of this delightful Europe."

"The old gentleman is going gay," said Luke flippantly. "You haven't seen Rustem?"

She shook her head.

"Nor any of his boy friends?"

"I saw Dr. Blanter; he has been lunching in my hotel, and he seemed particularly interested in me."

"You bet he is! That's the only bad man of the party." Luke was very serious. "He's escaped being struck off the medical register more often than Rustem had escaped being struck off the Rolls; only Rustem was unlucky. All greedy people are unlucky. Blanter was a doctor—is a doctor still. He was mixed up in one or two affairs and found it convenient to sell his practice. He is a brilliant toxicologist—knows more about poisons than any man in England, and when he isn't racing he spends his time in his laboratory—he's got a beauty on the river near Maidenhead—a palace of a place; with rosaries and boat-

houses and statues of Venus and all the comforts of home."

She laughed gently at this. If the truth be told, she had missed his companionship, and was annoyed that even a hint of indispensability should attach to any of her friends. And he amused her. So few people are consistently amusing without also being a little boring.

"You've been buying furniture?" he accused her.

She admitted she had.

"Only old oak, and not a great deal of it," she said. "I am determined to live at Longhall, and now I must, if it's only to put my furniture there. And I have three excellent servants. I shall be seeing them to-day. Isn't it queer how people gossip? I don't suppose I've told more than two people that I'm opening my house in the country, and I've had half a dozen servants call to see me. I've a splendid housekeeper, a cook, and two very pretty parlourmaids who haven't the least objection to living in the country. I've told them to be there to-day to see the place and to give the housekeeper a chance of learning her work."

"Marvellous!" said the other. "As an organizer you've got Trigger beaten to a frazzle."

They passed slowly through the village, beyond which lay Gillywood Farm, and they glanced at the forbidding entrance of Mr. Goodie's establishment.

"Like a prison, isn't it?"

"It is very sinister," she agreed. "Do you know, it gives me quite a thrill!"

"I hope you won't get the wrong kind of thrill," he said grimly.

The iron gates of Longhall were open. They passed up a weedy drive, and when they came into view of the house the car stopped at her signal. There was a group of people about the door—four women, and, at some distance, a gaunt-looking man.

"The two pretty ones, I presume, are the parlour-maids; the elderly ladies are the housekeeper and the cook," said Luke. "All dressed in black. You'd think they'd lost a job instead of found one."

As he walked with her toward the waiting women the oldest dropped a little old-fashioned curtsey; but Edna felt that her companion, rather than herself, was the chief subject of their curiosity, for they scrutinized him with an interest which would not have been excessive had he been a member of the royal family about to dedicate Longhall to the service of its owner.

He strolled across to the gaunt man, and, exchanging a few words, brought him back to Edna.

"This is Mr. Lane. If you don't mind, I'd like him to go round with us. You had better keep your servants outside until we've seen the house—anyway, I don't think you'll find they are particularly anxious to go in ahead."

"Do you expect a bomb to explode or something?" she asked scornfully.

"I expect to see rats," was the calm answer.

She shivered; she had forgotten about the rats, believed them to be the figment of Mr. Goodie's imagination. But she was to be disagreeably surprised.

Luke turned the key of the door and swung it open.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Lane and I will go first," he said.

He took one step across the threshold and stopped. She noticed that, as he did so, the four women stepped back apprehensively. She heard the rustling of tiny feet, saw two terrified little figures fly up the broad stairway, saw three or four more make a dart for the fireplace, and, failing to find an exit, fly across the room to the open door. Edna went pale; she hated rats, and there were rats in plenty here.

Luke turned with a grin to his companion.

"All right, Lane, bring 'em in."

The gaunt man went out of the house and came back in a few moments with three little terriers leashed together. In the meantime Luke had walked through to the back and opened every door and window.

"You wait here. I'm going to de-rat the house."

Edna, standing outside the doorway, heard the excited yelping of the terriers and the scamper of their feet on the bare boards. In half an hour Luke came down.

"Come in," he said. "I think most of them are gone."

"They're still in the house, though," she said fearfully.

"There may be one or two, but I shouldn't think so. They were turned loose in the house this morning for your special benefit. I should imagine Goodie has been searching Berkshire for weeks to make a show. Lane is an experienced rat catcher: that's why I brought him down. He'll stay in the house for two or three days and make absolutely sure that the beasts do not belong to the place. He says they're all foreigners—quite a number of field rats amongst them."

As she passed from room to room there was grisly evidence of the terriers' activities, and when she came to what she instantly decided would be her own bedroom she found the rat catcher leashing up his dogs again.

"I'll make a thorough examination of the house, Miss Gray," he said, "but I don't think I shall find many nests. This isn't the kind of place they'd live, anyway. There's nothing for them to eat—they'll be up at the stables if they're anywhere."

It was with some difficulty that Edna persuaded the four women to come into the house. The two younger girls flatly refused. Luke, an interested and amused audience of the little discussion which followed, beckoned the new housekeeper.

"Who told you there were rats in this house?" he asked.

The woman looked at him uneasily.

"It looked like a house where there might be rats, sir," she said.

"Who told you?" he asked again. "Who told all you people that the house would be full of rats and that you'd better keep outside?"

"Nobody."

It was the new cook who spoke, a husky-voiced woman.

"What is your name?" Luke challenged the housekeeper.

"Linton, sir."

"Linton, eh? It used to be Carr, didn't it? And what do you call yourself?" He addressed the cook.

"Mrs. Kohler."

"It used to be Klein. I suppose one name's as good as another. You other girls I've only two records against: one for shoplifting—that's you"—he pointed to the prettier one, who turned red and white—"and you, I think, were mixed up in the Hallam Street affair, weren't you?"

The pallid girl, incapable of words, nodded.

Edna was speechless with amazement.

"Now you can all go home," said Luke gently; "pay your own fares, and don't bother Miss Gray again, or I shall be coming after you to find out where you got all these wonderful characters you brought this young lady. You can tell the gentleman who sent you—I think it was Mr. Rustem: every one of you called at his office before you went to interview Miss Gray—that he needn't trouble to send the other four

or five he has interviewed. One of my officers has checked them up. Good-morning."

They moved like four black sheep toward the gates.

"But why—who are they?" stammered Edna. "Why did you——"

"They were specially chosen for you—a stupid move on the part of Rustem, because they'd have all been scared stiff at the first sound of the bogey—all except Mrs. Klein, who has the soul of a baby farmer and is probably due for the scaffold one of these bright days."

"But how did you know about them? You haven't been watching me?"

"Only by proxy," he said airily. "One has to keep an eye on one's friends. London is a very risky place. But really I knew all about these girls from the observation I have kept on Rustem. Now what are you going to do, young lady? Are you determined to come down to this ancient ruin, or are you going to be a sensible girl and buy a house in Mayfair or a flat in Piccadilly, and settle down to a hectic life?"

"I'm coming here," she said definitely. "The more I see of the house the more determined I am. It's a lovely place."

"Then let us vet the grounds," said Luke.

They walked through the rank grass at the back of the house. There was a courtyard here, and the wall which separated Longhall from Gillywood Farm was not more than fifty yards away. Longhall was built in the very corner of the estate, or, rather, in the narrow part of a pear-shaped area of downland.

Luke went very carefully along the wall as though he were looking for defects. There was a stout wooden wall door immediately behind the centre of the house. The turf below was scraped and torn. He saw signs of oil on the lock. Evidently this doorway, which gave communication between Gillywood and Longhall, had recently been used.

"Do any of your keys fit this?"

She took them from her bag and he tested them all, without finding one that fitted. He made a note in a pocketbook.

"That lock must be changed."

Here, as in the immediate vicinity of Gillywood Cottage, the wall was topped by a four-foot width of tough wire netting, which had obviously been recently put up.

"Goodie plays a lot of tennis, doesn't he?" he asked drily.

He found a rotting ladder, mounted gingerly to

the top of the wall, and took a survey of the land beyond. To the right, and close at hand, were the disused stables; a little to the left ran the southern wire fence. It ran back for three or four hundred yards, then turned right to enclose Gillywood Cottage from the back. Fifty yards away was a big cement mound, which apparently had no utility and certainly added nothing to the beauty of the heath. On the face of the quarry wall a mile and a half away he saw two dark openings, which he knew to be Perrywig Caves, famous in history and associated with difficult smugglers and an indubitable murder. Between the caves and the house was a large, straggling plantation. To the right of this, a bright red building, which was Mr. Goodie's stables.

The place was not unfamiliar to him; he had explored it thoroughly. Some day he would get behind the barred gate of the cave to discover what treasure it held. There were dark passages in Goodie's past upon which the light of day had never been thrown. Even Scotland Yard, with its matchless system of espionage, was compelled to rely upon vague and distorted material for facts.

When three people independently tell an identical story, the three being unknown to one another, that

story becomes a fact on which Scotland Yard can move—no three stories alike had ever been told about Goodie. In his secretive and shadowy way he had touched the fringe of great crimes without being identified with their perpetration.

Luke knew him to be a strong, merciless man, but had never suspected his one weakness and his supreme ambition. He knew nothing of the library which filled the upper floor of Gillywood Cottage, or the typewriter at which Mr. Goodie sat in the quiet hours of the night, preparing his *magnum opus*. Luke did not know, but he suspected, that the trainer never spent a night away from his cottage, and that he came back every night from Doncaster and returned in the early hours of the morning.

"Well, what did you see?" asked the girl impatiently, for he had been a long time at his survey.

"Land, and yet more land. Fences, and more fences. New stable buildings, and a concrete heap which meant nothing to me. You're going to stay here, are you?"

"Not to-night," she smiled; "but I'm certainly coming here to live."

"Then I'd better hunt up a bailiff for you," he said. "He'll take all the arrangements about the land

off your hands, and will be invaluable when you settle in the house."

He was as good as his word. In the course of the next few days he sent to her hotel half a dozen women servants to choose from, a butler, a footman, and the rat catcher, Mr. Lane. He reintroduced this gentleman by telephone.

"He's had quite a lot of experience as a land steward. He's an ex-member of the Berkshire constabulary and a pretty tough fellow in a fight."

"Whom is he going to fight?" she demanded.

"Almost anybody—you never know," said Luke vaguely. "Honestly, I recommend him. The butler is an ex-police officer——"

"Are you trying to turn my house into a police station?" she asked.

"There are few nicer places," he said.

CHAPTER VIII

SHE was satisfied with the servants he sent. Obviously he had taken a great deal of trouble, and she was grateful to him, and had reason for greater gratitude when their services came to be proved.

For the next two weeks she was an almost daily visitor to the house. Furniture went down in a procession of vans; Longhall resounded with the tap-tap of the carpet layers' hammers, glaziers and plumbers filled the place, and, under the direction of Lane, lawns and flower beds were evolved from the chaos of what had once been a beautiful garden. Wild and dishevelled hedges became trimmed and uniform; dingy windows became crystal clear; the unsightly wreckage of a barn at the back of the house vanished in a night. The fascination of Longhall grew and grew; and one day she came with all her trunks and her new maid, and, pretending that her bedroom did not smell faintly of one kind of paint, and the central heating of another, she entered into possession and

gave a housewarming party consisting of one guest.

"You ought to have asked the vicar; one always does on these occasions. By the way, are you Anglican or Holy Roman?"

She refused to make the revelation.

She had seen nothing of Goodie, but from her bedroom window—the bedroom was a large room facing south and west—she could see every morning his horses in silhouette passing along the top of the downs; and as day followed day, the mystery of the green-and-white cottage, just visible through the trees and the wire fences, became more and more absorbing an interest.

It worried her a little to realize how completely dependent she had come to be upon the detective. He permeated her life, could not be shaken off—nor had she any desire to shake him. His manner toward her never varied; he was the same familiar, dominating man she had known on the *Asturia* and had met in the market place at Doncaster. He never stepped across the border line toward any greater intimacy, and he gave her a hint of his mental attitude toward her when one day he told her that he looked upon her as his young brother. She did not know whether she was pleased or annoyed by this relationship

which he had thrust upon her. As a working arrangement, however, it was very satisfactory.

She was in London two or three days in the week, and sometimes met him for lunch. She liked meeting him, because he had always something to tell her, some little bit of gossip about his favourite obsession, the Green Ribbon organization.

Trigger had produced a most unexpected "transaction" in peculiar circumstances. There was a race at the First Autumn Meeting at Newmarket, one of those events for which horses are entered as foals, and, as is usual in these circumstances, only a field of three turned out to contest the prize. Two of them were well-known public performers; the third, who was a three-year-old, had only run once, and then moderately, in the spring of the year. Long odds were laid upon the fancied horse, who had run remarkably well in the St. Leger; the second favourite was eight to one against, and the unknown quantity, for some unknown reason, was quoted at a hundred to six. It should have been a hundred to one. And the despised outsider had won very easily. It was a Trigger's Transaction, and what gave the event unusual significance was the fact that, immediately after the race, the other two competitors were found to have a high

temperature, and it was generally believed in racing circles that they had been "got at." There was no breath of suspicion against the winner, who was owned by the impecunious son of an Irish peer.

"Nominally owned, that is to say," said Luke. "The Honourable Henry hasn't got two bobs to rub together. The horse certainly belongs to the gang. Both the sick horses were well when they reached the course, but both were seen to kick and jump when they were being led round the ring half an hour before the race started. Which proves nothing—undoubtedly the winner is very useful, and may very easily have won on his merits, for the time was very fast. But Trigger's advisers were making sure. That was easy, with only three runners. Trigger hasn't left his office for three days; he has been sleeping on the premises and having his meals sent in—he's got a very cosy little suite which connects with his office by a small electric lift. I'm looking forward to this afternoon: I've an appointment with him."

They were lunching at the Ritz, which in itself was a source of uneasiness to the girl. She knew that police officers were not exorbitantly paid and was growing uncomfortable with his repeated hospitality. He took her to the most expensive restaurants. It

was impossible that she should offer to pay, and her one attempt to assert her independence had been cut short by Luke in his iciest manner.

It was now that he told her (he had mentioned the fact before, but she had forgotten) that he had an income of his own apart from his police pay. His father had left him shares in a mineral-water factory, of all things; he had built it up from the lowliest beginnings, and had lived to see Luke's Lemonade in yellow and purple letters shouting from every bus side.

"It's a vulgar sort of wealth, but it's the same kind of money as you get from government stock—at least, it looks the same. And it's as good as yours, anyway, for all your wealth comes from slaughtering poor dumb animals and turning them into cold-storage beef."

He would have left the service years before had not the turf duty come along; it was too interesting to miss.

He escorted her back to the hotel where she was staying the night, and strolled down Lower Regent Street to keep his appointment.

A smartly uniformed commissionaire ushered him into a panelled waiting room, and, presently coming back, conducted him to Mr. Trigger's sanctum. It

was a large room overlooking Regent Street, and money had not been spared in its furnishing. Mr. Trigger sat in his shirt sleeves, though the day was by no means hot, behind a rosewood table which was covered with dictagraphs, telephones, and the paraphernalia of writing. It amused Mr. Luke to see a small bronze statuette of Napoleon placed so that it immediately faced the owner of the office.

"Sit down, Mr. Luke." The little man bustled to his feet, pushed forward a morocco-covered chair, and waited until his visitor was seated before he himself sat down. "I'm that busy I don't know which way to turn."

He had a Cockney voice, but he was a smiling, jovial little man, with a frank, rather honest face. Luke liked him. He was at least human. He would have made a success of any business, though he could not have discovered one for which his peculiar qualities better fitted him.

"I know what you've come to see me about. It's this Kalamoo affair."

He mentioned the name of the outsider which had beaten the two sick horses at Newmarket.

"Well, I'll tell you straight, Mr. Luke, I don't know anything about horses. I wouldn't know one

from another. They're just horses to me. And if they've got horns they're cows!"

He chuckled at this and pushed a cigar box toward his visitor.

"All I know is that this is the headquarters of Trigger's Transactions. I get a horse from the most reliable source I know, and I send it out to my clients and collect the dough. I don't know whether the horse is a good horse or a bad one. He's only a name to me. I hate racing; I wouldn't go on to a race course if you paid me—except that I have to go there sometimes. Give me golf! There's a game."

He pointed proudly to a microscopically small silver cup which occupied a place of honour on the ornate chimneypiece. And he was speaking the truth: of that Luke was sure. He was less interested in racing than Luke was interested in aviation. It was not he who invented the coups—he merely exploited them.

"I'll tell you the truth, Mr. Luke—I don't know whether a horse has got a chance or whether it hasn't. I've never bought a book of form in my life, and if I did I wouldn't be able to understand it. I do nothing that's contrary to the *Rules of Racing*. I know that because I've studied 'em. I don't communicate with

stable boys or jockeys or trainers or anything. I'm just a human machine, so to speak."

"Somebody knows about horses—I mean, some of your friends."

The fat little man shrugged his shoulders.

"Naturally! I'm not going to give you any madam, Mr. Luke. You know as well as I do that the doctor and Mr. Goodie are in this business, and Mr. Rustem has got a sort of share. They manage the horse part of it. It's an open secret. These gentlemen have devoted their lives, as it were, and to use a poetical term, to the noble sport of horse racing, and what they don't know about horses isn't worth finding out. I don't want to know. I take in the money and put it in the bank."

"All of it?" asked Luke.

Mr. Trigger smiled reproachfully.

"Come, come, come, Inspector! What a question to ask a business man! I put it in the bank, as I say, and I take out money that I have to pay, and that's the end of the business as far as I'm concerned."

"Have you ever met the owner of Kalamoo?"

"I've never met any owners," said Mr. Trigger cheerfully. "I dare say I've got a few amongst my clients, but I don't meet 'em. My job is to see that

the staff does its work—the best-paid staff in London, Mr. Luke. None of these girls gets less than a fiver a week; most of 'em get ten. They come at eleven in the morning and they're off at five in the afternoon. I've got a beautiful lunch room and lounge for them upstairs."

"You don't employ any men?"

Mr. Trigger smiled again.

"Am I mad? No, men talk. These girls don't know anything about horses, either—and they don't talk. My messengers are all old army men. I never employ a fellow who hasn't held the rank of sergeant major. I'll tell you something that'll make you laugh. I only employ religious men as messengers—fellows who've been in the R. A. T. A. You don't know what that is? The Royal Army Temperance Association. Fellows who've done a bit of preaching. I never employ a single man; I like 'em married, with a family dependent on 'em, so that they can't afford to lose a job; and I only take 'em when they're so old that nobody else would employ 'em, and even then I check 'em up. When they open my envelopes to put 'em into the telegraph office they know they're under the eye of an inspector—or they think they are. Organization—that's my job."

"And you do it remarkably well, Trigger."

Mr. Trigger beamed complacently.

"I am a pretty useful man," he agreed. Then, in a more serious tone: "So you see, Inspector, it's no use asking me about any of these horses or the owners, or why horses run or why they win. That's not my job at all. I've people doing that for me, and I've got to rely on them."

Luke nodded toward the wall behind where the little man sat.

"You wouldn't like to open that safe and show me all the pretty things inside?" he asked.

Mr. Trigger chuckled with delight.

"You'd be disappointed—you would really. There's nothing there. A few trays of stencil plates for that addressing machine"—he pointed to a large cabinet in one corner of the room—"a small box of movable rubber type, and that's all. I'll show you round the office if you like."

He got up, put on his coat, and went out into the large room where the long lines of girl clerks were sitting, each at a desk which was equipped with a clock and a date pad.

"The general correspondence room is upstairs," explained Trigger. "Naturally we get thousands and

hundreds of thousands of people who want to be in on our transactions. We take about four in a thousand. We only take the recommendations of our true, tried, and trusted clients—and we give them a good look over before we cut their names on a stencil plate."

Each girl had a card index, which bore no name, but the numbers of the clients. Before each were bundles of stamped and addressed telegraph forms, each little bundle held together by a clip.

"They came in this morning; they'll be transferred to my safe this evening. The girls' job is to make a note of the amount of money that's been invested. In some cases clients use codes, but I've got a copy of their codes, and attached to each of those little bundles will be a card showing the amount every client is betting. After the race the girl checks up the amount he has won and the amount due to us. It's method."

Luke passed along the line of desks, and scarcely received notice from the busy recorders. They were of an infinitely superior type to those usually met with in a city office. In the winter season, when the Green Ribbon Transactions no longer operated, they were granted a two months' holiday on full pay, and

free transportation to any part of the world they wished to visit. Trigger mentioned this startling fact casually.

"We've sent girls to South Africa before now, but mostly they want to go to the Riviera. Otherwise, we give them a bonus instead of railway fare. Every ten girls work under a captain."

Luke knew of the organization but had never seen it close at hand. He was full of admiration for the little man, who had taken the least promising of professions and won such an unique position. Whatever was dark and sinister behind Trigger's Transactions he knew nothing about, though he would have been a fool if he had not suspected that his partners "assisted luck."

Trigger took him up to his private suite, which, to Luke's astonishment, was plainly furnished.

"I have no visitors, and I only sleep here when I'm pretty hard pressed," he said. "A pretty lot of girls, aren't they? But I've never taken one out to supper, and the only girl that ever tried to give me the glad eye I fired on the spot. Business is business, love is love, and they don't mix. I have nobody here that doesn't belong to the Transactions. Not Mr. Goodie, or the doctor, or anybody."

Luke went away from the palatial office very little wiser than he had been when he came. Not that he had expected much information of the kind he required. He had, he was sure, a line to the little organizer. He was the one man in the confederacy who could never be convicted. This was an important conclusion to reach, because he could now afford to drop direct observation of the Green Ribbon Agency, and concentrate upon the two men who supplied the raw material which Mr. Trigger turned into gold.

He excluded Rustem. That sleek man was an agent and a tool, initiated nothing, except perhaps a scheme for the evasion of unpleasant consequences.

Dr. Blanter was a heavy drinker, and an habitué of certain night clubs, not of the most savoury character. That night he went to the most hectic of them. At ten minutes past twelve the police raided the club and removed the visitors to a police station.

Usually, ladies and gentlemen who find themselves in that unhappy position are treated with the greatest consideration; they are not searched, and they are given a certain amount of freedom in the waiting room until their friends come to bail them out. On this occasion, however, the police were most thorough.

Dr. Blanter, protesting violently, was completely

searched, his articles of value and his keys taken from him, and he was locked in the detention room. It was three hours before he was released and his valuables handed back to him. By this time he had cooled down and made no fuss; indeed, that three hours had been the most unhappy of his life. He saw behind the raid and his detention something more than an offence against the licencing laws.

It was four o'clock when he got home, and there was nothing in the orderly appearance of his bachelor flat to suggest that for two hours it had been in the uninterrupted possession of four skilled and expeditious men who had searched every drawer, every cupboard, read every letter, diary, and written word that the flat contained. But for Luke it was a blank evening.

CHAPTER IX

THE long string of race horses walked slowly and stiffly up the slope of the downs and disappeared over the crest. Behind them, riding at a distance, Edna saw Li Goodie. He rode alone on a big, black horse, his chin on his breast, his eyes half closed. To Edna, watching through a powerful pair of prismatic glasses, he seemed to be asleep, but there was no more wide-awake man in Berkshire that day than Elijah Goodie.

He reached the gallop, and sat alone whilst his head lad gave the boys instructions. It was probably the only stable in England where English was seldom spoken: the majority of the riders were half coloured. He changed them every two years, and from time to time found himself engaged in a battle with the Labour Ministry, for permits for foreign employees were difficult to obtain.

They had a club house of their own, went to London in batches under the charge of one of their English-speaking members. They never went to the

village, and the nearest Catholic church was twenty miles away. They rode like cats; there were two of them at least who would have shone on an English race course, but Goodie never permitted them to take a jockey's licence or ride in public.

In all cases Goodie's horses and Goodie's coups were ridden by the best of the English jockeys, who knew nothing of their charges' merits until they were leaving the paddock gate. The formula was invariably the same:

"You'll get five hundred pounds for winning this race."

If this didn't come, the jockeys knew that the horse was not seriously expected.

Goodie sat, gloomily watching the horses flying across the downs toward him, galloping two and two. All passed him save one, and he became very alert when that solitary figure appeared on the skyline. It was Field of Glory, the Stockton winner: a racing machine that moved in effortless style, covering an extraordinary amount of ground with every stride. He flew past where Mr. Goodie sat, and, reining round his horse, the trainer trotted after the rider. It was five minutes before he came up to him.

"Well?" he asked.

The swarthy lad who rode him grinned.

"An airplane, señor. He goes better and better every day."

Goodie grunted something, dismounted, and, going up to the horse, patted his neck. He walked round him, feeling every leg.

"Cover him up and walk him back to the stable, José," he said in Spanish. "A bargain for eight hundred pesos, eh, José?"

"*Dios!*" said the man, and rolled his eyes.

"Eight hundred pesos—sixty-five English pounds," ruminated Mr. Goodie.

It was a minor weakness of his that he loved to boast of his bargains, even when they were not bargains. He looked at the horse for a very long time in silence, then, mounting his hack, he ambled back to the cottage. Edna saw him coming, put down her glasses, and withdrew farther into the room, where she could observe him without herself being observed.

She saw him throw a glance in the direction of the house, and then his chin went forward on his breast again. Mr. Goodie was thinking, not of horses or of women, but of the stored manuscript which was half completed but which perhaps would never see the light of day. For he was engaged in the incredible

task of writing a true autobiography, and this was a very urgent reason for the wire cage in which he lived.

He went upstairs to his study, unlocked the safe, and took out the last sheets of his manuscript. He read them over closely, and, though he rarely smiled, he smiled now at the thought of Luke; for in the book of which these pages formed part he had set forth, without apology or excuse, the story of deeds which were afterward to give him immortal notoriety.

That he should write these memoirs at all was an act of madness, an aberration in which vanity and the desire for dangerous living played their appointed part. But the understandable reason was his loneliness. His book was his one companion; throughout the dark hours of the night they would sit together, the written page and the yellow-faced man, leering at one another knowingly.

As one of the maidservants had said in Edna's hearing, life in this sleepy hollow was "not exactly lively." Edna fought against even the disloyalty of the thought that she was a little bored by her seclusion, and had a grandmotherly talk with herself, in which she pointed out her youth and the desirability of a more cheerful existence than she was living. But

she *was* a little bored, though she rode every day, and went to town at least twice a week.

She had to fight against the inclination to stay on another day at the hotel, or to see a play which in her heart of hearts she knew she did not want to see, but which was an excuse for London. She was entirely without friends, and felt no inclination to make any. She saw the vicar and his wife, an acidulated woman, and her daughters, who lived a mile from her. They called and talked about nothing in particular. She returned the call and thanked God it was all over.

It irritated her that she missed Luke. She had occasion to write to him once, and was staggered to discover that she didn't know his initials. She was emboldened to call him up on the telephone and demand them.

"M. M., but I only use one," he said.

"What does M. M. stand for?"

"I refuse to make any statement. It's a guilty secret that I've kept for years. Can't you guess?"

And then an inspiration came to her.

"Not Matthew Mark?" she gasped.

"Mark," he said loudly. "I've forgotten I was ever called Matthew, and I've not forgiven my parents even for the Mark."

She came back from London one night, tired and a little irritable. It was not, she told herself, because Mr. Luke was out of town when she called him up. (He knew she was coming to London, had made a tentative engagement with her, and yet had not thought it worth while to excuse himself.)

She had brought back a car full of books, had spent the whole afternoon in a wild orgy of buying. They would at least decorate the new shelves of her little study.

At nine o'clock she decided she was tired and would go to bed, but at a quarter-past nine, when she was in bed, she decided that the last thing in the world she wanted to do was to sleep. She got up, put on a dressing gown, and, after trying vainly to read the most alluring of the books she had bought that day, she walked to the window and looked between the curtains. In the glorious moonlight the scarred face of the downs showed whitely. She could even see the little black patches which were the entrances of Perry-wig Caves. Turning out the light, she pulled back the blinds and drew a chair to the open window. It was a warm, almost sultry night in early October; a night for dreaming, if one could think of anything more interesting than Matthew Mark Luke. The absurdity

of the name struck her afresh, and she laughed softly.

Mark must be definitely put in his place. Unfortunately he had anticipated her, and had put himself in an impregnable position. He wasn't a person to be dropped—he might very well anticipate her here.

As she sat musing she heard a door slam. It came from the direction of the cottage. Presently, against its whitewashed wall, a man came into view. By now she could recognize Mr. Goodie at a distance. He moved softly toward the big concrete mound that had excited Mr. Luke's curiosity. She heard the grating of an iron door swinging on its hinges, and heard him murmuring something, and then a low whistle.

He disappeared behind a clump of bushes, but presently came into view. He was walking at the farthermost corner of the fence, carrying something in his hand, and behind him were two great dogs, with long, switching tails.

Moonlight plays strange tricks, and it seemed to her that those two dogs were of an enormous size; bigger than bloodhounds, bigger than the biggest Newfoundland she had ever seen. They padded the lawn at his heels, now in the shadow, now clearly visible: two great black dogs, walking side by side, their noses to the ground. One of them bounded to

the left; he had probably seen a rabbit. She heard Goodie's snarl, and, as the beast came shrinking back, the crack of a whip.

The figures grew fainter and fainter. They were making for Perrywig Caves, and she went in search of her field glasses. There was a slight mist on the ground which made it impossible to see very distinctly. An hour passed before they came into sight again, and this time the dogs were ahead of him, and stood waiting for him to open the gate. A cloud had come over the moon, and as he stepped to the farther fence she could see nothing. The slamming of the cottage door proclaimed his return.

She saw one of the beasts a little later; it came nosing along the wall and passed out of sight. She heard it sneeze, and then caught a glimpse of it as it ran toward the farthermost side of the concrete mound.

She drew the curtains and got into bed, and fell into a restless sleep. Twice she woke and looked at the clock, and found in each case that less than an hour had passed. Then, settling down, sleep came to her. Hardly had a sense of unconsciousness come when she was wide awake. A scream came into her dreams. She sat up in bed, her whole body trembling.

It came again—the high, howling shriek of anguish: such a scream as might have come from a torture chamber. Her blood froze within her; she was incapable of movement. A third time it came: a pitiful, sobbing wail of sound. She forced herself out of bed, staggered to the window, and pulled back the curtains.

The sound had come from the direction of Perrywig Caves, but how near or far it was she could not tell. As she stood, staring out . . .

"I hope you're not frightened, miss?"

The voice came from underneath the window, and she jumped. The man who was standing there was wrapped to his chin in a greatcoat, but she recognized the voice and knew it was Lane, the steward, before he gave his name. Under his arm the faint light showed the gleam of a gun barrel.

"What was it?" she whispered, and in her relief she had a wild desire to raise his salary.

"I don't know, miss. I've been up since four, and I heard nothing till just now."

"Why have you got that gun?"

"I thought there might be some poachers about."

He walked forward in the darkness toward the wall, and after a while came back.

"I had a new lock put on that door—a Yale. You'll find the key in your library. I wouldn't advise you to open that door, miss—day or night."

"What dogs are those?" she asked.

"Dogs? Oh, you saw them, did you? He's been out, has he—Goodie, I mean? Did he have his dogs with him?"

"He went toward Perrywig Caves," she said, and to her surprise the man answered coolly:

"I wondered if he might. Rum time for training race horses, isn't it, miss?"

"What kind of dogs are they?" she asked again.

"I'm blest if I know," said the man. "I've heard about them but never seen them. He keeps them in a sort of underground kennel. That's why I think you'd better not go through that door: they're pretty dangerous. He can manage them because he's an animal trainer."

All this conversation was carried on in a low tone, but evidently it had reached one wakeful person, for she heard a back door open and the voice of Panton, the butler.

"Is that you, Jimmy?"

"That's me," said Lane.

Panton came into view. She saw him put something

into his pocket and wondered what he had been carrying.

"I'm sorry, miss. I thought I heard somebody calling."

"You must be a light sleeper, Panton," she said.

It was rather amusing, this three-sided conversation, she leaning out of the window, shivering (she did not realize how cold she had been till she got back to bed), and the two men below.

They moved round the corner of the house, whispering together, and she went back into the room and slipped into bed with an unaccustomed sense of luxury and happiness. While she was trying to analyze that sense of happiness, the figure and voice of Luke obtruded through all her reasoning. Luke, who had furnished her with two strong guards who were alert to every whisper. She fell asleep, and when she woke it was nearly ten o'clock and the sun was pouring through the half-drawn curtains.

CHAPTER X

DR. BLANTER took the unusual course of calling at Scotland Yard to lodge a complaint. He was intensely annoyed that, after seeking the highest officials, he was handed down from one subordinate to another, until he found himself sitting *vis-à-vis* the imperturbable Mr. Luke.

"Perfectly disgraceful, I agree with you, Doctor," said Luke, a frown of disapproval corrugating his brow. "I don't know whether I've heard anything so monstrous. They took you from a night club, they put you in the detention room, searched you—which, of course, is the ordinary routine, though it's not usual in such cases. I can only suggest that the officer in charge thought that, overcome by the horror of your position, you might lay violent hands on yourself."

"Don't try to pull my leg, Inspector," growled Dr. Blanter. "You know that's not what I'm complaining of. I'm complaining of this fact—that whilst I was held in the cells, three or four of your busy

fellows came along to my flat and searched it. You can't say they didn't, because a neighbour of mine on the other side of the courtyard saw them at it; he thought they were burglars and called the police."

"Do you mean to tell me they didn't pull the blinds down?" asked Luke, in horror. "The careless devils!"

"I'm going to take this matter to the House of Commons."

"I should," said Luke firmly, "and to the House of Lords. It's a much more respectable place."

"If the police can search my house without a search warrant——"

"They may have been burglars, after all," suggested Luke. "Your kindly neighbour was probably right. And where was the admirable but bibulous Stoofer?"

He knew the big brute of a man who acted as bodyguard and "minder" to the doctor. It was no secret that the master and man got drunk together—the doctor had been evicted from his one respectable club for introducing his servant as a guest.

"Tight, was he?" suggested Luke, when the doctor made no reply. "Did the police come when your neighbour telephoned for them?"

"They didn't," snapped Dr. Blanter. "You know

pretty well why they didn't come. I'm not going to stand it. If you've anything against me, come into the open and charge me."

"With what?" asked Luke blandly. "Give me a suggestion; tell me anything I can charge you with, and I'll oblige you with the greatest of pleasure. I know nothing definite against you, Doctor." He leaned his elbows on the table and looked straight at the big man's face. "I know, of course, that you're a blackguard and a beast and the biggest leg in London, that you've been guilty of offences which, if the Medical Association could have proved its case and the police could have found a few witnesses who weren't bribed or suborned, would have put you into Dartmoor for seven years. But I know nothing definitely against you."

The man's face had gone from red to purple, from purple to a sickly yellow.

"I'll break you for this!"

"I don't think so," said Luke, in a gentle, even voice. "You and I are alone, and I'm telling you just what you are. I know you're in every swindle that is exploited by the Green Ribbon; I know that you haven't, in the whole of your gross body, a single spark of pity or human kindness. If you had, you

could never have taken that dead girl and dropped her into the mill pond."

He was referring now to one of the darkest episodes in Dr. Blanter's life, the one case which, if it could have been brought home to him, would have sent him to penal servitude for life.

"I know that you'd cut my throat with no more compunction than you'd cut a pig's—but I can't prove it. And since I can't prove it, you're a free man. Am I far enough in the open for you?"

Blanter swallowed the lump in his throat. His big hands, resting on the table, were shaking with fury, and not, as Luke well knew, with fear; for fear was not in the man.

"At the back of my mind," the detective went on, "I have a feeling that you're concerned in a pretty ugly crime, and I don't know what it is."

And then Luke remembered a grisly little present that a detective officer had given him that morning. He put his hand into his waistcoat pocket and took out a small piece of chalk and passed it across the table.

"Here's a little souvenir, a mascot," he said.

Blanter glowered down at it.

"It's the piece of chalk that was used this morning

at the execution of the Highbury murderer. They made a mark with it for his feet on the trap. Keep it for luck. We'll find another little bit of chalk for you when your turn comes."

This time he had hit home, got right under the skin of the giant. Blanter's big jaw dropped, and into his eyes came momentarily the yellow flag of fear. He stared down at the chalk, his face twisted in an expression of repugnance and horror, and rose, pushing back his chair.

"Take it. Show it to Goodie—he's yellow too."

Luke walked to the door and pulled it open.

"Get out," he said briefly, and without a word or a look Dr. Blanter walked past him, and Luke pulled open the window to air the room. He was inclined to be a little extravagant in moments of great emotion.

It was not his own room; he was occupying for the time being the office of a superior, who came in to complain testily of draughts.

"Did you see his nibs?"

"I not only saw him but scolded him," said Mark Luke.

By the time he reached his own bureau he was a little doubtful as to whether he had not said too much. He had no illusions about Dr. Blanter. He

was a man who would stop at nothing, and it was not the question of his promotion that was worrying Mr. Luke so much as the question of his life.

He rang the bell for his clerk.

"There'll be a box of poisoned chocolates come here in a day or two," he said. "Send them to Superintendent Kersin."

He never had liked Kersin.

But Dr. Blanter had a soul above poisoned chocolates, and at that very moment was planning something particularly ingenious for the discomfiture of the man who, for the first time in his life, had frightened him.

Blanter had a beautiful house near Maidenhead. It commanded, not only a backwater, but the island which formed this. A sprawling, one-storied house that stood behind a shaven lawn, studded with bright flower beds; and it was thither that he made his way after his interview with Luke.

That piece of chalk! He shivered and closed his eyes. He was shaken—he who boasted that fear was the one word he could not understand in any language. When his nerves were ajar, as they were frequently for other reasons than fright, he found one sure sedative: a gleaming motorboat that was housed in the

big white shed at one corner of his lawn. He had hardly reached the shed before he was in the boat and steering for the open river.

He could think now, and think sanely. Luke had drawn his bow at a venture, and put into words all that gossip had whispered.

What was Luke's vulnerable point? He must have one. If he knew as much as could be known about the doctor, Blanter knew something of Luke; knew, especially, that he enjoyed an independent income, and that dismissal from the force, even if it could be manœuvred, which was extremely unlikely, would not bring ruin. He knew of the detective's friendship with Edna, but those whose business it was to collect information had reported that "there was nothing in it." He was not the type of man who would fall in love. Who'd marry a copper, anyway—a damned, sneaking policeman in plain clothes?

He was much calmer when he brought the boat back to the shed and handed it over to his boatman. He ate a large dinner, and joked heavily with the three young lady guests who had arrived in his absence. By the time coffee and cigars came he had reached the stage of serenity which a good dinner and agreeable company invariably brought. He did not

think again of Luke till the early hours of the morning, and, as he thought, his mind instinctively ran down the long rows of bottles that covered one wall of his laboratory.

"Too dangerous," he said aloud, and on this note fell asleep.

He was up early in the morning, almost as soon as the sun rose through the mists of the river, and was in his laboratory half an hour later. But the bottles held no inspiration, and the little powders and the tiny phials in the locked cupboard did not help him.

He sat down on a stool before the bench and stared glumly at the wall. Suppose this fellow had fallen for the girl . . . It was worth another inquiry, he decided.

CHAPTER XI

THERE is a popular delusion about jockeys, that they earn too much money on the turf and spend too much in the West End of London. Tommy Dix, who was called a veteran without taking offence, lived a typical jockey's life. He had a fast Bentley and a good bed; and when he wasn't riding or walking, or explaining to owners why their five-furlong horses could not stay a mile and a half, or telling trainers what they ought to have known without being told, that their horses couldn't act on the hard going or the soft going, whichever was the going at the moment, he spent his life in one or the other of these two articles of commerce.

He went to bed every night at ten, and was riding gallops every morning at six, if the gallops were near where he lived, and an hour later if they were some distance away. To leave Newmarket at five in the morning, ride half a dozen horses across Salisbury Downs, get to a race meeting, ride two or three more in their legitimate and competitive exercises, and

return home to Newmarket the same night, was an ordinary day's occupation. Sometimes he went to the pictures, sometimes spent a week-end in town and did a theatre; but usually he lived in a breezy house, where the windows were open summer and winter, slept like an angel, took one meat meal a day—a lean lamb chop—and thrived on it.

His only diversion was a night spent in a Turkish bath, when the exigencies of his profession demanded that he should ride at a weight less than nature had allotted to him.

He knew Mr. Goodie, had ridden for him, and came down to Berkshire one Sunday morning to ride in a fast gallop, his mount being the horse Field of Glory. Only Mr. Goodie saw the trial. Field of Glory won by a neck from an uncommonly ordinary lot of platers, and, when Tommy had dismounted, Mr. Goodie met him.

"Is that good enough to win the Cambridgeshire?" he asked.

Tommy looked at the horse and then at Mr. Goodie.

"What weight has he got?"

"Seven seven," said Mr. Goodie.

"And is that the weight I was riding him at?"

The trainer nodded.

"You haven't a chance in hell," said Tommy inelegantly.

He was a little puzzled. On his way to the starting point he had felt under the saddle, but there were no lead weights in the pocket. Trainers sometimes do not take jockeys into their confidence and, knowing something of Goodie's reputation, Tommy expected to find the pockets packed with lead. His own riding weight was seven three; the saddle might have been a little heavier—suppose he rode at seven ten, the horse still had no chance.

Mr. Goodie waited till the jockey's car was a blur of dust on the road, and then he ordered José to take off the saddle. José, being a strong man, was able to do so. It was a specially made saddle, with sheet lead beneath the seat; the exact weight that Tommy Dix had carried in the gallop was ten stone.

It was all one to the jockey who was engaged to ride the horse in the Cambridgeshire, for there are more jockeys riding losers than winners in every race. He made a half-hearted attempt to get off riding, but Mr. Goodie had written to him, keeping him to his contract. The Jockey Club is rather fussy about

jockeys accepting engagements which they do not fulfil.

Tommy drove back to London, and, passing through the suburbs, stopped at the house of an eminent bookmaker. It is a lamentable fact that jockeys know bookmakers and are frequently on speaking terms with them.

"How did he go?" asked the bookmaker.

"He'll win a good seller," said Tommy. "That's one you can lay."

Tommy had one great fault—he was talkative, and all Newmarket and most of sporting Fleet Street knew that Field of Glory, albeit a winner of the Stockton Handicap, was not a considerable quantity when the question of the Cambridgeshire Handicap arose for discussion.

I think he will improve on that gallop [wrote Mr. Goodie to Tommy the next day].

The horse is just coming to himself, and next year may be anything.

Tommy read the letter and said something rude.

There had been another spectator of the gallop that Sunday morning. Edna Gray had ridden out

on her hack, taken a wide sweep through a lane, and come on to the downs in time to see the start. She knew very little about racing; the only opinion she formed was that one of the stable boys who were riding was extremely capable. This was an unconscious compliment to Tommy Dix.

She saw the horses pull up at the distance, and, turning her hack, rode in the opposite direction, descending a steep and, if she had only known it, perilous path that brought her past the face of Perrywig Caves. She reined in the horse to look at the big aperture. Peering in through the heavy gate, she strove to penetrate the gloom, but could see nothing except the suggestion of a wall of rock which seemed to be the end of the cave, although she knew by repute that it was possible to travel "miles" underground through the labyrinthine passages which honeycombed the downs.

She touched the horse with her heels and rode on for a few paces. Suddenly she reined in the hack. There was evidence here of picnickers; the remnants of a meal had been flung down behind a bush. There were orange peel, chicken bones, a potato or two, and the remnants of a salad. Evidently the picnickers had come well equipped, and must have cooked their

meal near by, for the potato is not a vegetable that *al fresco* lunchers carry with them.

Again she went on, her horse stepping gingerly on the loose surface of the slope. Once he slipped and she thought he was going to fall, but to her relief she came to level ground without mishap.

Luke had promised to come down to lunch that Sunday, but probably would forget all about the engagement, and not even apologize for his lapse. She was agreeably surprised to find him sunning himself before the house in a deep wicker chair.

"So you heard the ghost, did you?" he greeted her, without attempting to rise. He really had the worst manners of any man she knew. "Well, are you coming back to town like a sensible lady?"

He rose lazily as she came up to him.

"The rats, I hear, have disappeared. Messrs. Rustem and Goodie wasted a lot of time and money and energy for nothing. Are you coming back to town?"

"Why should I?" she asked.

"Because this is a very lonely life for an attractive young lady, and because I've done a very stupid thing."

He followed her into the lounge, and had the grace to put the cushions in a chair for her.

"It's amazing to hear you make such a confession," she said. "What have you done?"

"Some unknown person called me up on the phone yesterday and asked me if I knew you. When I said that I did, he said something particularly foul about you. It was, of course, the sheerest invention, and was said with a purpose. Like a fool, I raved at him. It was what he wanted, of course, and he had cut off before I realized what a stupid ass I'd been."

She stared at him.

"I don't understand."

"To be caught by a simple trick like that! I'm ashamed of myself," he said.

"But what does it mean? I still don't understand. What foul thing did he say?"

"That's neither here nor there," he said. "The point was that the man at the other end wanted to know whether I cared sufficiently about you to go raving mad at the first word of abuse—and he knows."

Before she could speak he went on.

"When I say 'cared sufficiently about you,' I do not mean that I'm desperately in love with you. It merely means that I'm crazy about you. There is a subtle distinction between the two emotions."

"I hope there is," she said coldly. "Are you staying to lunch?"

"I refuse to be snubbed," said Mark Luke. "As I told you before, I regard you as my younger brother. One is fond of younger brothers—at least, some younger brothers."

"I don't think it is necessary to pursue this rather embarrassing topic, is it?" she asked, angry with him, more angry with herself that she had betrayed her annoyance.

"It is, up to a point."

It was impossible to quench Mr. Luke.

"For example, if this gentleman thinks he can hurt me by hurting you, it's rather important that you should be put out of reach. Dr. Blanter is the one man I cannot allow you to meet."

She turned swiftly on him, making no disguise of her anger now.

"You could have put that a little more tactfully, couldn't you, Mr. Luke?" she asked wrathfully. "He may be a very undesirable sort of man, but if I have given you the right to determine whom I shall meet and whom I shall not, I have done so unknowingly, and I am sorry that I have put you in a false position. You've been very good to me and I appre-

ciate it, but I rather hate your way of assuming that you're responsible for my life. It's not embarrassing, it's irritating!"

He did not answer; he was looking at her very seriously. Then, after a long interval of silence, he said:

"I suppose it is. My manners aren't of the best. I'm sorry."

Instantly she felt penitent, but controlled herself to hide her contrition. She had gained a little victory, but not without casualties. In some subtle way his attitude had changed toward her. She thought he had no attitude but one, but here she was mistaken.

Throughout lunch she strove vainly to get back to the old footing, which was infinitely preferable to the more correct and respectful attitude he adopted now. In the end she accused him of sulking, and he laughed.

"I hope not, but you never know with a man: they're such vain creatures and can sulk so easily. Have you seen any more of your dogs?"

She shook her head.

"Take a closer look at them when you see them again," he said, "and don't be frightened."

"Dogs do not frighten me."

He stayed an hour after lunch, and never had she

thought it possible to find in him such a capacity for small talk. When he went away he left her with a sense of dissatisfaction—dissatisfaction with herself, with him, with Longhall, with her present mode of living, and with the long evening to come.

She rang for her maid.

"Pack my suitcase and telephone to the Carlton for a suite, and tell the chauffeur I am going to London to-night."

For the first time she did not notify Mr. Luke of her movements. She realized this with a start, not because of the omission, but dismayed by the consciousness of her habit.

London on a wet Sunday evening is a dull place even in a bright and sparkling hotel. There was not even the excuse of a theatre to take her out. She went to sleep that night, thoroughly miserable, and could have cried if she had dared to admit to herself an excuse for tears.

CHAPTER XII

LUKE was working in his office the next morning when his clerk came to tell him that a man had called.

"Looks like somebody who wants to touch you, sir."

"Bring in this ambitious person," said Luke.

He swung round in his swivel chair to meet the dilapidated little man who stood apologetically in the doorway, his greasy old cap in his hand.

"Hullo, Punch! Come in."

He nodded to his clerk to withdraw.

Punch had gone several degrees down the scale of respectability since Luke had seen him at Doncaster. The toes of his boots gaped; he was unshaven, and had obviously slept in his clothes the previous night, and probably many other previous nights.

"I walked up from Newbury, Mr. Luke. Couldn't get a brief to get on to the course. If I had, and I'd found anybody with a couple of bob, I should have backed the winner of the cup. Old Goodie was there, but when I asked him for the price of a drink he told

me to go to hell. If I'd seen Trigger I'd have got it. Trigger's not a bad feller. I did a couple of jobs for him when he was in a small way, and he's always paid well——"

"You're not going to tell me the story of your life, Punch," said Luke. "What do you want?"

The man licked his cracked lips.

"I've had nothing to eat since yesterday."

"And nothing to drink since this morning."

The man shook his head vigorously.

"I'm on the wagon, I am indeed, Mr. Luke. More than a hundred thousand pounds have passed through my hands through booze, and it took me until a month ago to realize it. That's what I wanted to see you about. It isn't going straight, it's going sober, and I know you're the sort of gentleman who wouldn't think twice about helping a feller if he thought he was willing to help himself."

"You've had a few chances, Punch."

The man nodded.

"Yes, I have," he said bitterly. "That's why I'm having no chances now. Almost anybody's willing to help a man once, even twice; it's when he gets a regular sponger, as I have been, that he's finished—can't even raise the price of a meal. I'm not blaming

anybody except meself. Nobody believes me when I tell 'em I've gone sober."

Luke looked at him thoughtfully.

"I wonder if I could trust you," he said, and interrupted the little man's protestations with a gesture. "Anyway, I'm going to take a chance with you, Punch, and if you let me down I'll never let up on you!"

He took out his pocketbook and found two five-pound notes.

"Go out, have a bath, burn your clothes, and get a respectable suit and a lodging. Report to me this afternoon; and keep your mouth shut about me."

The man was incoherent and ready to fly out on his mission, yet must stop to retail a little gossip.

"Field of Glory is no good for the Cambridgeshire. Tommy Dix rode him in a gallop yesterday morning. I saw one of the travelling lads at the station this morning, and he told me. I can't see how he could be any good for a race like the Cambridgeshire and I don't understand why he won the Stockton Handicap. I sold him for sixty-five quid——"

"Yes, yes, that's a bit of ancient history. Report at four o'clock."

Punch went out of the room, voluble to the last.

After he had gone Luke took from a locked drawer three large blue folders marked "Green Ribbon." He added a few notes to the dossier of Mr. Trigger, and, reading for the twentieth time the meagre particulars he had of that gentleman, could find little in the details of his known life that was in any way reprehensible.

Dr. Blanter's dossier was a much more important affair. It contained newspaper cuttings of two inquests, particulars of a hearing before the Medical Association, and a score of letters, half of which were anonymous, the majority written by illiterate people. A current record of the doctor's movements lay before him, but gave him little news that was of any value.

It was generally believed at Scotland Yard that the doctor had associations with several organized cliques of criminals, "clique" being a word preferable to "gang" to describe the loose associations of men, most of whom were operating individually, yet were bound together by some common object or interest, and could be relied upon to act in concert if occasion arose.

Blanter was a liberal paymaster, and he had also at his command a little army of men and women who

had been in his employ at some period or other—the staffs of queer little night clubs which he had financed, and establishments of a less reputable character. He was known to be a man who could be depended upon to provide funds for the defence of those who had been brought within the reach of the law, and in one way and another he had accumulated a formidable reserve, upon which he could call in his necessity.

Luke, at any rate, did not underrate the importance of this man, and had taken certain precautions.

Dr. Blanter was not unaware of the fact that he was shadowed. He had the instincts of a man who has lived dangerously near the edge of the law, and, moreover, he had a wholesome respect for the intelligence and perseverance of Scotland Yard.

Early that Monday morning he arrived at his town house in Half Moon Street, to find a long telegram transmitted to him from an agent in South America. He read it through once and memorized every line of it—this was one of the tricks of which he was very proud—and destroyed the telegram. A few minutes later, after considering the various merits of four possible candidates, he called up a young lady who

lived in Bayswater, and she answered him rather snappishly, for she had been aroused from her sleep.

"It's the doctor speaking," he said. "I want you, Maggie. Come round and see me at half-past eleven."

"I'm so sorry, Blanter; I didn't know it was you," she apologized. "I'll be with you on the tick."

This young lady rejoiced in the name of Ruby de Vinne for stage purposes; it had been given to her by a fanciful press agent who had a bowing acquaintance with typography. It was her pleasure to describe herself as an actress, and certainly on occasions she had played a part. In one play she had said: "What will the prince think of you now, my lady?" and in another, addressing the leading man of a musical comedy, she had said, in a refined Cockney voice: "Tell us all about your adventures in China," which had given the leading man an excuse for bursting into song.

Dr. Blanter called her Maggie because that was the name her parents had given her. She came at eleven-thirty to the second, a dark and pretty girl, who had once had the word "vivacious" explained to her, and had never forgotten its significance.

"Oh, Doctor, you gave me such a start. I thought

it was my boy come back from Germany. He's playing at the Admiral Palast in 'Aller's Revue, and he stops the show. They've asked me to go out——"

"If you shout at your boy as you shout at me over the phone I don't wonder he stays in Germany," said the doctor with good humour. "And you're still rather weak on your h's, Maggie darling. Haller is pronounced Haller, even in Berlin. I've got a job for you."

She nodded. She had done work for the doctor before, and retained pleasant memories of the reward. There was nothing mean about the doctor; people who had "done jobs" for him would be happy to go on doing jobs for the rest of their lives.

"You speak Spanish, don't you?"

"Like a native," she said promptly.

"Well, you know a word or two—that's all I want. And, what is more important, you've been on South American tours once or twice. Cabaret work, wasn't it?"

"I was starred," she answered promptly, "or, at least, the troupe was starred, and I was the leader of the troupe."

"Now listen to me." The doctor shook the ash of his cigar into a silver bowl. "Just forget that you

were ever in a troupe, that you've ever been on the stage, and remember what I'm telling you. You went out to Buenos Aires with your father, who is a retired colonel, and while you were there you were introduced to Edna Gray. Her uncle—well, I'll give you full particulars of where she lived and what she did. I'll tell you the hotel she stayed at, and her dressmaker—as a matter of fact, you might have been introduced to her at her dressmaker's. She came into town every three months, and it is quite possible you might have met her there. This young lady is staying at the Carlton Hotel. I want you to get in touch with her—meet her by accident; she usually lunches there when she's in town, and she's in town now. Make friends with her, but don't overdo it. Get her to go with you to a theatre—I'll get a box for the Pavilion revue whenever you want one. How are you off for clothes?"

Miss de Vinne was very well off for clothes just then.

"Don't take her to any of the flash places. Lunch her at the Ritz or the Berkeley. Be careful of your h's, and, whatever you do, don't slop over. See me again this afternoon, after you've studied up these particulars."

He took a sheet of paper from a stationery rack, and in his copperplate hand wrote down a few facts for her to memorize.

"There's your part," he said humorously. "We'll talk it over at tea. I'll give you fifty pounds for your expenses, and when that's gone you can have another fifty."

Miss de Vinne was what she described as "a quick study," which is not remarkable, remembering the brevity of the parts she had played. She returned that afternoon word-perfect, and not only survived the oral examination of her employer, but, as he graciously admitted, completely satisfied him.

"There's another point I want to make to you, and this is important. She's got Luke hanging around her—they came back to England in the same ship, and probably that's how he got to know her."

"Luke?" she said, in a changed voice. "You don't mean the busy? He knows me. He had me up at the Yard over that Pyrock affair, and I was as innocent as a baby in arms, Doctor. He kept me there for six hours, asking me questions until I didn't know whether I was on my head or my heels."

"You'll have to arrange it so that you don't meet him, and if you do you will bluff it out. I don't know

what terms he's on with the girl, whether he'd tell her. Anyway, your job is just to manœuvre an invitation to Longhall."

"What's 'manœuvre' mean?" asked Maggie, and he explained with great patience. "Wouldn't it be a good idea if I sent up my card to her?"

"That reminds me," said the doctor. "Your name is not Ruby de Vinne; your name is Maggie Higgs, which is your real name."

She was not at all pleased with this descent.

"Do you think it sounds genteel enough? I mean, I'm supposed to have been abroad."

"Even foreign travel doesn't change your name to De Vinne," said the doctor acidly.

The introduction was not difficult to arrange. Edna went to the theatre that night; between the first and second acts she came out into the vestibule, when there suddenly appeared before her a radiant figure, her arms aglitter with many bracelets.

"Isn't it Edna Gray?" asked the vivacious young lady. "I'm sure it is!"

Edna was amused and puzzled.

"Yes, that is my name."

"You don't remember me? And why should you. I only met you once. Do you remember Madame

Rugatti's in Buenos Aires—you'd just come in from your uncle's place, you remember, and you were awfully tired."

Edna shook her head, still smiling.

"I don't remember," she said; "but I often came in to Buenos Aires feeling very tired."

"How delightful to see you!" glowed Maggie Higgs. "I'm in London for a month or two, and I was just praying to meet somebody I knew. I'm all alone here; Papa's gone back to India to join his army."

This was a slight error, but was overlooked, in Edna's warm pleasure at meeting somebody who at least liked her well enough to wish to renew an acquaintance.

They chatted for a few minutes, and then the curtain bell rang and they went back to the theatre. After the show was over Edna found the girl waiting for her in the lobby.

"Where are you staying? . . . May I drive you there? My car is here."

They supped in the restaurant, and, on parting, had made an appointment to meet the following day. Maggie went back to Half Moon Street and reported jubilantly.

The doctor listened with pursed lips and a frown on his forehead.

"It's a pity you lunched in the public dining room. You'd better tell her to-morrow that you're moving into the Carlton. Take a suite, and have your meals in private."

At about that moment a young man in evening dress was telephoning through to Mr. Luke.

"Do you remember Ruby de Vinne, sir? . . . Yes, Maggie something or other—Higgs, is it? Yes, that's the name. She's got acquainted with Miss Gray. They were at the theatre and had supper together. De Vinne went on to Blanter; she's there now. Any instructions?"

"Pick her up in the morning," said Luke without emotion. "If Maggie shifts her lodgings to the Carlton, take a room there and mark the account for me personally. On second thoughts, you'd better tail Maggie home."

At two o'clock in the morning Miss Higgs drove back to her pretty flat in Bayswater, unescorted. At least, she had the happy impression she was unescorted.

Dr. Blanter was having breakfast the following morning when his servant came to tell him he was wanted urgently on the telephone.

"Tell 'em to go to the devil," growled the doctor, who had had a bad night. "Who is it?"

"Mr. Luke, sir."

The doctor dropped his knife and fork and went into his study.

"That you, Blanter? Luke speaking."

"Well?" snapped the doctor.

"Keep Higgs away from Miss Gray, will you?—unless you get any satisfaction out of illusions."

Dr. Blanter breathed heavily through his nose.

"I don't know what you mean," he said after a pause. "Who is Higgs?"

"Don't argue—I'm telling you," came the icy reply, and the click of the receiver as Luke hung up.

The doctor went back to his breakfast, a very thoughtful man.

Edna waited in vain for the visitor who was due to arrive at eleven o'clock. They had planned a shopping excursion and a lunch, but half-past eleven came, and then twelve, and no sign of the visitor. She was puzzled and more than a little annoyed. Without liking this new friend who had been thrust upon her, she had anticipated a pleasurable day in the company of another woman.

Just before lunch a telegram came from Germany.

Mr. Garcia had decided to make a leisurely trip through southern Europe, and asked that she should write to him at the Argentine Consulate in Constantinople. If he had wired his itinerary, or given her any address to which she could have telegraphed, she would have packed her clothes and joined him. Instead, she went back to Longhall late in the afternoon, and found that the country offered less diversion to a woman without occupation than town had done. She had serious thoughts of returning to the Argentine and shaking the dust of England from her feet for ever.

CHAPTER XIII

A YOUNG and attractive woman without friends is something of an anomaly. Edna Gray began to realize that her decision to live in the least residential portion of the county of Berkshire was a mistake. The loveliness of the country, the vistas of rolling green, the splashes of colour which had grown, as if by magic, at the hands of her gardener, who had carte blanche, the lovely quietude of an old house, and the comforting sense of responsibility which she derived from its management—all these things were weighed down by her isolation.

She had lived in lonely places before, but it had been a bearable loneliness, since it was inevitable. In this thickly populated island, with all the amenities at hand which her youth and her position could bring her, it was a little freakish in her that she could cut herself off from human society.

Thus she argued, though she told herself that London was within two hours' car ride, and that she had no particular desire to meet anybody. She rode

every day, and generally in the afternoon drove about the country in one of those tiny cars which had once excited her derision but which now she found a particularly useful method of transportation.

There was an uneven and badly tended road which led by a circuitous route to the crest of the downs. She had even found away across the down itself, and the tiny machine stood up bravely to the strain she imposed upon its chassis.

But a horse was her chief joy. She would ride for hours, without any exact destination. Twice she found herself on a new training ground, where strings of horses were at exercise.

Returning from her ride one morning, she had an experience which she was to remember. She had found her way down to the level grassland, a gentle slope which avoided the beaten track down which she had come on the previous Sunday. It led her round the face of a grassy bastion, and she was turning for home when she saw two men digging. They were sulky-looking, middle-aged men of the labouring class, and they had already made a great pile of chalky earth which had been flung up on each side of the trench. She brought her horse nearer, wondering what was the reason for the excavation. The two

men looked up at her as she rode past, and answered her cheery greeting with a grunt.

The hole had been dug on Mr. Goodie's land, and she rode on, giving little thought to the matter. Building methods were mysteries to her; why gangs of men dug holes in the ground, or threw up embankments, was never apparent to her until the finished work advertised its utility.

Lane came to her that evening with some accounts for settlement.

"Has Mr. Goodie notified you he's doing any building on your land, Miss Gray?" he asked. "I see a couple of his labourers have been very busy for three days excavating at the foot of the downs. I don't know what are the terms of his lease, but I should say he couldn't erect any buildings without your permission."

She smiled at this. Her position of authority never ceased to amuse her.

"I'll go into it, Mr. Lane," she said, but had no intention of doing anything of the sort.

The evening brought an explanation. It was nearly dark; she had made a long ramble through the country, and very foolishly had taken, as she thought, a short cut along what was known as the downs road,

but which was little more than a track used by farmers' wagons. It was growing dark when, to her consternation, the engine stopped. She got down, and understood the cause before she examined the gasoline gauge. Very foolishly she had forgotten to fill up.

Her situation was by no means desperate. She was within three miles of her house, and she had a good sense of topography. She abandoned the car and continued the journey on foot. It was nearly dusk by the time she began the descent of the southern slope. And then she became aware that between the road and the downs was a motor vehicle of some kind. By the position of the head lamps she guessed it was a trolley.

She had hardly noted this fact when she saw something walking toward her, and heard the clink of a horse's hoofs as he struck a stone.

Edna moved for the shadow of the plantation. There was no reason why she should be afraid. Possibly it was one of Goodie's farm hands, leading a cart horse. But, though she was not by nature nervous, she felt her heart beating a little faster and a cold shiver run down her spine.

They were visible now—a man leading a horse—

but the man was Goodie. She recognized his hunched shoulders, the droop of his head. They passed her not half a dozen yards away and went on toward the place where she had seen the labourers digging a hole, and where, even in the dim light, she could see piles of chalky soil. Horse and man stopped, and, peering through the gathering darkness, she saw that the horse was standing on the edge of the pit. And then she saw Goodie take something bulky from his pocket. She thought he was putting a bridle on to the horse, and she was so interested that she forgot to be nervous.

"*Plang!*"

It was a noise like the slamming of an iron door. She saw the horse fall heavily and disappear from view, and her heart started racing again as she realized what had happened. The horse had been shot. That pit, dug with such labour, had been prepared for this eventuality. For no reason at all she began to tremble, and for a second thought she was going to faint; the mere realization was sufficient to enable her to fight off the weakness. She began to move away almost on tiptoe, walking faster and faster, and only just conquering the almost irresistible inclination to break into a run. She made a circuit to avoid

the van, but she passed close enough to see what it was: a great motor-horse van, which at the moment was unattended, and this she passed at a distance of twenty yards and gained the road.

By the time she reached the house she was nearly hysterical with excitement and panic. Luckily, none of the servants saw her come in, and she was able to reach her bedroom without making a fool of herself (as she described it afterward).

When she grew calmer and could think consecutively she was ashamed of her terror. Save for the darkness, there was nothing mysterious about the happening. Owners of horses occasionally do shoot their charges; possibly this was some pet of the old man's, and he could not bear any other hand to send it to oblivion.

From her bedroom window she searched for the trainer, but could not find him. At nine o'clock she could still see the horse box standing where she had passed it, its lights burning dimly. It had gone in the morning. When she rode out in the early sunlight, after sending her chauffeur to collect her abandoned car, she saw two labourers filling up the hole.

She continued her way to the crest of the downs, and then, unexpectedly, as she turned on to the level

plateau, she came face to face with Goodie. Sitting on his hack, moodily surveying the glorious landscape, he turned his yellow, inscrutable face and met her eyes, and for the first time since they had met at Doncaster he spoke to her.

"Good-morning, Miss Gray."

She answered him civilly.

"Didn't scare you last night, did I?"

She nearly jumped from the saddle, she was so startled.

"I didn't see you; my man did. I had to shoot an old hack of mine, and I thought I might as well do it when nobody was around. . . . There's generally a lot of picnic parties on the downs, and I hate shooting horses anyway."

His eyes never left hers.

"One of these days I hope you'll sell this place, Miss Gray," he went on in his monotonous voice. "I've got so used to it that I shall hate leaving it. You must come up and see my horses gallop some morning. They're not much—I mean, they're not very good horses, though I have one or two that can go a bit. They tell me you're thinking of going into ownership? I never tout for clients, but if you like to send a couple of horses to me you may be sure I

shall look after them well and give you a winner occasionally. I have one that I'd like to sell you now."

She was staggered to hear revealed a plan which she had confided only to Luke.

"I am afraid my ownership plans are rather vague," she said. "I really don't know how to begin about it."

He licked his colourless lips and looked past her.

"I've got a horse you could buy for a thousand pounds; it's worth much more, and I believe the owner wants to sell—Field of Glory. I thought of coming up to see you about it, but then I never tout for clients. He's a pretty good horse, by Blandford; his dam was a good winner in Ireland. You might do worse than have your colours carried in public."

She shook her head.

"I know so little about racing——" she began, and the ghost of a smile puckered his face.

"If trainers had to wait for owners who know something about racing they'd starve," he said. "This horse is in the Cambridgeshire, and he might win it. I don't say he will, but he might. I tried him the other morning; I think you saw the trial? You might think it over, Miss Gray."

He jerked his chin at her, wheeled his hack round,

and cantered away toward his horses that were walking in a circle at the far end of the gallop.

Edna Gray was puzzled, though she told herself, as she rode back, that there was nothing unusual in a local trainer, who was also a tenant, offering her an opportunity for ownership.

She had occasion to talk to Luke on the phone that day, and she mentioned casually her conversation with Goodie. He was interested.

"If he offered you Field of Glory for a thousand pounds you had a chance of making a bargain, but I'm very glad you didn't seize it," he said. "It belongs to a man in the Midlands, a publican—or, at least, it's supposed to belong to him. I pretty well guess why Goodie wants to transfer the horse to you!"

"Then let me pretty well understand it," she said, but he did not accept her invitation.

After she had rung off she realized she had forgotten to tell him about the shooting incident, and afterward the event faded from her mind.

In the days that followed Luke neither wrote to nor communicated with her in any way, and she passed through a brief phase of active dislike of him. Then, toward the end of the week, when she was

weary to death of her loneliness, he made his appearance unannounced and unheralded. His reception was a cool one, but he had expected no other, and her attitude became almost icy when she learned that she was not the object of the visit at all, but that he had come down to see her steward. Indeed, he did not go to the house at all until she invited him there.

"I hate these mysteries, Mr. Luke. If I hadn't been in the lower meadow I shouldn't have known you were here at all."

"Don't be testy," he said, with a return of his old-time manner. "I had to see Lane about a matter which is really nothing whatever to do with you."

A quick retort was on her lips, but she was blessed with a sense of humour, and laughed.

"You're an exasperating man and a very bad-mannered one too! You should have come to see me first. Are you staying the night? I will arrange for rooms——"

"There is an inn along the road—the Red Lion. I've already parked my bag there," he said.

"You could have stayed here."

He overlooked her inconsistency.

"I prefer the Red Lion. My hostess doesn't bark at me or think I'm presuming on her acquaintance.

Besides, you're going to be very furious with me when you know that I've robbed you of a girl friend."

"A girl friend?" she said, bewildered.

"Maggie Higgs. She's a third-rate vaudeville artiste, and that's the nicest thing that can be said about her. Blanter sent her to you to get acquainted —by the way, did she call herself Maggie Higgs or Ruby de Vinne?"

A light dawned upon the girl.

"That was why she didn't come, then?"

He nodded.

Strangely enough, she was not angry with him, did not even resent his interference, and she accepted without question his unflattering description of the girl.

"How very odd! Why did Dr. Blanter want her to know me?"

He did not answer this, and possibly would have found some difficulty in offering a theory. He had one, nebulous enough, but not at the moment to put into words.

"I should like to look round your estate, if I may," he said. "I haven't been over it for a long time."

He intended walking, but she had the horses brought out, and rode by his side through a gate

from the stable yard on to the land behind the house. They were within fifty yards of one of the wire fences, following a rough cart track toward the downs. The cottage was out of sight behind a clump of chestnuts, but they had a good view of the new stables lying on the lower slope of the downs. There was nobody in sight, which was not remarkable, for the day had turned chilly and a few drops of rain had fallen. Usually there were a few picnic parties about on Sundays, and in the summer months the little ravines were full of holiday makers.

She mentioned casually the evidence she had had of one such party near Perrywig Caves, and he was interested.

"You went up there, did you? That is on Goodie's land, isn't it? I think you will find he leases that part of the downs."

"Why is the cave closed?" she asked.

"You mean with a gate? It looks a little sinister, doesn't it? But, as a matter of fact, I believe the big cave has been used as a storehouse for hundreds of years. There's a cut road that leads up to it, and Goodie stores his forage there. I have never been inside them, but I believe the main cave is pretty extensive. It is a natural warehouse."

They could see now a sprinkling of stable boys moving about the main yard.

"Why does he have only Spanish boys?" she asked, and he chuckled.

"There's nothing particularly menacing in that. We English are a queer people: we think every foreigner is a potential murderer, and there are quite a lot of people who believe that Goodie employs these lads for their villainous qualities or because they're so naturally vicious, being of foreign origin, that they would condone the most horrible crimes! He has them because they do not speak English. The curse of the English racing stable is the lad who writes and secretly posts letters to professional backers and tipsters, giving them particulars of recent gallops. The Jockey Club try to keep this down, but it's almost impossible. Their wages are low, and a head lad can pick up a tidy income by supplying information to the right people. Of course, it's against the rules of the Jockey Club, and both the stable lad and the person to whom he writes would be warned off if the fact came out. Happily for all concerned, the truth very seldom escapes; more happily still, stable lads and head lads are such rotten judges that their information isn't as profitable to the people who buy

it as you might think. All they know is about their own horses; they're not aware of the fact that other stables are equally confident of winning races."

He knew the ground much better than she; led her in a semicircle to the foot of a rough road which sloped up to the entrance of the caves. There were two of them, and two miles away was a third, believed by some, though it had never been proved, to communicate with the main cavern. They dismounted, tied their horses to a tree, and went the rest of the journey on foot.

At the mouth of the cave Luke made a careful test of the gate. The square bars were three-quarters of an inch in width, and the gate hung upon hinges set in the solid rock. He tested the gunmetal locks, and reached to the lower staple which fastened the second piece of the gate to the rocky floor, but it was immovable. The floor was of earth, as far as he could see, and covered by furrow-like marks.

"A rake of some kind. That's odd."

He peered into the dark interior of the cave.

"And there's the rake." He pointed, but she could not see. "Just behind that rocky buttress. I can see three or four teeth of it."

He turned away and looked down the steeper slope

toward the bridle path which she had descended.

"Where did you find the remains of the picnic?" he asked.

She looked vainly for signs of the débris. There had been no heavy rain, and yet every scrap had gone. She could not make a mistake as to where she had seen the bones and the orange peel: it was at the foot of a slender ash tree, and part of the remains had been caught in a bush. But when they went down to make an examination there was not a sign of the litter.

"Somebody has been tidying up," he said flippantly.

Remounting their horses, they rode up to the top of the downs. It was growing dark, and heavy banks of clouds were sweeping up from the southwest. They came back to Longhall only just in time, for they were hardly in the house before the rain fell in sheets.

CHAPTER XIV

OVER dinner he gave her the gossip of the race course. Goodie had won a race, a little plate, and the horse had been well backed, but was not a Transaction. It would have started at an outside price, but the doctor had plunged on it. He was a great gambler, and had been known to lose a hundred thousand pounds in one week at Monte Carlo, and even to win as much.

"He'll bet on anything; that's why he's nothing like as rich as the noble Trigger and Goodie."

"Is Goodie rich?"

"I should think he's a millionaire twice over! All his money is invested in South American securities, and it's pretty clear where he's going to settle down when this country becomes too hot for him."

He had not quite got back to the old Luke she knew. There was still a reserve which she could not penetrate, a politeness which was, she ruefully admitted, foreign in him, and much more objectionable than his more casual manner.

A little after ten, just before he left, a telegram was phoned through from London. It was from Garcia, had been handed in at Constantinople, and told her he was contemplating a motor trip across the desert to Palestine.

Rain was falling heavily, and Edna insisted on taking Luke to the Red Lion. On the whole, not an unpleasant evening, she thought, and yet not entirely satisfactory, for she was as far from understanding him as she was from understanding herself.

She did not hear the bell ring in the middle of the night; it was not until Panton, the butler, knocked on her door that she woke.

"What is it?" she asked.

"It's Mr. Luke, miss. He wants to see you very urgently."

She switched on the light, dressed hurriedly, and came down. She found Luke in the dining room. He was wearing a mackintosh and his hat was sodden with rain. He had walked two miles through the storm.

"Is anything wrong?" she asked anxiously.

He closed the door of the dining room.

"Do you know this?"

He took from his pocket a small book; it was bound in limp leather with gilt edges.

The book was vaguely familiar. She took it from his hand and turned the cover. And then she saw on a flyleaf, written in Spanish:

To my dear friend Alberto Garcia, on his 63d birthday.

It was a volume of Spanish poetry that she had bought in Buenos Aires, and the writing was her own.

She looked at him, bewildered.

"Yes, I gave it to Mr. Garcia."

"How did it come to be on the bookshelf in my sitting room?" he asked. "Did Garcia ever stay at the Red Lion?"

She shook her head.

"Not that I'm aware."

"I've made myself very unpopular at that hostelry," he said grimly. "I wakened up everybody who might know—unfortunately, the proprietor and his wife are away on holiday, and most of the staff are new."

He had gone to bed, he said, but could not sleep, and, getting up, had searched the little bookshelf in his sitting room for something to read. It was an un-

interesting collection of books, mainly religious volumes and the dog-eared editions of Victorian novelists. Then he had found this book and turned the pages idly, and only by accident had discovered the inscription on the flyleaf.

"I knew Garcia couldn't have been here since you've been in residence, because he's been abroad."

She laughed.

"But is the matter so very urgent that you should wake four sleepy people in the middle of the night?—Not that I mind in the least."

She rang the bell.

"We'll have some coffee—and take off your wet coat. Apart from the fact that you're ruining my beautiful new carpet, you look most uncomfortable."

Panton, half-dressed, took her order and removed Luke's coat and hat to the hall.

"Yes, it is a bit urgent," he said. "Have you got Garcia's address in Constantinople?"

She considered.

"Only the Argentine Consulate."

"They may be able to put me in touch with him. Do you mind if I get on the phone and send a cable to him?" he asked.

He scribbled the message on the back of an en-

velope, and, going out into the hall, succeeded in getting "telegrams" after the usual exasperating interval. The girl went upstairs to complete her dressing. She was wide awake now, and at the back of her mind was an uneasiness which had not yet become panic.

She finished her dressing, turned out the light, and drew back the curtains to air the room. As she did so she saw a light in the distance. It was coming across the meadows from the direction of the downs, and it was a light carried by somebody who was running. There was no mistaking that fact; it jerked to and fro erratically. There is always something rather terrifying about somebody running for no accountable reason, and she felt a little shiver run down her spine. She went out on to the landing and called softly to Luke. He had finished his phoning and came up to her, taking two stairs at a time.

"What is it?" he asked.

She told him and he returned with her to the bedroom. The light was nearer now and steadier. She saw it halt at the corner of the wire compound, heard the clang of a gate as it closed and the snap of the lock. It was too dark to distinguish the man who carried it, for the rain was incessant and formed a

misty screen between them; but as he came nearer . . .

"That's Goodie and he's without his dogs. They wouldn't go out on a night like this, anyway."

The light passed toward the house and they heard the cottage door close.

"What is the matter with his lordship, I wonder?" asked Luke thoughtfully. He glanced at the luminous dial of his watch; it was a quarter to three. "Where does Lane live?"

"He has a cottage on the road," she said.

"I suppose you can't get him on the phone?"

She had had a house telephone fixed, and one connection was with the steward's cottage.

"I'll get on to him if you don't mind."

He went into the butler's pantry, where the little exchange board was erected, and after a long interval she heard the murmur of his voice talking to Lane. When he came back to the dining room she had poured out the coffee which Panton had brought. She noticed that the butler too had dressed.

"There was no need for you to get up, Panton."

"It's all right, miss," he smiled. "I've always been an early riser."

Edna waited till the door closed upon him.

"What is happening?" she asked.

"That is just what I'd like to know."

Luke took up the little volume, looked at the inscription again, and put it back on the table. He asked her how far Lane's cottage was from the entrance to Gillywood Farm, and when she told him that it was less than a hundred yards he was satisfied.

"What did you tell Lane?"

Here he was rather evasive.

"I'm terribly sorry about waking you so early, and, it may be, without any reason at all. I'm probably jumpy—I get that way sometimes."

Then, with a smile:

"Tell me all about the horses you're buying. Have you made a start——"

She heard the insistent tinkle of the telephone in the pantry, but before she could get up he was out of the room. When he returned there was a frown on his forehead.

"It was Lane," he said. "As he was dressing he saw two men canter past his house. He recognized one as Goodie, and the other was probably Goodie's house man, the Spaniard. He said they came from the direction of Gillywood Cottage and they were evidently in a hurry. Goodie had an electric storm lantern; he put it out opposite Lane's cottage. Appar-

ently the girth of Manuel's saddle had slipped, for they stopped and he dismounted to fasten it. After that they went flying up the road toward Gareham."

Ten minutes later Lane presented himself at the house and was brought into the dining room.

"I saw Goodie quite plainly," he said. "I won't swear to the other fellow, but he was a fairly fat man. But I could tell Goodie's hack in the dark—a gray Basuto pony."

Luke nodded.

"Get back where you can watch Gillywood Cottage and report when they return. Don't let them see you."

Lane went out, stopping only to swallow the hot coffee which the girl had given him.

"It's all very exciting and mysterious," she said, "but what does it mean?"

"That's what I'd like to know," answered Luke with a troubled look in his face. "This is the worst hour in the day for guessing."

There was a room on the top floor at the gabled end of the house which commanded a view of the road along which Goodie had gone, and also a fairly comprehensive view of the eastern downs. Fortunately, it was unoccupied, and from this post of

observation Luke kept watch. The field glasses he borrowed from the girl were fairly useless, for the night was completely dark.

He had been watching for three quarters of an hour when Edna, whom he had left below, came up to him, bringing some fresh coffee.

"Did you see anything?"

"Nothing," he said.

He had hardly spoken the word when, far away on a shoulder of the downs, he saw the flicker of a light. It lasted for a full minute and then went out.

"What is that? It can't be a car: there's no road there," she said.

"You know the country around here pretty well —where would that be?"

She mentally constructed a rough map of the surrounding country.

"That must be somewhere near what they call here the east cave. There's a legend about here that it is connected with Perrywig Caves, but nobody has ever found a way through. The entrance has been closed with a light fence by the Urban District Council—sheep get in there and are lost. And—look!"

The light had appeared again, and he focussed his glasses on it. He could see no more than that it was

stationary, had probably been placed on the ground. It was impossible to see by its light any human figure, even through the powerful glasses. Presently it went out, and when it appeared again it was at some distance from the place where it had originally appeared.

"He's going toward the road," said Luke. "I presume he's coming back."

It was long past four o'clock when the sound of horses' hoofs on the road came to him. By this time Luke had taken a post of observation whence he could see without betraying his presence.

The sound of the hoofs came louder and louder through the hiss of the rain, and then the horsemen passed, their horses at a walk. He could just distinguish Goodie, who rode a little ahead of his companion, his chin on his breast, a characteristic pose of his when he was riding.

Luke went back to the dining room, slipping off his wet waterproof in the hall.

"I'll wait till daylight and then I'll borrow one of your horses and do a little investigating myself," he said. "Something important must have happened—I wonder if a horse has broken loose?"

She nodded.

"That occurred to me. One of Mr. Goodie's horses got out of the stable last week; it took the whole day to find him."

He suggested that she should go to bed, but she scoffed at the idea.

A quarter of an hour after Luke had settled down to wait for daylight, Lane came to make his report. Goodie's big touring car had left in the direction of London. Goodie himself was driving and Manuel had closed the gates behind him.

"Then it isn't a horse that's got loose—something much more important than that," said Luke.

"Shall you go back to London?" asked the girl.

He shook his head.

"No, this is the centre for an hour or two at any rate."

Just before six the horses were brought round. Edna suggested she should ride with him, and as the rain had ceased she could do so without discomfort. Banks of cloud obscured the sky, and the light was still bad when they set out. They followed the road until she indicated a gap in a ragged hedge which fringed the road. Horses had passed through the gap before; they could see the marks of their hoofs coming

and going, and could follow the direction that Goodie had taken, until they struck the grassland, where no traces were left.

The general direction that Goodie and his companion had followed was toward the little cave. She pointed out its position with her riding whip. Another proof that they were on Goodie's trail came when they struck the corner of a cultivated patch, part of some farm land, where the hoof marks were so clear that they could be read at a distance from the saddle.

The entrance of the cave was invisible, though the light was better. It lay behind a little hillock in the hollow between this and the downs proper. It was so small that it would have taken him some time to find the opening. It was about five feet high and little more than a yard broad.

"The gates are pulled down!" she said.

It was a flimsy affair, made of thin stakes wired together, and it hung drunkenly from one of the hooks on which it had been fastened. Obviously it had never been intended to use these gates at all. There were no hinges; they had been secured at four places to the rocky wall of the entrance by iron staples, one of which was broken off. The fractured staple was an object of great interest to Luke, who

examined it carefully, and dragged it back to fit the fractured end which still remained in the wall.

Climbing past the obstruction, he made a careful scrutiny of the rocky floor of the cave, picking up one stone after another until he found a piece of rock which he carried out into the light of day.

With the aid of a torch he made a superficial examination of the cave. The farther it went, the lower sank the roof, until it was impossible to stand upright and he was forced to crawl on hands and knees under rocky shelves, until the difficulty of the way made him retrace his steps.

He came out to find an anxious Edna peering through the aperture of the cave, and realized that his inspection must have taken longer than he thought. It was not easy to replace the broken gate, for the thick strands of wire that bound the stakes together required considerable strength to twist them into their original shape.

They rode back to the house, and Luke was so preoccupied that he scarcely spoke a word. After he had sent Edna's chauffeur to the inn for his car:

"Have you got a private extension to your phone other than the one in the hall, or is that the only instrument in the house?" he asked.

She had an extension to her sitting room. He went there, closed the door behind him, and for half an hour was a very busy man.

He found her in the hall, standing by the open door, looking out upon the dreary garden, for rain was falling again.

"What is it?" she asked quietly. "There's something very wrong. Can you give me a hint?"

He shook his head.

"I'm only guessing, and I may be guessing wrong," he said. He thought a moment, then: "I am bringing a man down here; he'll be staying with Lane. I tell you this in case you see a stranger with a not particularly prepossessing face. Do you remember a man who spoke to me at Doncaster, a shabby gentleman named Markham—Punch Markham?"

She nodded.

"I want him down here to keep an eye on Goodie's horses. He's rather a talkative person, and I've given instructions that he's not to come anywhere near you or bore you with stories of his past triumphs and his vanished wealth! What I want you to do, if you will, is to allow him to use your telephone. There isn't one anywhere near here, and it may be necessary for him to get in touch with me."

He drew on his raincoat, which the butler had dried in the kitchen, went into the dining room, and brought out the little volume of poems.

"I'll take this with me if you don't mind. By the way, when Garcia came here, the first time you visited the house, did he carry this book in his pocket?"

She thought.

"It's quite likely. He was very attached to it. I know that, because Mr. Garcia was rather a careless man, and once, when he lost the book, he advertised an extravagant reward for it—don't you remember? It happened on the ship."

He did not recall the incident, but then, he was not so much interested in Edna Gray and her friend as he was at the moment.

"As I say, you'll find Punch rather a bore," he said at parting, "but I've told Lane to keep him away from you as much as possible. By the way, can you mount him?"

She could do this without inconvenience, for she had two hacks and a couple of hunters in her stable.

"You'll find him useful," he said, when she told him this. "He's a wonderful horseman and he'll keep your fat beasts from getting too fresh. In that case don't hesitate to use him—let him take your

horses out for exercise. That, I think, would be a capital idea. You can fix it with your groom."

Luke was in town before lunch and went straight to his office. He found the two detectives he had asked for waiting, and gave them instructions. By three o'clock that afternoon he had his news bulletin from Gillywood. Goodie's car had returned from London, or whatever had been its destination, and, an hour after its arrival a closed car had come pelting down the road and turned into the entrance of Gillywood Cottage. Lane, the watcher, had seen its occupant—Dr. Blanter. The doctor had stayed for two hours and had gone back the way he came. At midday a second car turned into the drive, and again its occupant had been recognized, or at least it had been possible to furnish a description which enabled Mr. Luke to place him. This time it was Rustem. His visit was briefer, and when he went away, according to Lane, he was looking very worried. Something was agitating the gang, but apparently nothing had happened which called for the attention of the placid Trigger.

More than ever Luke was convinced that Trigger was operator and no more. He would be fully occupied. The Green Ribbon Agency was departing from

all its traditions. A hurry-up call had gone to every subscriber, and one of the notes sent out by the systematic Joseph found its way that evening into Luke's hands. It ran:

It is the usual practice of the Green Ribbon Agency that Trigger's Transactions should be few and far between. Hitherto we have not sent out more than eight or nine horses in the course of a year. There are circumstances which make it necessary, in the interests of our clients, that that number should be increased. We have information about half a dozen horses which cannot fail to win, and especially do we urge clients again to increase the number of their bookmakers with the object of having a special bet on the Cambridgeshire. We remind clients that even bookmakers who have closed their accounts will be willing to lay a horse two or three days before this race, believing they can cover themselves at the last. The next Trigger Transaction runs almost immediately. Clients who have not sent their stamped and addressed telegraph forms should forward them without the slightest delay.

Why was the Green Ribbon overcrowding itself at this moment? To Luke's mind there was only one explanation: Blanter and his friends intended rushing as many Transactions into the remaining months of the season as they could handle. They were doing this because something had scared them. They foresaw the end of their operations.

CHAPTER XV

THIS in fact was what had happened. Dr. Blanter met the little "organizer of victory," as he sometimes described himself, at their favourite Wardour Street restaurant.

"You're asking for trouble, Doctor. We can't handle a horse a week, or a horse a fortnight. You're killing the goose that lays the golden eggs, and that's a fact."

"We've got to do it," growled Blanter. "I want to get the money in, and I've got the horses to do it with."

The little man shook his head glumly.

"There's only one way we've ever made money, Doctor," he said, "and that is by being patient. I don't know much about racing, but from what I've heard half the fellows go broke at the game because they won't wait. I've got to work the staff day and night to get out a horse a week."

"Well, work 'em day and night," snapped the

doctor. "And don't try to rattle me, because I've got enough worry without yours."

Mr. Trigger smiled.

"I've got no worry," he said. "I've got more money than I'll ever spend, and nothing that you can do will scare me. I told Luke the other day——"

"Has he been to see you?" asked Blanter quickly. "Why the hell didn't you tell me?"

"Because it wasn't worth talking about," said Trigger coolly.

He gave a brief account of Luke's visit, and Blanter's suspicious eyes never left his face.

"Is that all that happened?" he asked. "You're not keeping anything back, are you? I'll tell you this —I don't completely trust you, Trigger."

Again the little man smiled.

"You trust me with your money. I've got an idea, Doctor, that if you trust a man with your money you'd trust him with your soul! No, there's nothing underhand about me. I've told you all he said, and all I told him. I've done as much for the sporting papers and shown them round the premises. In fact, I'm quite ready to give them the run of the office. There's nothing I do that isn't gentlemanly and straightforward."

Blanter scowled at him.

"You think that if it comes to a fight you're out of it, do you?" he demanded. "Well, get that idea out of your thick head. You've made money out of everything we've done; we've trusted you to handle our money, and we've taken your word that the share you've passed on to us is all we're entitled to. If there's any kind of trouble, Trigger, you're in it, and I'll damn well see that you're in it! So don't get any silly ideas about being safe and gentlemanly."

Trigger looked at him with round-eyed interest, but said nothing; he was apparently impervious both to insult and suspicion. His early troubles had perhaps inured him to both. Certainly he showed not the least evidence of antagonism in the course of that interview.

Presently they began to talk business.

"I shall want thirty thousand pounds. Lord Lathfield's stud is for disposal, and I think we can get something out of it," said the doctor.

To his amazement, Trigger shook his head.

"Listen, Doctor; we're running this plant on sound lines. You and the others draw what you want, but we've always made it a rule that no big sums are to be paid out till the end of the season."

The doctor's face went red with anger.

"If I make a rule I can break it, can't I?"

"You didn't make the rule," said the other coolly. "We all made it. It was Rustem's suggestion, and Goodie agreed. We'll have a board meeting if you like, but I'm not handing over thirty thousand pounds on my own responsibility—stud or no stud."

He drank his unfinished glass of Vichy and rose.

"I've got some work to do," he said, and left abruptly.

It was the first sign of revolt, and it sobered the doctor. He went home and got Mr. Rustem on the telephone, and the ex-lawyer obeyed the summons he received with every sign of reluctance. He put down the phone and rang the bell for his clerk.

"I'm going round to see the doctor, and if anybody wants me tell them I'll be back at five."

Pilcher pulled a face.

"I had a date at five," he complained.

"Put her off," said Mr. Rustem coldly.

His interview with Dr. Blanter could not have been a pleasant one: he came back, ruffled and in an unusually bad temper.

Blanter was the big mind of the organization; but Rustem was the more subtle. He had an animal-like

instinct for danger, saw signs which were not visible even to the man who inspired his apprehension. The doctor had set him an impossible, a ridiculous task, and Rustem had said as much, without being relieved from the duty which had been imposed upon him.

He dismissed Pilcher and put through a telephone call to Berlin. The man he sought was not there, and he had to sit, fuming with rage, for two hours, till, on his third call, his object was achieved. He spoke for twelve minutes, and he spoke in French, for his correspondent was an Alsatian, who had found the return to liberty of his native land a little irksome, and had removed to a more tyrannical atmosphere, where he could live his life without the irritating attentions of the French police.

It was nearly nine o'clock when his telephoning was finished. Mr. Rustem went home and ate a leisurely meal, waiting for the evening to pass. At half-past eleven he gave Edna Gray's telephone number and was connected in five minutes. Edna's voice answered him, and it was clear, from her anxious tone, that she had received the telegram.

"Is that Fraulein Gray?" He spoke thickly, with

a tolerably good imitation of a German speaking a foreign language. "I am Dr. Thaler. I have just come from Berlin. Have you heard from my poor friend Garcia?"

"Yes," said Edna's voice, "I have just had a telegram from him. Is he very ill?"

"I fear desperately," said Rustem. "As we would say . . ." He said something in German which was unintelligible to the girl. "I would like to see you, but unfortunately I must leave London by the night train for Ireland. He is anxious that nobody but yourself should know of his illness."

"Is there any hope?" she asked, with a catch in her voice.

"I fear not," said Rustem. "A week, perhaps two . . . he is not a young man. I have arranged that my brother shall meet you at the Friedrichstrasse station."

"I will leave by the first train in the morning," she said.

When Mr. Rustem came away from the telephone he looked less worried. He went to report personally to Dr. Blanter, and discovered that the doctor had left in a very great hurry for the country.

Edna read the telegram again; it had been handed in at Berlin.

AM VERY ILL. DR. THALER, WHO IS GOING TO LONDON, WILL CALL YOU UP. PLEASE COME AND SEE ME AT ONCE, AND I BEG OF YOU NOT TO LET ANYBODY KNOW YOU ARE COMING—THIS IS MOST IMPORTANT, FOR I HAVE A GREAT SECRET TO TELL YOU. ALBERTO.

He gave the name of the principal hotel in Berlin.

She was distressed and puzzled. Her last news had been that he was travelling in Asia Minor, though it was quite possible that he had never left Constantinople and had returned, possibly to seek medical advice, to the German capital.

She made preparations to leave early in the morning, but by the time she had summoned her chauffeur to give instructions she had changed her mind. She would go to London and sleep in town—it would be less fatiguing, starting out in the morning on her long journey.

Her maid packed a trunk hastily whilst the butler telephoned to the hotel to reserve a room. She left an hour after midnight, very wide awake. She had not gone ten miles when she felt the brakes go on,

and the car jerked itself to a standstill. The night was dark, a drizzle of rain was falling, and she could see nothing, even when she let down the window and looked out.

"What is it?" she asked.

"There are two cars blocking the road," said the driver.

They could see the red light of one, and suddenly the head lamps of another were switched on. Only for a second, then they were extinguished. She heard the whirr of the engine as it backed to the side of the road. Dimly she saw a small house behind the hedge, and as the car came abreast of the first of the machines she saw, on the top of the bank, two men. Their backs were toward her and it was impossible to see their faces, for they were kneeling on the ground.

"Looks as if there had been an accident," said the chauffeur, "but they don't seem to want any help."

She drove on and quickly forgot the happening. The car had to stop at an all-night filling station, which gave the chauffeur an opportunity of referring to the incident.

"One of those gentlemen looked to me like Mr. Goodie," he said. "He always wears a brown raincoat

with a sort of cape over the back. I didn't see any signs of a collision, did you, miss?"

She had seen very little; the sudden glare of the head lamps had temporarily blinded her, and she had had only the dimmest view of the men as her car had passed on.

She reached London in the early hours of the morning, and was glad to get to bed. The night porter at the hotel had arranged to get her ticket, and at half-past ten she was at Victoria Station, superintending the registration of her baggage.

"Whither away?"

She recognized the voice and spun round. Mr. Luke was gazing at her very sombrely. He looked tired, and he was entitled to, for he had had less than three hours' sleep on the previous night.

"I'm going abroad," she said, "to Berlin."

"So the labels tell me," he said politely. "This is rather unexpected, isn't it?"

She hesitated.

"Yes—I do unexpected things. I thought you'd discovered that."

"Did Mr. Garcia send for you?" he asked, and she looked up at him quickly.

"Yes."

"Is he ill? I mean, is it a very urgent matter?"

She sighed impatiently.

"You're making me break a promise——"

"You were asked to tell nobody you were leaving?" His voice was sharp and commanding. "Don't get annoyed with me, Miss Gray. I'm most anxious to know all the particulars about your visit to Germany."

"Am I under police surveillance?"

"For the moment you are." His manner was brusque to the point of rudeness, but she was not offended, for some reason which she could not explain to herself.

"I had a telegram from Mr. Garcia last night; he is very ill and asked me to go over and see him. He's staying at the Adlon. The German doctor, who came to London last night, called me up——"

"At what time?"

"About half-past eleven," she said.

He nodded.

"There's no train comes from Germany at half-past eleven; the German mail train arrives either in the morning or in the evening. Can you remember what the wire said?"

She told him as nearly as she could remember.

A porter came to remove the baggage, but Luke checked him.

"Wait a moment."

He led the girl out of the hearing of the passengers and the crowd of porters.

"I want to ask you, as a very great favour, not to go to Germany," he said.

"Why not?" she asked.

"I can't afford the time to go with you, and I haven't another man at hand. Don't tell me it's not necessary I should go. I am asking you as a very great favour."

"But Mr. Garcia——"

"I promise you Mr. Garcia shall be looked after, and if it really is necessary you can go this evening. It only makes a few hours' difference."

He was so earnest, so insistent, that she could not deny him. He drove back with her to the hotel, and told her just where his theories had led him. When, on the top of this, he suggested she should go to Kempton with him that day, it seemed the most callous and cold-blooded proposition she had ever heard.

"I want you to go to Kempton for several reasons," he interrupted her objections. "In the first place, it is necessary you should be seen with me to-day of all

days; in the second place, I want to see if two of my friends will be present. And I particularly want to be with you to-day."

She smiled.

"I won't take that as a compliment."

"Don't," he said.

When he came to the hotel for her he had all the necessary baggage, and was in holiday mood. The rain had cleared off; it was a glorious autumn day, with a nip in the air that set young blood a-tingle, and she could almost forget the worry and bewilderment of the morning, and her anxiety over Garcia's illness. She was very fond of the old man, yet between youth and age there cannot be that absorbing friendship which colours life and all that makes up life.

They parked their car near the entrance, and he led her down on to the lawn. It was early for racing, and there was only a sprinkling of people. The men he sought were not there, but he saw them three minutes later in the paddock: Goodie and the doctor, head to head, with Rustem an almost detached third. They were in the far corner of the paddock when Luke sighted them, and from the shelter of the stand by the parade ring he fixed his glasses on the trio. The trainer and the big doctor were talking intently;

they were gestureless, earnest, seemingly unperturbed.

It was Rustem who supplied the clue to the importance of that conference. He paced restlessly from side to side, his hands now in his pockets, now behind his back. Luke could see his face only occasionally, and even then his glasses gave him no more than a hint of the man's agitation.

"You came up last night, didn't you? I didn't know you were in town till I rang up your house early this morning."

"I'm still worried about Mr. Garcia, and if he wanted me——"

"He didn't," said Luke promptly. "He's not in Berlin. I've been on to the police president, and what the Berlin police don't know about Berlin isn't worth looking for. The baggage you sent out is still at an agency at Friedrichwilhelmstrasse and has not been sent for."

"But Dr. Thaler——"

He shook his head.

"I don't believe in that Dr. Thaler. For some reason they wanted you to go to Berlin, and I can pretty well guess what that reason was. I don't know whether Mr. Garcia is ill or well, whether he's in

Constantinople or Vienna, but he's certainly not in Berlin."

"He *was* there," she insisted, but he evaded the challenge.

"I don't know. There are some things about this business I don't like very much. Here's the first horse in the ring: you ought to back it."

He pointed to a big chestnut walking sedately behind his attendant through the parade ring, and consulted his card.

"Ginny—who is Ginny? That is one of the trainers I don't know."

A passing friend elucidated the mystery. Mr. Ginny was Irish, one of two brothers; one had his stable in Ireland, the other in the north of England. Luke made a closer inspection of the big chestnut as he walked round the ring. It was a three-year-old, and three-year-olds were in the majority amongst Trigger's Transactions.

He left Edna standing by the ring and went in search of information, returning just as the jockeys were beginning to mount.

"Do you back horses?" he asked her in his abrupt way. "If you don't know a bookmaker I'll introduce you to a few and you can make a lot of money—I

wouldn't suggest it, but I know you can afford to lose a little."

He took her back to the ring, and under his instructions she backed Red Dahlia to win her £500.

"Which is Red Dahlia?" she asked, bewildered.

He explained that it was the chestnut.

"I'm pretty certain this is a Transaction—in fact, so certain that I'm going to pass the word along. I'm rather curious to see what happens. This horse has never run before; it's a three-year-old weight-for-age selling plate, and he gets an allowance because he has never won a race. Nobody knows whether the horse is trained by the English Ginny or the Irish Ginny, and I've just met a man who swears that he's seen the horse working on the Curragh."

As the horses galloped down to the post Luke went and whispered the warning. In two minutes a ten to one chance had dropped to six to four. He had his reward when he saw the doctor stroll into the ring. Apparently the cry of "Six to four the field" had no significance for him. He went up to the nearest bookmaker, and Luke moved to within earshot.

"What do you bar?" he asked.

"Red Dahlia," said the bookmaker, and the doctor's jaw dropped.

"Six to four?" he squeaked incredulously.

Then, turning, he met Luke with unamused gaze.

"Is this your little joke, Luke?" he asked.

"My little joke," nodded the detective. "Doctor, you're losing your nerve—that's the first time you've ever given it away that you're in on the Transactions —Red Dahlia is one of them, isn't he?"

The big man was quivering with rage, could find no speech. He swung round, muttering something under his breath, and pushed his way through the crowd that was gathering at the rails.

"You're a lucky woman," said Luke when he joined the girl on the stone stand of the lawn. "You've got ten to one about a horse that will start at odds on."

He was no mean prophet. Before the gate went up Red Dahlia was unbackable. He did not get too well away, but his rider did not bustle him; he went forward readily when he was called upon, and at the turn into the straight lay third. His jockey took no chances; although a tempting opening was made for him, he declined the invitation, well knowing that it was one of the tricks of race riding for jockeys to offer an opening and close on the innocent who accepts it. He took his place on the outside, and two

furlongs from home, though he was still lying third, it was any odds on his winning. At the distance he moved forward with the greatest ease, and, galloping down the leaders, won in a hack canter by three lengths.

By the rules of the race he had to be sold after winning, and Luke joined the throng about the sale ring. He expected the colt to fetch a big price, but was quite unprepared for the figure it reached. It was not till Goodie had nodded his head to the auctioneer and brought the price up to 2,800 guineas that the hammer fell.

"That will take a little of the gilt off the gingerbread," said Luke. "I'm sorry for his punters, but I particularly want to rattle the gang at this moment. That horse is probably worth 5,000 guineas. It isn't often Goodie bids for successful platers, and I presume he's going to take him down to Gillywood."

CHAPTER XVI

As THEY drove from the course they saw the doctor's big French car turn in the opposite direction. He was alone; Goodie had probably gone before him, for he never stayed on any course after the horse in which he was interested had run.

"Now, young lady, I don't know what to do with you."

"I think I'll go back to Longhall," she said.

He agreed to this.

"It's easier to keep an eye on you at Longhall than it is in London," he admitted, and she looked at him open-eyed.

"Why is it necessary to keep an eye on me at all? Do you imagine that something dreadful is going to happen to me?"

He scratched his nose irritably.

"I'm blest if I know. If I could only be sure of one thing—I've been trying to puzzle out all the secrets of this case, if it is a case. Why they were so anxious that you shouldn't go to Longhall isn't much of a

mystery. Goodie didn't wish to be overlooked—do you realize the isolation of his gallops, that nobody else but you and I ride up on those downs? But it's the other thing that puzzles me—Mr. Garcia's book, and those telegrams from Germany, which may be genuine and may be a fake."

"You've got a suspicious mind," she said.

He nodded.

"You mean I think the worst? I suppose I do."

"What's the worst you think of me?" she was bold to ask, and he looked at her steadily.

"The worst I think of you is that you're worried sometimes whether I shall overstep the little barrier between us and make love to you. But worse than that, you sometimes wonder whether the fact that you are a lady with a quarter of a million of money doesn't weigh with me."

He saw the colour come into her face and chuckled.

"I got home there!" he said.

"The money part of it, no; the other part, yes," she said defiantly; "and I'm sorry I drove back with you—you're very unpleasant."

"You'll either have to drive me back or leave me to walk," he said good-humouredly, and changed the subject. "I'm keeping an eye you on because evi-

dently you're considered an important person, if all I believe about Blanter is justified. This attempt to get you to go to Germany—well, there may be anything behind that. The whole thing was obviously organized. Dr. Thaler, who called you up, and who was probably our dear friend Rustem—he speaks German like a native—arranged the wires. I'm having a search made in the German post office for the original of the telegram that came to you. It is easier to trace the sender of a wire in Germany than in any other country."

He was surprised that she accepted the idea of police supervision without protest. He never would have made the suggestion but for the Berlin wire. It was as clear as daylight that they wanted her out of the way. Whether they contemplated anything more sinister than a wild-goose chase across the Continent on the trail of a will-o'-the-wisp Garcia, he did not dare to think.

He saw her off from her hotel, and arranged to take her to the Cesarewitch on the following Wednesday. This time the car carried an extra passenger seated by the chauffeur; a singularly wide-awake Scotland Yard man.

Luke had plenty of work that night. It confirmed

what had amounted to a certainty in his mind, that Red Dahlia was a Transaction. On the night Trigger sent out his horses his staff worked overtime, and when Luke passed up Lower Regent Street that night he saw that the green shades were drawn down, and that the main office was a blaze of light. He had other sources of information, however, and they reported before nine that they had received the usual telegrams and that the horse had won.

They were remarkable people, these clients of the Green Ribbon: retired officers, men occupying good positions in the city and in the services; doctors, lawyers, almost every profession was represented on the secret book of clients which Mr. Trigger kept in his safe. There was behind Trigger's Transactions a curiously solid and stolid army of respectability and unimpeachable integrity, and that was the strength of the little man's position. In the first place, they were extraordinarily reticent, none of them proclaiming openly that he owed a sensible proportion of his income to systematic betting. Trigger, moreover, imposed a vow of secrecy upon his clients.

This tipping agency, strange as it might seem, was a veritable godsend to thousands of men and women with small incomes, and having positions which en-

titled them to the confidence of the most suspicious class in the world—the bookmaking fraternity. No bookmaker will stand heavy losses continuously from one client. They were "cut off" with monotonous regularity, their accounts closed, and they were told brusquely to do their business elsewhere. But competition in the bookmaking world is keen, and there were some ten thousand bookmakers to choose from; new accounts could be opened with great ease by people writing from a good address and having nothing to fear from the investigations of certain commercial inquiry agents.

Luke had an idea that Trigger did not entirely depend upon his unpleasant acquaintances, but that he had other sources of information. He was a shrewd, far-seeing man, and he would have seen the red light long ago and would have been organizing, in his quiet way, a less dangerous alternative to Blanter and his friends.

The detective made his rounds, calling at certain night clubs, not all of them of the best class, picking up a word here and a scrap of information there. The last call he made was at a place off Wardour Street which for some time had been under his observation. It was perhaps the most exclusive of the little clubs,

certainly the most luxuriously furnished and appointed, and its habitués were men and women who did not need the attraction of a jazz band.

It was here, in one of the silken alcoves, that he found Mr. Rustem, and the eye of Mr. Rustem was bright and his speech a little thick. He was sitting at a small table by himself, which was unusual in a gentleman whose penchant for feminine society was fairly well known. He was drinking absinthe, and as Luke entered was dripping water on two lumps of sugar that he held in a tea strainer over the glass. At the sight of Luke he dropped the strainer with a clatter and jumped to his feet, blinking at the detective, his sallow face a shade paler.

"Well, what is it? What is it?" he asked. His voice was strained and high; the hand that went to his lips trembled.

Excessive indulgence in absinthe may have been the cause of the ex-lawyer's agitation, for it was not the first time that Luke had met Mr. Rustem in similar circumstances, and he could not remember that his appearance had produced such an effect before. However, he sat down and pulled up a chair to the table. A dozen curious eyes were watching; his identity was very well known at the Starlight Club,

and there was quite a number of people who were relieved to see him turn his attention to the drinker of absinthe.

"What's the matter with you? You're all to pieces. Has Blanter let you down?"

Rustem forced a smile.

"Blanter!" he said scornfully. "Good God! There's nobody in the world can let me down, Luke! You fellows at Scotland Yard think you know it all, but there's a little left over for lawyers, you know, old boy. People don't turn me down, they crawl to me; they come slithering into my room, old boy, begging me to get 'em out of trouble."

Luke had an idea that here, so far as Blanter was concerned, the wish was father to the thought. Something had upset Rustem very badly: he was a nervous wreck, could hardly hold the glass steady when he raised it to his lips and jerked down the opalescent fluid.

"Have a drink, Luke? It's licenced hours, so you needn't get rattled. I saw you at Kempton to-day. Did you have a bet—oh, I forgot, you never bet. Nice little girl that, Luke, eh? The Argentino, I mean —Miss What's-her-name."

"How's the doctor?" Luke ignored the invitation.

"The doctor—pooh!" Mr. Rustem snapped his fingers. "Bluster and bluff, old boy!" He leaned over to Luke and his voice dropped to a confidential tremor. "I'm nearly through with that crowd. They're too hot for me, old boy. Do you see what I mean? I'm all for the law—habit of a lifetime, Luke. Mind you," he added hastily, "I don't want you to think they break the law, because they don't. But they might do. I couldn't stand that."

"It would break your heart, wouldn't it?" said Luke. "By the way, did they ever prosecute you over that old lady's estate?"

Rustem stiffened with drunken dignity.

"Prosecute, my good fellow? Don't talk nonsense! The whole thing was cleared up and explained. Would I rob a woman of a beggarly few thousands? I've got a hundred and fifty-four thousand pounds of my own." He spoke impressively. "A hundred and fifty-four thousand—why should I rob anybody? I mean, it's ludicrous."

He found some difficulty in pronouncing the last word. Luke was merciful. He beckoned the waiter and ordered a drink. Rustem at the moment was a gentleman to be cultivated.

"The Transaction came unstuck yesterday?" he suggested.

Rustem shrugged his elegant shoulders.

"A low business, a vulgar business," he said, "tipping horses. Why, one might as well be a bookmaker! I mean, that's one of the things I kick against. And it didn't come unstuck; the price was bad, thanks to you, you wicked old devil."

He was becoming playful. Luke examined the bottle of absinthe; the cork was on the table and had evidently been extracted that evening; the bottle was nearly empty.

"Listen!" He looked round with extravagant caution. "You don't bet, do you? Well, you're a fool. Field of Glory will win the Cambridgeshire. It's money for nothing—I'm not a betting man, but I'm telling you to get a fortune on it. And for God's sake don't tell Blanter that I told you."

"Is that the next Transaction?"

"In a way. Not the usual wires, you know, but everybody told days before. They can afford to do it. They can get a good price; it takes a lot of money, spread all over the country in little sums, to bring a horse from thirty-three to one to tens. You can get

twenty-fives now. It's money for nothing, Luke, and don't forget I told you."

He leaned back, looking at the detective with eyes which were a little uncertain which way to look. He pulled out his watch awkwardly.

"A quarter to twelve. Do you know where I'm going?" He spoke very emphatically. "I am going to the Turkish baths and I shall be there till seven o'clock in the morning. I hate the beastly places, but I must go. And to-morrow, old boy, I am going to Edinburgh to see a client—well, she isn't exactly a client, but a dear little thing who's appearing in *Rosy Rosy*. . . . Want you to do me a favour—come with me to the baths."

Luke smiled and shook his head, but the man was insistent.

"I only want you to go with me to the baths—don't want you to come in."

He rose unsteadily, put a five-pound note on the table and did not wait for the change. Rustem was very popular with night-club waiters.

Partly to humour him and partly to discover if there was any other information available at the moment, Luke drove with him to a well-known Turkish baths establishment and left him at the door. Rustem

was a little unsteady, and found some difficulty in standing without the support of his companion's arm; but, drunk as he was, he could pull out his watch again and peer at it short-sightedly.

"Twelve minutes after twelve, and don't forget it!"

Luke watched him till he was out of sight. What was happening? Why had this man emphasized the hour at which he had left him? Why did he go to a Turkish baths when he hated the beastly places? Obviously because he wished to produce, on some future occasion, a complete alibi. He was going to Edinburgh for the same purpose. It was something to think upon.

Mr. Rustem, sober, carried out the plans of Mr. Rustem of the hectic night. He left the baths at ten o'clock, and caught the first available train for Edinburgh. Another curious circumstance, Luke discovered, was that the revue *Rosy Rosy* was not in Edinburgh at all but in Blackpool.

CHAPTER XVII

LUKE thought a lot that day of Garcia and his beloved Vendina, and at a bloodstock agency in Pall Mall he secured a list of all the important stud establishments in Germany, and sent them identical letters. He was indeed a nuisance to his clerk that day, for he hardly ceased dictating correspondence from the moment he came in till night, and the wearied typists banged their troubles on their typewriters with savage relief.

There was need for the precaution he had taken with regard to Edna. The detective he had sent to Longhall got him on the phone and reported the attrival in the neighbourhood of quite a number of strangers. He had recognized one, a piece of bad luck for the victim, for he was a convict on licence who had failed to report. The others were unknown. Two had taken rooms at the Red Lion, the landlord of which was coming back that evening from a holiday jaunt on the Continent.

Luke was worried. It was not certain that the strangers had any criminal intention. Most likely they were touts who had come down to watch the gallops. There was a lot of talk about Field of Glory; he had dropped in the betting from thirty-three's to twenty-five's, and on such occasions professional backers and those who get their living from betting send their trained observers, or come themselves, to watch the horses at work. They would have very little opportunity, for Goodie had a rough way with trespassers.

Luke went down to the biggest and most important of the sporting clubs and had tea with a leading bookmaker.

"As a rule there's no market on the Cambridgeshire at this time of the year, before the Cesarewitch is run," said the man of figures, "but this year there's quite a lot of betting; more than most people expected. There are half a dozen horses genuinely fancied, and being backed by the right people, but I haven't heard that there's any heavy money for Field of Glory."

He explained what Luke knew, that a bookmaker will lay a horse to lose an appreciable sum in an ante-post betting race, and not attempt to lay off a penny

until the race day approaches and the situation with regard to a dozen horses becomes clarified. It was then that covering would begin.

"As a matter of fact, these pre-race books do not show any profit and you can only afford to lay horses because it is certain that less than half the field will run. The money you lay the wrong 'uns is so much money to the good—from our point of view. I know nothing about Field of Glory, except that he won a race in the north and, according to some of the jockeys, is very moderate. You know that old Goodie has sent down Red Dahlia, the horse he bought in at Kempton the other day; there's going to be some sort of gallop on Sunday with jockeys up."

There was great jubilation at the comparative failure of the Saturday Transaction. No bookmaker objects to paying out over an odds on chance. Some of the big offices had been badly hit in the course of the year. One had "stood" £300 worth of bets on a horse that started at thirty-three to one. Great bookmaking firms, despite all stories to the contrary, do not like paying out £10,000 over a small race, or any race. But these men who lay the odds are great optimists. They believed the time must come when the Trigger luck would turn.

"Though there's not much chance of it," said Luke's informant. "Sometimes he runs two in one race, both with very nearly equal chances—he does that to neutralize any bad luck that's going in the course of the race. Of course, one of the stakes loses, but that the punter can well afford, because the other wins and the prices about it are generally good."

He hazarded an opinion as to the profits of the Green Ribbon Agency.

"Dr. Blanter loses enormous sums in mug punting—when he backs his fancies he's the biggest fool in the world. You wouldn't believe it, but a few weeks ago I laid him an even £10,000 on a horse which I knew was only running to get a bit of weight off."

One of Luke's properties was a tiny house in a small street off Knightsbridge. He lived alone, but had so surrounded himself with labour-saving and electrical gadgets that he boasted he could cook his breakfast in his sleep. It was one of those tiny houses which had been jealously furnished. He had certainly spent more on its interior embellishment than the house had originally cost. Two women came daily to clean the place—seemingly an unnecessary extravagance, since there could hardly be enough work to

occupy one for a full working day. But there was method in Mr. Luke's eccentricity. Both women were the wives of local constables; they were in his house no more than an hour and a half a day, and gave him the seclusion and privacy which he desired. It meant also that when he was away his "housework" went on as usual, for he kept a duplicate set of keys at the local police station.

The visitors who had come to his house that evening had not apparently used those keys. A small jemmy had forced a back window, and the rest was easy. Luke had not taken a step into the narrow passage of his little habitation before he realized that something was wrong.

He turned the switch but no light came. His electric torch showed him that the lamp bulb had been removed. Doors were open; every drawer of the desk in his little study had been pulled out, and the contents were sorted into a heap on the top of the desk. Each paper, notebook, and document had obviously been carefully scrutinized. A heavy blanket taken from his bed had been fastened by nails across the window of the study, and apparently the intruders had known his movements, for they had worked at leisure. Was that the reason Rustem had so carefully

insisted on impressing his movements upon the detective? It was unlikely; Rustem was many things, but not a burglar.

Luke was quite prepared to believe that Rustem was innocent on this occasion. This was the work of skilled men. They had left nothing behind, not even a finger print that he could find on a superficial search.

He went from room to room—only two had been thoroughly and systematically combed: the bedroom and the study. It was not an unsual experience; he had had his rooms looked over when he had been away on a case, but this was the first time his house had been burgled. One or two articles of value had been taken, some pieces of silver, worth about ten pounds, that he had had in the drawer of his desk, and an old silver watch which he used as a desk clock.

He was not amused; Mr. Luke was, in fact, humanly annoyed. He saw in this act Dr. Blanter's "retort" to a much more skillful examination of his belongings.

Sitting down at his desk, he turned over the papers one by one, striving to recall what the drawers had contained of any moment. He kept no records of his cases here, and he was not in the habit of jogging his

memory with notes which could be of the least value to the people who had inspired this raid.

Mechanically he notified the local police, and when the divisional detective inspector arrived, with an assistant, they made a much more complete inspection of the burgled premises.

"They haven't taken fifty pounds' worth of stuff," said Luke; "and I shouldn't think they've gained a penn'orth of information."

He put his bedroom in something like order, and not even troubling to make fast the window through which the burglars had gained access to the house, he went to bed.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE Cesarewitch is to all handicaps what the Derby is to all classics, the supreme and paramount prize of the year, the race of all races on which the attention of the punting public is concentrated. Edna Gray drove down to Newmarket in the early morning. It was a bright, coldish day, and a mist was still lying in the hollows when her big car flew along the deserted road.

She had left Longhall very soon after daylight. Luke had ordered a room for her at the Rutland Arms, and had arranged to have a couple of hacks waiting to take her on to the heath to watch the early morning work. It was a little after eight when her car swung into the cobbled yard of the Rutland, and half an hour later she was cantering up the High Street toward the race-course side of the town. An exhilarating experience. Newmarket, beloved of the Stuart kings, was astir; the High Street was alive with people, and along the side of the road they passed string after string of horses on their way to their morning work.

"There's Goodie." Luke pointed to a solitary horseman moving across the heath. "He arrived half an hour before you—he never sleeps away from home."

It was a memorable morning for the girl. She saw racing in a new light; not as a medium for gambling, but as a great industry. Newmarket thought horses, talked horses, and, if it dreamed at all, it was of horses. Generations of trainers and jockeys had lived and died in this town; kings and great lords had given their names to the courses—even the flag above the judge's box had an historical importance. Here was a vast free heath, and the great ramparts and ditch which the Iceni had built—the ancient city of the Iceni was still called Exning. Briton and Roman had raced their hairy steeds over its undulating surface. A king had seen his jockey reprimanded and had left Newmarket in a huff, never to return. Harvey had strolled across this pleasant heath and had theorized upon the circulation of the blood. Milton had lived here. Cromwell had stabled his horses in the town and had exercised them on the heath; and Buckingham had stolen away on his secret mission to Spain along the road which leads through Six Mile Bottom.

Luke was an authority on Newmarket; knew its

history, could tell innumerable stories of its patrons. They breakfasted together after she had changed. He had procured a pass for the Members' Enclosure and tried to interest her in the great race of the day. But the names of the horses were as Greek to her, and when she found that Trigger and his confederacy would not operate, she lost interest.

It was revived long before thirty horses had cantered down past the stands, crossed the heath diagonally, and disappeared through a gap in the Ditch.

It was an amazing race; to her, who thought of the sport as an amusement, it was incredible that one half the race was run out of sight of the thousands of spectators who packed the stands. Yet so it was; not until the field came into view a mile and a quarter from home, a mass of tiny shapes, their colours almost indistinguishable, did the race become a reality.

Across the flat they came, a dark mass of horses growing more and more distinct, and stretching from the rails to the middle of the course. When the field reached the bushes the roar of the crowd grew. First one and then another showed; and then, on the extreme outside, a crimson-and-white jacket began to move forward. The roar became a pandemonium of sound as the crimson and white forged ahead into

the dip and, challenged left and right by two horses she had not seen before and which came out of the ruck, passed the winning post a length ahead of his nearest opponent.

"That's the Cesarewitch," said Luke. "The winner must have started at forty to one, for nobody is smiling!"

He drove back with her and she dropped him in London, where she spent the night. She was dead tired when she went to bed, and dreamed a confused dream of jockeys and horses, of red-and-white winning posts, of white rails, of kings and their strangely garbed courtiers.

In the week following the Cesarewitch Luke was a very busy man. Step by step he had sought to trace the movements of Garcia, but foreign governments are slow to respond to the urgent requests of Scotland Yard. Germany had supplied within three days copies of all the telegrams which had been despatched from Berlin and Munich. In every case they were typewritten and signed with the name of Alberto Garcia.

Edna could not help him very much: she had no specimen of the old man's handwriting. What made the matter more puzzling was that the telegrams did not cease. She found one waiting for her on the

day she returned from the Cesarewitch. It was addressed to her at the Berkeley, where she spent the night. If it puzzled her, it convinced Luke. She had not stayed at the Berkeley before; how did the man who was telegraphing from Lausanne know that she was neither at Longhall nor at the Carlton?

He sent round for a copy of the wire and added it to his dossier. Lausanne could easily be reached, and within half an hour he was speaking to the chief of police of the Swiss city. Within twenty-four hours he learned that, although the hotel registers had been searched, the only Garcia was a young Portuguese student who was staying at a *pension*.

From Punch Markham, now installed in Berkshire, he received a great deal of information which did not interest him, and a few items which did. Punch had thrown himself into his work with the greatest enthusiasm. He not only touted Goodie's horses, but did a little private spying on Goodie himself. He also had a private grievance, which he came to London to ventilate.

"Look at this, Mr. Luke!" "This" was a discoloured eye, and the little man was tremulous with wrath. "That's not the way to treat a man. Goodie's head lad done it! I admit that nobody wants their

horses touted, but there's a gentlemanly way of getting rid of them."

He had gone up to see a gallop, having heard a whisper that Field of Glory was to be tried. As a matter of precaution he had literally dug himself in, enlarging a hollow which he had found in the downs, from which he could observe the horses. Before they arrived, however, two men appeared, and it was obvious to Punch that they were searching the gallop for an unofficial observer. When they were close on him he tried to bolt, but they caught him. One of the riders, whom he described as a big man, and whom Luke had no difficulty in recognizing from the description as Manuel, had galloped after him, and, stooping as he came up with his quarry, had lifted Punch bodily from the ground with one hand and hit him with the other.

"Goodie's got something up his sleeve, I'll bet you," said Punch; "and my own opinion is that he's sent Field of Glory away to be tried somewhere else. And if he wins the Cambridgeshire I'll eat him! He was a good colt—there ain't a bad Blandford—but he broke down as a yearling, and I had to patch him up to sell him. You can take it from me, Mr. Luke, that that horse won't win no Cambridgeshire. Why old

Goodie's being so careful I don't know. But that Goodie couldn't be open and aboveboard, not if he tried! If I could only get into the stable——"

"You'd hear nothing," said Luke. "None of the boys speaks English."

But the little man was not satisfied, and his enthusiasm for discovery was unabated. Luke did his best to damp that enthusiasm, for nothing is quite so dangerous as a zealous amateur detective.

The detective was leaving his office soon after six that night, had closed down his desk, and was slipping into his overcoat when he heard a knock at the door. He was alone in the office; his clerk had left half an hour earlier, and his chief assistant was away in the country, following the veriest hint of a clue. Luke looked round; the knocking was repeated. It was an agitated knock; somebody was in a hurry.

"Come in."

The door opened and a man came in, closing it behind him. It was Rustem; his face was the colour of dirty chalk, and the hand he held out to Luke was trembling. For the first time since Luke had known him, Mr. Arthur Rustem had the appearance of untidiness. He looked as if he had been sleeping in his clothes all day.

"What the devil's the matter with you?" asked Luke in astonishment.

The ex-lawyer forced a smile.

"I'm not particularly well—nerves, old boy." His voice quivered.

"Sit down. Are you poisoned or something?"

"That's a good joke—ha, ha!" Mr. Rustem's voice was hollow, his laugh entirely mirthless. "No, nerves —just nerves. People been following me about——"

"That sounds like an incipient stage of lunacy," said Luke with a smile.

"What are you doing to-night, Luke? I mean, couldn't we have a chat together about various odd-ments? I'll tell you candidly, I'm all shot to pieces."

"Have you been hitting the hop?" asked Mr. Luke coarsely, and Mr. Rustem shook his head with great vigour.

"No, no. Dope? Good God, no! I haven't come to that, old boy. It's nerves, that's all. I wondered if we could go out and have a bit of dinner somewhere and have a little chat. There's another thing I wanted to see you about. I hear the Police Orphanage is in want of funds, and I wondered if they'd accept a thousand pounds——"

Luke shook his head.

"Leave it in your will," he suggested. "It's much better and less embarrassing. No, we don't want money at the moment—at least, I'd rather you didn't give it. What's the matter, Rustem—conscience?"

The lawyer jumped to his feet.

"No," he said loudly. "Conscience? What have I got to worry about? Naturally I've done a lot of things that I probably wouldn't do again if I saw as clearly as I do at the moment."

Luke thought quickly.

"All right, come along and dine—as a great concession I'll allow you to pay for the dinner."

There was something wrong, and very wrong indeed. The man literally clung to him as they went down on to the Embankment; and all the way to Soho he kept up an incessant chatter of conversation about nothing that really mattered. He was not wholly coherent; sometimes his speech sounded like a badly worded telegram without punctuation, and was quite as incomprehensible.

Luke was alert. Something had happened, and something very important; and he realized, before the dinner was half through, that Rustem had nothing to say that was of the slightest moment. Once more he was establishing an alibi.

He lingered over dinner, trying to make the meal last as long as possible, until, from sheer compassion, Luke suggested he should accompany him the rounds of the little clubs.

"It will do you no good being seen with me, otherwise I shouldn't suggest your coming," he said candidly. "Your disreputable friends will think that you are putting up a squeak. Heaven knows, there's no man in London who can squeak more effectively than you."

But the opinion of his sometime clients did not seem to weigh very much.

It was in the little club where they had met before that they happened upon the important Mr. Trigger. He was sitting in the identical alcove where Rustem had been discovered, and before him was a glass of colourless liquid. He smiled genially at Luke, but did not smile at all at the detective's companion.

"Sit down, won't you, and have a drink? I'm drinking lemonade myself, and I suppose that gives you a laugh. I don't drink hard liquor."

He shot a swift sidelong glance at Rustem.

"It would be a good idea if some of my friends followed my example," he said.

Rustem was frankly knocked off his balance at this

meeting with his partner, and had not even the enterprise to protest against the innuendo.

"If I didn't come over here for a little recreation," Mr. Trigger went on, "I think I'd go potty!"

"And when you say 'recreation' you mean lemonade?" smiled Luke.

He liked this little man, found in him an amusing foil to the more sinister side of his organization.

"Lemonade and watching people," said Mr. Trigger. "There are more crooks come here than you'll meet at the Old Bailey, Mr. Luke."

Again that swift sidelong flash of his round blue eyes toward Rustem.

"You a member, Mr. Luke? Then you and me are the only two honest ones! Not that I have come to this club to meet crooks: I meet one or two at board meetings occasionally."

This time the challenge could not pass.

"If you mean me——" snarled Rustem.

"If there's anybody else you can think of I'd be glad to hear you name 'em!" said the little man calmly.

Suddenly he shifted round in his seat to face his angry associate.

"I'm telling you—and I'm saying it before Mr.

Luke—that at my board meetings I don't want to discuss anything that's not business; and business with me is money and telegrams and organization. If I get a horse from a reliable source I send it out to my clients. I don't want to know nothing about that horse, except that he's got four legs and a head that he can get in front of all the other horses when they're passing the post. I don't want to know what makes him put his head in front, and I don't allow anybody at my board meetings to tell me. I wouldn't have my name associated with anything that's dirty, underhanded, or unsporting."

Dimly Luke visualized the scene which had provoked this outburst. There must have been a meeting that day, and somebody, probably Rustem, had begun to discuss matters which were outside the actual business for which they had met; and this little man had silenced the discussion, and had in all likelihood crushed Blanter.

"You're a hell of an honest man!" snapped Rustem.

J. P. Trigger smiled.

"I'm better than honest, I'm safe," he said, and in the sentence he epitomized his philosophy.

He finished his lemonade, paid the waiter double the amount he was asked for, and got up.

"I'll leave you two gentlemen; you've probably got something to talk about," he said politely and not without sarcasm. "But I'll tell you this, Mr. Luke. If that man"—he pointed a podgy finger at the scowling Rustem—"says that I know anything about anything except business, he's a liar. Not that I'm afraid of him squeaking." Luke thought it rather inconsistent that he should suggest there was anything to squeak about. "He's too yellow to let go of the tiger's tail. I can be safe, but he can't be, because he knows."

On this cryptic note the great J. P. Trigger waddled out of the club, his bowler hat set at a rakish angle over one eye, a large cigar stuck at an angle in one corner of his mouth.

"Tricky little swine!" growled Rustem. "That a gutter-bred brute like that should talk——"

He checked himself, as he had checked himself a dozen times that evening. The fear of revelation and the fear of all the consequences which might follow silence battled for decision. Mr. Arthur Rustem, who for ten years had dominated the criminal world, was not the Arthur Rustem Luke had known. He was

cowed and frightened, and with good reason, for the ruler was now ruled; he had surrendered his independence to a stronger will, and had not the courage to break with the man who threatened to destroy him. Luke made several ineffectual efforts to bring him to the subject of Dr. Blanter; he even recounted casually certain lurid stories of the doctor's past. It was unnecessary, since Rustem knew much more than the detective, and had defended him on his one appearance in court.

Luke did not get rid of his companion till nearly eleven o'clock. Rustem staggered a little when he reached the open air, but pulled himself together, and, taking formal leave of the detective, turned into Wardour Street. He had not gone far when a car drew slowly up to the curb, keeping pace with him, and then he heard a voice call him. He looked round in a fright, and saw the red face of Blanter's servant, who was driving the car.

"Step in—the governor wants you," he called hoarsely.

Rustem hesitated but obeyed. The car drove quietly across Coventry Street and into Haymarket —which was not in the direction of Half Moon Street. Through the Admiralty Arch into the Mall they

passed, and then the car drew up and the driver stepped to the sidewalk.

"Don't get out—I want to talk," he said.

Rustem thrust his head and shoulders through the window opening.

"That's for luck," said the man, and slashed him across his bare head with a rubber truncheon.

Rustem never remembered what happened between this and his awakening in Perrywig Caves.

CHAPTER XIX

LUKE went back to his office at Scotland Yard to read the telegrams which had arrived in his absence, but there was nothing which interested him quite so much as a telephone message which had come through from Punch. It ran:

> Have got the whole strength of the story. Must see you at eleven o'clock to-morrow. Will try to get you at your house at half-past ten.

It might easily be that, in his eagerness, Punch had got hold of the wrong story altogether. On the other hand, the man had an instinct for news of a certain kind. What the "story" was and whom it concerned, Luke could only guess. He phoned through to Lane, but Lane could give him no information.

"He's been out since nine. He's got something very hot, but he won't tell me what it is. I think it must be about Goodie."

Big Ben was striking midnight when Luke turned out of his office and walked leisurely toward his home. There was reason for the leisure, for the first of the

fogs had descended upon London, and, though it was not thick, it was sufficiently dense to make the finding of a taxicab a difficult business. In Trafalgar Square, however, he found a cab crawling by the side of the curb, and, since he was tired and admittedly lazy, he overruled the driver's fears and crawled up through Piccadilly Circus into Piccadilly. At Hyde Park Corner the fog was, as he anticipated, a little more dense, and he paid the taximan and piloted himself across the road, reaching the gates of the park. At Knightsbridge the fog was so thick that the street lamps were represented by a lighter type of fog.

Turning into the little street where he lived, he felt along the railings till he came to his house. Taking out his key, he felt for the keyhole. To his amazement, his fingers touched nothing. The door was wide open, and, when he had closed it behind him and switched on the light the passage was blurred with a yellow mist.

His study was in the back room; the door of this also was open. Putting out his hand, he switched on the light. There was no sound or hint of movement, and, as the light threw no menacing shadows, he changed his automatic from his left to his right hand,

pushed open the door still farther, and stepped in.

The room was empty except—

There was a long divan near the window, and on this lay a man, covered by a rug. Luke stood looking for a long time before he approached the figure and gently drew back the rug that covered the head. He knew old Garcia, had met him on the boat, and recognized him instantly. He was wrapped up in an overcoat and was fully dressed except for his shoes.

The detective only needed to take one glance at the face. Garcia was dead.

He went to the table, and, taking up the telephone, lifted the receiver. No tinkle came from the bell in the corner of the room, and when he went out to make an examination in the passage he found that the wires had been neatly cut.

Luke made a quick scrutiny of the room. Nothing had been touched on his table; there was no evidence that any of the drawers had been disturbed. He left the house, closing the door behind him, and went in search of a policeman and a telephone booth. He found both at the same moment, and after he had phoned through to the local station and to headquarters he joined the constable and they returned to the house.

It was half an hour before the divisional surgeon and the local inspector arrived, and in that period the detective had made several important discoveries. He had found the dead man's boots, neatly placed beneath the table, and a rough search of the body produced several scraps of evidence which had some bearing on the case.

The first of these was a folded copy of a German newspaper, the *B. Z. Am Mittag*, a journal published in the afternoon and enjoying a large circulation. It was dated two or three days previous. There was also a copy of a detective story such as travellers use to beguile their journey. In an inside pocket was a bill bearing the heading of a firm of watchmakers in Munich. There were no other documents, and the body bore no visible mark of violence.

It was not until the early hours of the morning that the police surgeon reported the result of his examinations. There were no marks of violence on the body, but on the left arm there were half a dozen small punctures such as a hypodermic needle might make.

"Did you find any kind of dope in his pocket?"

Luke shook his head.

"No."

The contents of the pockets lay on the inspector's table at the police station: a watch and chain, a cigarette case, a pair of reading glasses in a case, and about a thousand marks in German money.

"He's been dead at least six hours, and probably more," said the surgeon. "He hasn't the appearance of a drug addict—has he been under treatment?"

Luke told him as much as he knew of the dead man's immediate past. The detective had made a close examination of the house, and it was clear that whoever had entered had used a key. It was not till then that Luke remembered that there had been two spare keys in the drawer when the first burglary had been committed.

He had thought of ringing up the girl and telling her what had happened, but there was no reason why he should wake her from her sleep with the ghastly news, and he determined to go down himself the following morning and break it to her personally. Long before then, however, something happened which put Garcia's death out of his mind.

The fog had been terribly thick along the Embankment, and the city patrols had made their way with some difficulty along the deserted pavement which fringes the river. At twelve o'clock, almost at the

moment Luke had been leaving Scotland Yard, a city police officer had heard the *rap-rap* of an automatic and had groped across the dark roadway to discover the reason. He had met nobody, seen nothing; he reached the opposite sidewalk and began systematically to cover the ground. It was a considerable time before he located the reason. He saw a figure lying in the gutter.

Luke went to Scotland Yard to make a detailed report, and was met by the hall man.

"Do you know a man named Markham, Mr. Luke?"

"Punch Markham? Yes."

"The city police have just found him on the Embankment—shot dead."

Poor Punch had been shot at close quarters; his coat was singed by the flame of the explosion. The only thing found in his pockets that had been of any value to the city detectives was a small address book in which Luke's name had appeared.

Luke paid a hurried visit to the city, and for the second time that night interviewed the police surgeon.

"It is a pretty simple case," said that official. "Either of the shots would have killed him."

"Was it self-inflicted?"

The surgeon shook his head.

"It couldn't have been from the position of the wounds. No, it is murder all right. A foggy night *and* the Thames Embankment were very favourable conditions."

The only evidence immediately available was that of a street cleaner who had seen a man pacing up and down the pavement near the place where the body was found. He took very little notice of him and was unable to furnish any details, except that he wore a wrist watch and examined it by the light of a small pocket torch. As a matter of fact, the street cleaner had thought he was a city detective, and that certain business premises were being watched that night.

Luke went home, changed his suit, and, brewing himself some hot coffee, went out into the misty morning determined upon a bold step. Detectives take many risks, none greater than the risk of offending important people and drawing upon themselves an official admonition.

Dr. Blanter might be called important; he had, at any rate, influential friends; and after its failure to secure a conviction against him Scotland Yard had moved warily, fearing always an outcry against persecution.

By the time he reached Half Moon Street the servants were up. One was shaking the dust from a mat at the door.

"The doctor's in bed, sir. I don't think I can disturb him."

"Go up and tell him my name," said Luke curtly.

He was shown into a small drawing room and spent the moments of waiting profitably. His wait was not a long one: the doctor made his appearance within five minutes, very alert and wide awake.

"Do you want me, Luke?" he asked brusquely.

"Where were you last night? I want an account of your movements."

Ordinarily this peremptory demand would have aroused the doctor to a fury, but instead he answered readily.

"I was here all the evening. I went down to the country yesterday afternoon and got back to town late."

"What time did you go to bed?"

Blanter looked first at him and then at the ceiling.

"About ten o'clock; it may have been a little later. Yes, I think it was half-past ten. I heard half-past ten chiming as I went up to my room."

Luke fixed his gray eyes on the doctor's.

"Then why was it, when I called you up at ten minutes to ten, that your servant told me you were out?"

He saw the bland smile on the doctor's face, and knew he had made a mistake.

"My dear fellow, my servant couldn't have said anything so stupid, because it was his night off and he didn't return till this morning. I was alone in the house. Not an unusual experience; I am told some of the most respectable people in London live entirely alone."

"I live entirely alone," said Luke. "I occasionally have visitors. I had two last night—one alive and one dead."

The doctor raised his eyebrows.

"Indeed," he said, with polite interest. "This isn't another little bluff of yours, Mr. Luke?"

"It's not a bluff, as you know. One alive and one dead. Alberto Garcia, with a few German newspapers, German money, and a bill or two in his pocket to give point to the story that he's been in Germany and has been sending the telegrams sent by your agent. Within a few minutes after my discovery somebody found a man called Punch Markham dead in the gutter on the Thames Embankment. He had been

shot by somebody who met him by arrangement—it was obviously the same person who broke into my house. This poor devil had arranged to telephone to me at half-past ten, and that was the hour when I was burgled."

"It was also the hour I was going to bed," sneered Blanter. And then, leaning forward across the table, his big face puckered into a frown: "Come straight with this, Luke. Are you accusing me?"

"I'm suspecting you," said Luke coolly.

"Why should I kill Garcia and this other man—I seem to have had a very busy evening yesterday!"

"The motive isn't very clear. If I can find the motive I shall find the murderer. Just remember that, will you, Blanter?"

He went out of the room and beckoned the man who was standing on the opposite side of the road before he returned to the doctor.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to search your house."

"Have you a warrant?"

Luke produced it.

The house was not much larger than Luke's own, and the search had not progressed far before certain unusual things were revealed. The rooms on the

ground floor were more or less tidy and clean, though there were layers of dust everywhere. Upstairs the rooms were almost unfurnished. The doctor's bedroom was reasonably comfortable, but the rest of the house was like a pigsty. He met and interrogated the servant: a big, broad-shouldered man who must have rivalled the doctor in his strength. He reeked of drink, and evidently was a very privileged person. Luke had heard of this factotum of the doctor's, knew that he had been in Blanter's service for five or six years.

The detectives were leaving after a fruitless search when, turning to the servant, Luke asked casually:

"It's a long time since you had cheese on Wednesday, isn't it?"

The man blinked, changed colour, and stammered.

"Eh? I don't know what you mean, guv'nor."

When they were clear of the house Luke was still grinning.

"I don't see the joke—I mean, about cheese on Wednesday," said the other detective.

"I hope you never will," said Luke. "It's queer how people betray themselves over quite little things. The moment I saw that bird I knew he was an old lag, though I can't place him. He's not only an old

lag, but he's been in Dartmoor. A few years ago, when the diet wasn't as varied as it is to-day, convicts were given cheese on Wednesdays; and somehow you never forget what happened in a convict prison."

"Have you ever been in one?" asked the other.

"Only as a temporary visitor," said Luke.

He could not find time to get to the country, and telephoned the girl, asking her to come up. When she arrived he went round to her hotel and broke the news to her.

"I think I can save you the grisly business of identifying poor Garcia—fortunately, he was on the boat with us and I knew him very well by sight."

She was terribly shocked, wept a little, being human.

"I can't understand it," she said, when she had recovered. "Then he was in Germany all the time?"

Luke shook his head.

"No, he's not been in Germany at all."

He had sent in search of Rustem, but Mr. Arthur Rustem was neither at his office nor at his expensive flat. There was a possibility that he had gone abroad, and instructions were sent to all the port officers to turn him back on the excuse of passport irregularity.

Edna had seen Punch only once since she had been

in residence. He had been living with Lane. She had lent him a pony and she had seen him riding up to the downs, and on the occasion he had come to the house she had been out.

"I saw him yesterday morning again. He was riding very near the place where the horse was shot."

"Where which horse was shot?" he asked quickly.

She told him of her little adventure in the dark, and he was greatly interested; he made her draw a plan showing the exact spot where the horse was buried.

He questioned her as to the date of the shooting, and she rang the bell for her chauffeur. It was the day she had sent her big car into Reading to have some repairs effected. The chauffeur came, a methodical man with a large notebook which he used as a sort of diary, and definitely fixed both the day and the hour, because he had returned to the house with the car immediately after she had gone up to her room.

"It must have been that day, miss. It was during the week before the night we went to town and saw the accident on the road."

Luke had heard of no accident and asked for further information. He did not interrupt until the girl

had finished. He was pacing up and down the room, his hands behind him, long after the chauffeur had been dismissed.

"Can you put me up for to-night? I don't think I want to go to the Red Lion," he said. "I'd like to go right away if you'll let me. I'm dead with tiredness, and if I could only sleep for an hour or two at Longhall, I think I might be able to go on for another thirty-six. I've got to be fresh and bright for Cambridgeshire day."

She looked at him open-mouthed.

"You're not going to the races, with all these terrible things . . ."

"I certainly am going to the races," he said, callously as it seemed to her. "Field of Glory is a ten-to-one chance, and I particularly wish to see Mr. Goodie in the moment of triumph."

She shook her head.

"I don't understand it. I, of course, couldn't go. Poor Mr. Garcia! It's the most terrible tragedy! I dare not allow myself to think about it."

He had no friends or relations, she told him. He was a fairly wealthy man, and when he asked her how his estate was disposed she answered frankly.

"I think he's left everything to me," she said.

"He told me he would years ago, and he referred to it again on the boat. He wasn't murdered?"

Luke hesitated; he did not rule out that possibility.

"I don't think so. The doctors are under the impression that he died a natural death."

He questioned her about the old man's practice. Had he ever taken drugs of any kind? She repudiated this instantly.

"He had a horror of drugs—never even took medicine. He invariably went into Buenos Aires for osteopathic treatment when he was not feeling well. I know that the day he arrived in London he sought out the nearest osteopath and had treatment."

They drove down together to Longhall, and Luke slept shamelessly all the way and was hardly awake when he fell on a bed in the guest room to continue his slumber.

By nine o'clock that night he was very much awake and alert, and spent a solid hour at the telephone. At eleven o'clock Lane called for him, and they went out together, after arranging with the butler to wait up for his return.

It was three o'clock in the morning when he came back to find a sleepy-eyed girl dozing in her chair. His boots and clothes were covered with dust, and

Lane was in no better case. If she expected him to tell her where he had been, or to satisfy her natural curiosity, she was to be disappointed. He told her that he had had a successful night, but in what way he was successful he would not say.

When he came back to London he learned from his immediate superior that a complaint had been lodged against him with the chief commissioner.

"By Blanter, of course? Unprofessional conduct, bullying, third degree, impertinence . . ."

"A little of each," said his chief. "The commissioner has left me to deal with it. We'll let it stand over for a day or two. Are you going to Newmarket?"

Luke nodded.

"Blanter you'll never get," said the superintendent confidently; "he's much too clever. One is always reading about these master criminals, but the police never meet them, and for the excellent reason that they're not caught. The moment a man's pinched he ceases to be a master and goes back to the working classes! Blanter has never been caught."

"We will give him a new experience," said Luke with equal confidence.

The doctor was an energetic and a tireless man. An inquiry put through to Maidenhead disclosed the fact

that the Maidenhead property had been sold after two days' negotiation. He had sold it at bargain price, which was significant, for Blanter was a good business man and would never get rid of a property except at a profit, unless he was in a hurry; and he was in the greatest hurry he had ever been in his life.

Mr. Trigger was to learn something of that urgency. He had a call from the doctor, and Blanter's demands were both exorbitant and difficult to fulfil. Only Trigger knew that they were not impossible.

"Be reasonable, Doctor. I can't find you £200,000 at a minute's notice. The money is invested as fast as it is made—you know that—and we can't divvy up before the end of November."

"You'll get that money, Trigger; you'll get it in American currency. It has got to be here ready for me when I call."

The little man leaned back in his chair and met the menace of the doctor's eyes without flinching.

"If the Transaction comes off there'll be no difficulty, of course," he said. "Otherwise I shall have to sell stock at a loss. What's the hurry?"

Blanter did not explain. That was not his way. He was used to implicit obedience, and his first inclination was to fly in a rage at the opposition which was

being shown to him. Second thoughts prevailed. He had already sensed this antagonism on the part of his once-willing agent. He had perfect command of his emotions when he so willed, and, sitting down in a big chair, he lit a cigar.

"Don't let's quarrel," he said. "If you want to know what the hurry is, it's Mr. Luke. So far as I'm concerned, the Green Ribbon has had my last horse. It won't hurt you, because you've got plenty of money, and I suggest that you liquidate your business, sell the offices, and retire——"

"Listen, Doctor." The little man leaned his elbows on the blotting pad and tapped the desk to emphasize his words. "Trigger's Agency existed before you'd ever heard of it—what's more, before I'd ever heard of you except as a mug punter who'd been before the coroner and had a narrow squeak. It will go on existing without you. I never asked you how you got the horses that I operate, what you did with them, or how you persuaded them to win. That's not my business. If you've done anything illegal I know nothing about it. So far as I know, Field of Glory is going to win the Cambridgeshire on Wednesday, and I have advised all clients and have had a record of their bets. Why it should win or why it shouldn't win I

don't know, and don't want to know. There are other sources of information besides yours—other stables and other horses besides Goodie's. If you've done anything illegal that's your affair and not mine. Mr. Luke I regard as a fair-minded man, and I'm certainly not scared of him."

He got up from the table, walked round to the other side of the desk, and stood looking down at Blanter.

"A man named Garcia was found dead this morning. I've seen it in the evening newspapers. And a little racing tout named Punch Markham was found dead in the city."

"Well?" said the doctor, when he paused.

"I'm only asking you for the sake of asking. They've nothing to do with our business, have they?"

And then the doctor made a false move.

"Suppose they had?" he said.

Trigger did not reply, and he repeated the question.

"I'd walk straight out into the street, get a policeman, and pinch you," said Trigger slowly. "If I thought that little chat which Rustem started and

which I stopped had anything to do with murder, I'd shop you, as God's my judge!"

The doctor rose slowly to his feet, a commanding and terrifying figure in his cold fury. Only Mr. Trigger was not easily terrified.

"What do you think would happen to you?" he asked with deadly softness.

Trigger smiled.

"I might have to explain to the coroner why I shot you stone dead!" he said.

He had his hand in his jacket pocket, and for the first time Blanter saw the bulge of the levelled barrel.

"I never take a chance with you, Blanter, and I'm not taking one now. You can clear out, and if there's any money to divide after this Transaction you'll get it."

Dr. Blanter found himself in Lower Regent Street, a dazed man. He might have respected J. P. Trigger if he had been capable of respecting anybody.

When he got to Half Moon Street he found his servant sitting in his study, smoking one of the doctor's best cigars. The doctor's decanter was on the table and a glass half filled with whisky and soda. Stoofer rose only to help the doctor to a drink before

reseating himself, and Blanter took no exception to the familiarity.

"Did you see Goodie?"

"No," said Blanter.

The corner of Stoofer's ugly mouth lifted.

"He's got no more brains than a rabbit," he said. "He asked me what the new box was for—he see me drivin' it on the North Circular. That old devil certainly misses nothing."

"Why were you driving it on the North Circular Road?" asked Blanter carelessly.

"Tryin' out the engine. The bus was inside too—she was delivered yesterday, and I had a bit of practice fitting her wings. Where do we take off?"

"At Goodie's place. I wish he was in Sussex—that would be easier—but it's lonely enough. Will the plane hold two?"

Stoofer sneered at him.

"Four," he said. "It's a pretty machine. When I was in the air service, if anybody had told us we could get a plane with detachable wings they'd have been laughed at!"

The friendship between the doctor and this uncouth servant of his was notorious. They had certain crudities in common, and Stoofer had been more

nearly concerned in certain black incidents of Blanter's past than Luke knew. Had he read the Blanter records again, he would have learned that the man who was concerned with the doctor in the worst charge that had been brought against him, and who eventually received a sentence of five years, was the same man who now lived luxuriously at Blanter's expense. He had been convicted as "John Ernest," which were his Christian names.

When Mr. Stoofer was very drunk it was his practice to tell his employer that it was in his power to give him a "lifer."

"I suppose the Cambridgeshire business will go through?" Blanter poured himself out a liberal portion of whisky as he asked himself the question. "Goodie isn't worrying, now we've got that white-livered Turk on the chain. He was the danger."

"What are you going to do with him?" asked Stoofer.

The doctor was noncommittal.

"We'll see. Have you fixed everything for to-morrow?"

Stoofer nodded.

"I got a French chauffeur and I've hired the lorry. You may not want to use 'em."

"And I may," said Blanter shortly. "I'm relying on you, Stoofer—the timing, I mean. I don't want to take a chance. If anything happens——"

He shrugged.

"Nothing'll happen," scoffed the man. "Shall I go down to the cellar and get another bottle, or will you?"

"As you're my servant it would be a good idea for you to earn your money," said the doctor good-humouredly.

Nevertheless, it was he who went. In the course of the next twenty-four hours he would have to rely a great deal upon this brute of his, and it was advisable to keep him in good humour.

CHAPTER XX

ALL journeys passed very quickly to Luke, because he had a great deal to think about, and it seemed that he had hardly stepped into his car outside the entrance of New Scotland Yard than he was passing through and raising his hat mechanically to the Ditch; for, if he did not bet, he had a punter's superstition.

Though the weather was none too propitious, the town was crowded, and cars bowled down the broad road to the stands three abreast. His own stopped at a little gate and he slipped into the paddock, unobserved, to find it already crowded, though the numbers were not in the frame for the first race.

In point of interest the Cambridgeshire Handicap takes second place to the Cesarewitch; but this year there were half a dozen horses genuinely fancied, and, with the heaviest betting that the race had known for many years, public interest was unusually keen.

Luke had half an hour's conversation with certain officials of the Jockey Club, and by the time he came

out of the little room the attendance in the paddock had doubled in size.

He did not see the first race, but visited in turn every man he had posted at the exits from the enclosures. Goodie he had seen, a solitary figure in his favourite position, the most distant corner of the paddock. It was whilst Luke was visiting his "sentries" that Blanter's big Rolls arrived, and the doctor climbed out and came through the paddock gate.

"That's the car: watch it—if necessary, throw it out of action."

He did not underrate Blanter's ingenuity. He was dealing with an extraordinary genius, who had devoted great powers to base uses. Nevertheless, they were great powers. Blanter never failed to cover his tracks—that had been the history of him all his life. He was such a good general that it was certain he would prepare a way of retreat. He had said to Luke almost the first time he had fallen under suspicion: "I can foresee every move you make, and you can't foresee mine. That's where I've got you, Luke, and where I'll keep you."

Before the Cambridgeshire the paddock was uncomfortably crowded and it was impossible to get anywhere near the horses. Strolling into the ring,

Luke learned that Field of Glory was one of the strongest favourites the race had known. He stood nominally at five to two, but it was impossible to get a bet about him. The detective heard bookmakers refusing bet after bet with a laconic: "Can't offer you a fair price."

There is no parade of horses at Newmarket, no bands or flowers, nothing but plain racing. The horses went down to the nine-furlong post in ones and twos and threes. Presently Luke saw a beautiful bay horse loping down by himself.

"That's the winner. He looks as if he could pull a bus and win," said a voice at his elbow.

Certainly there was no horse in the field which carried his bloom or moved in such effortless style. His long stride covered an immensity of ground. Luke glanced at the number board and saw that it was drawn No. 1, the best position in the race.

He went on to the lower steps of the stand to watch the race. There was a long delay at the start: horses weaved in and out; two refused to go near the gate, and a third took it into his head to bolt in the opposite direction. The field must wait until he was overpowered and brought back. Slowly the horses were manœuvred into line, and then:

"They're off!"

Ten thousand voices said the words at once; it sounded like the boom of a cannon.

Right across the course, like a regiment of cavalry charging, they flew, and at a distance it was almost impossible for any but the most skillful observer to tell which was in front. Luke had glued his eyes to the bright green cap of the horse on the rails. He was galloping with the greatest freedom. It was clear to him, as it was to thousands of trained watchers, before the field came into the dip, that Field of Glory, going easily on the stand side, was not only in front but could never be caught. He passed the post, pulling up, a winner by three lengths.

Luke ran back into the paddock to the far side of the unsaddling enclosure and waited. He saw Goodie walk slowly into the space reserved for the winner, and presently the jockey of Field of Glory appeared above the heads of the crowds and the horse walked into the enclosure. Goodie caught him by the bridle and held him while the jockey dismounted and unsaddled; then together they went into the weighing room with Luke at their heels. He could not see the doctor, but did not doubt that he was somewhere near.

The jockey had seated himself on the scales when Luke passed a slip of paper to the clerk, who read it.

"You object to this horse, Mr. Luke?"

"I object to this horse," said Luke, "on the grounds that he is not Field of Glory, but a horse imported from the Argentine, named Vendina, who was purchased from the late Señor Garcia for stud purposes in Germany."

Goodie's face was a mask: he displayed no evidence of emotion whatever.

"A stupid charge," he said heavily. "The matter will go before the stewards, I presume? I shall be handy."

He walked out of the weighing room, a detective at his elbow. No effort was made to stop him till he was outside, and then the detectives closed on him.

The watchers did not see the doctor until he appeared from the direction of Tattersall's, walking along the line of cars. The fact that the chauffeur was not on the seat of Blanter's car was responsible for their carelessness. A big French machine that was pulling out passed the doctor and for a moment blotted him out of view. When it had passed he had disappeared. It was not until the French car was well clear of the gates that they realized what had hap-

pened. Blanter had had two cars parked; he had slipped into the second machine as it had come abreast of him, and had half a mile's start.

Luke, who came out at that moment, and learned the truth, did not even stop to curse the detectives who had been fooled, but, jumping on the running board of the police car, which was already moving, he went in pursuit.

The big Frenchman was almost out of sight. There was no chance of signalling the Cambridgeshire police who were doing duty on the road. The car swung toward London, a quarter of a mile ahead of Luke, and was going almost as fast as he.

They had passed the fork of the Cambridgeshire road and were moving for Six Mile Bottom when the cunning of Blanter was revealed. A big motor lorry which had been standing on the grass verge backed on to the road so as to block it. It was done so cleverly that at first Luke thought it was an accident; but it was a little too clever, for the trolley had not moved till the doctor's car had passed. One of the detectives in the police tender jumped up by the side of the driver.

"You're under arrest! Pull your lorry straight, or I'll take my stick to you!"

By the time the lorry was straightened, Blanter's

car was out of sight. There was another obstruction: a big motor horse van, coming toward Newmarket, but this pulled aside to allow them to pass.

Blanter had seemingly forgotten one danger: the possibility that the level-crossing gates at Six Mile Bottom might be closed. They were in fact shut when the car came up, and they only opened again when the police tender was within a hundred yards of its quarry. Both cars flew along the road, Luke gaining steadily. It was at the juncture of the Royston and Newport roads that the police tender overtook and passed the French machine, and pulled up with a jar of brakes.

Luke did not recognize the driver; he was a stranger, and obviously foreign. Running round to the side of the car, the detective jerked open the door.

"Step out, Doctor."

But the car was empty. On the floor lay a race card. He took it up, and saw something written on a blank page. The handwriting was jerky; it was evidently intended for him, and it ran:

I expected this. Sorry to disappoint you.

Luke placed the driver of the car under arrest and rushed back to make inquiries at Six Mile Bottom.

It was here that the man must have escaped, and probably caught the train that had been responsible for the closing of the gates. To his amazement, he learned that nobody had got out of the car, that the train did not stop at Six Mile Bottom but was a through express.

"I'll swear the car was empty, because I looked into it," said one of the railwaymen.

If the car had been empty at Six Mile Bottom, where had this man made his escape? There had been time for the car to slow, or even stop, whilst Luke was ridding himself of the obstructing lorry. But where would he have gone? There was no house; the country was open. Blanter was not the sort of man who would fly to the woods.

He came back to the course to find the rings seething. The horse had not been disqualified, and the decision of the stewards was suspended. Goodie had been removed to the town police station and had made no protest.

He interviewed the trainer in his little cell, but had little satisfaction from him. Goodie refused to talk or offer the least assistance. He was seemingly uninterested in the fate of his partner, and not greatly

concerned about his own. Luke took him back to London, handcuffed, and lodged him at Cannon Row for the night.

The position was still a little obscure, and there was a possibility, as his timorous superior did not fail to point out to him, that Goodie might still acquit himself of the charge. The Jockey Club had taken the unusual course of suspending a decision, as they were bound to do until proof had been adduced. A logical act, but one which led to a great deal of confusion amongst ready-money bettors, who were thus deprived of drawing their winnings on the first or the second.

"I'll get proof enough," said Luke.

He would have sent his best men to take possession of Goodie's house, but here arose one of those technical difficulties which so often hamper the administration of justice. Goodie's house was under different police jurisdiction. There had been some trouble between Scotland Yard and the local constabulary, and though the Yard was within its rights in sending a man, it was decided to leave the matter in the hands of the local police.

And then a thought occurred to Luke and he got

into touch with the Berkshire C. I. D. It was in consequence of that communication that the house was not even visited by the authorities that night.

One thing could be done. Mr. Trigger was summoned to headquarters and asked to give an account of himself and his Transactions. As had been expected, he had the most complete documentary proofs that he was not concerned except in the sending out of horses, that he had no communication whatever with the doctor except on that subject.

A second search of the doctor's house was made and a police officer left in control. That Blanter would attempt to go to London Luke did not for one moment expect; what he was more likely to do was to make for an unlikely seaport and get a passage to the Continent. The recognized ports were notified as a matter of course, but it was improbable that the doctor would attempt to leave from Dover or Harwich. At any rate, for one relief he was thankful: with Goodie in prison and Blanter in flight, the danger to the girl was, he thought, reduced to an inconsiderable factor. Here, however, he was unduly optimistic.

Nothing had been seen of Rustem; possibly he had retired to his place of retreat, which, for some

reason never thoroughly explained, was Edinburgh.

Pilcher was almost tearful when he protested that he knew nothing of his master's whereabouts except that he had said it was unlikely he would be in the office on the day of his disappearance. That the man was speaking the truth was confirmed by inquiries at Rustem's flat. If he had fled the country he would at least have taken with him the £2,000 which was found when the police forced the drawers of the desk in his study.

There had been many misguided excuses made for the local police. It was pointed out that they did not immediately occupy Gillywood Cottage because no specific charge had been made against its owner, and certainly not the charge of murder which was subsequently preferred. Furthermore, the cottage was situated a long way from headquarters, and at the moment no detective officer was available. Certainly it seemed unlikely that, having made his escape, Blanter would make for a spot where he might well suppose a police caretaker would be found.

The apologists would have saved themselves a great deal of speculation if they had overheard Luke's conversation with the Berkshire police chief on the subject of dogs.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening when the watchful Lane saw a big motor horse box come along the road. It passed the entrance to Gillywood Cottage and disappeared in a southerly direction. A motor horse box returning to one of the many training establishments within range of a few miles was not an unusual spectacle on the evening of a big race meeting. Lane thought nothing of it; he did not see the lights extinguished, or the big truck turn off the road.

Though it had all the appearance of a horse box, it held no horses, and a big man had been sleeping half the journey in the compartment usually reserved for the stable lad. The driver got down and jerked open the door.

"Here you are, guv'nor," he said.

Dr. Blanter got down laboriously and stretched his legs. He had been a long time cooped up in that narrow cell, for the "box" had gone through Newmarket, taken a wide detour and come back through Cambridge.

If Luke had inquired he would have found that it had been waiting between Six Mile Bottom and Newmarket since two o'clock that afternoon, just as the obstructing trolley had been waiting. He had never dreamed that an innocent-looking van going toward

Newmarket could contain his prey, yet that had been the case. By the simplest of tricks Dr. Blanter had escaped immediate arrest. He had come back here, not because he regarded the cottage as a place of refuge, but believing that in the excitement of the day Luke would do exactly what he had done—relax his vigilance over Edna Gray. Moreover, the wide downs and the grassy valley offered solitude for the assembling of the tiny airplane which the van held, and a favourable taking-off place for the long journey which would begin at dawn.

Goodie's house might be, and probably was, in the possession of the police. But of one thing he was sure: Rustem would not have been found or have told his story. Blanter was not concerned; his own fate was sealed, unless he made his escape from England. He had no doubt in his mind, however, that he would succeed.

And the police would have found the big cats, too. He bared his teeth in a smile at the thought. How would these bucolics deal with that problem?

The presence of the motor van would pass undetected until the morning, and in the night Stoofer could do his work. For Stoofer had spent certain years of the war, and six months after, as an aircraft

fitter. It was indeed he who had suggested to the doctor an infallible method of escape.

The broad, even meadows which ran along the base of the downs were admirably suited for the purpose. It had always been the doctor's idea that this should be his jumping-off place. Big a man as he was, he was light of foot. The groom working in the stable yard of Longhall neither saw nor heard the shadow that passed. Blanter made a careful reconnaissance of the house. There were, he knew, two menservants—three if Lane were included. He knew, too, that they were ex-police officers, specially chosen by Luke, and the reason for the detective's anxiety he could guess.

After a long search of the dark courtyard he found at last what he sought—a ladder—and, lifting this from its supporting peg, he planted it against the wall near the open window of what he knew was the girl's bedroom. It would have been his own room if he had succeeded in buying the property, for it was Blanter on whose behalf Mr. Rustem had negotiated.

And then he heard a sound which made him stiffen. He crouched back against the wall.

From where he stood he could see the angle of the stable and the glow of its reflected light, spread

fanwise across the tiled floor of the yard. It was Edna's voice he heard, speaking to the groom. Evidently she had come out at the front of the house, and had passed across the lawn to the stables. She was ordering her hack for the morning.

He crept along till he came to the angle of the wall and looked round. He could see the back of her; she wore a long ulster coat which she must have slipped on as she came out of the house, and she was bareheaded. A horse started to kick in the stable, and the groom went out of hearing. For a little time the girl stood watching, and then turned back toward the house. She changed her mind, and, turning to the left, walked to where Blanter stood in hiding. She did not see him, but the ladder was silhouetted against the sky. He heard her utter a little exclamation, and made his decision. She felt a huge hand suddenly close over her mouth and an arm pass round her waist.

"If you make a sound I'll throttle you, my girl!" said a whisper in her ear.

She struggled madly to escape from this clutch, but his arm was like steel and the hand on her mouth immovable. Suddenly he felt her sag in his arms, and the weight of her told him that her swoon was genuine. He heard the slam of a door and looked round

cautiously. Then came the clatter of heavy feet on the yard, and he carried the girl to the angle of the wall, and, peeping round, saw the groom disappearing in the direction of the house.

He lifted her without effort, passed quickly before the stable door and through the side gate. She was still unconscious when he reached the van. The man who had been drinking tea from a vacuum flask sprang up.

"You didn't get her?" he asked exultantly. "My God, that's a bit of luck, Doctor! Here, I'll carry her."

"You needn't," said Blanter curtly.

They passed over the dark ground and they were nearing the foot of the downs when he heard her moan and felt her move in his arms. Setting her down, he felt in his pocket and took out a small case.

What he had to do could be done in the dark. The sharp pain in her arm brought her to consciousness. She moaned a little. They stood in silence, watching her, till her head drooped again.

"There's nobody in the cottage, guv'nor," said the man under his breath. "I went in and had a look round."

"How did you get in?" asked the other sharply.

"I picked the lock of the wire door—the one in the corner. It was easy."

"Did you leave it open?"

"No, I just left it on the latch. Why?"

He heard the doctor breathing quickly.

"Nothing," he said. "Come along."

He stooped to pick up the girl, and did not put her down until they came to the iron-barred gate which covered the mouth of Perrywig Caves. This the doctor unlocked and they passed through together, the gate closing softly behind them.

"If you feel in one of those holes in the side of the rock you'll find a lantern. Don't put it on till I tell you."

The cave ran straight for about fifty yards, then turned gently at right angles. Here was another gate, also to be unlocked.

"You can put on the light now."

The cavern in which they found themselves was twice the height of an ordinary room. There was a high-powered car here, covered with a cloth; and around the wall was a series of rough chambers cut out of the solid rock. Blanter put the girl down with her back to the wall, and, strolling to one of the recesses, flashed the lamp in the sleeper's eyes.

"Wake up, little Arthur," he said pleasantly.

The huddled figure which lay on a bed of straw woke with a start and stared, blinking, at the man whom, of all men in the world, he feared.

"Hullo, Doctor!" he said, with a pathetic attempt at geniality. "There's something mediæval about this, isn't there, old boy?"

As he moved his leg there was the clank of a chain. It was fastened to a leglet about his ankle and the other end to a staple fixed in the rock.

"A little bit mediæval, I think you'll agree; and all because of a baseless suspicion——"

"Don't talk," said Blanter coldly. "I want to give you the news. They've caught Goodie and they're after me and you."

The white-faced man rose unsteadily to his feet. The chain was a very long one, which gave him almost the run of the main cavern.

"What is the charge?" he asked.

"I don't know what it is, but I'll tell you what it will be," said Blanter carelessly. "Willful murder—we're all in it, Rustem, except you."

"Not me, not me!" said the prisoner, waving his hands hysterically. "I knew nothing about it. I told you——"

"I said 'except you,'" he said. "You wouldn't be in it because you'd be the chief witness for the state. Which is unfortunate for you!" The doctor's voice was gentle, almost caressing.

"I've brought you a little friend. But she's not here to keep you company—disabuse your mind of that idea."

Then Rustem saw the girl.

"Miss Gray!" he said, in horror.

"You may call her Edna," smiled Blanter. "I'll give you permission. After you're gone she's going to amuse us—Stoofer and me. Stoofer and I have identical ideas on the subject. If we're going to be hanged we might as well run the gamut of offence!"

Rustem stared at him in a horror that he did not attempt to conceal. He was a thief, a swindler, by all codes a villain, but——

"You can't do that, Doctor! My God, you can't do that!"

Even as he spoke he knew that this gross man was capable of deeds as vile. In that old case in which Blanter had been involved, and for which Rustem had defended him, there had been details which had turned him sick. . . .

The doctor looked at him, amused. Across his face

was a broad, leering grin. Arthur Rustem was a coward, physically and morally, and yet at this moment, when he knew that death was at hand, he felt no qualm of fear. He suddenly realized, though there was no apparent reason for his understanding, that the girl had recovered consciousness and was listening. Her head still drooped forward in a way that reminded him of Goodie. It was a ludicrous comparison; he would have laughed, but if he laughed he would become hysterical, and if he was hysterical he was lost. He knew the doctor, knew him better than any man living, knew exactly with what cold-blooded indifference the man would encompass his end.

The doctor took a small bunch of keys from his pocket and held one up.

"We will release you from your mediæval surroundings in a minute or two. I shall want to anklet my little friend over there. It is a new anklet—the last was broken by your predecessor."

"By 'release' I suppose you mean——?"

"Exactly," said the doctor. "You're too dangerous, Rustem, and you're rather a fool too. I think it will be better for all concerned, though we shall be sorry to lose you," he added, with mock sympathy.

"Wait a moment." Rustem saw his hands go into his

pocket and interrupted the action. "A long time ago, Blanter, you told me about kelacine. You said that if ever you went out, that was the way you would go."

The doctor smiled.

"Marvellous man—marvellous memory!"

He took out his little case, opened it, and selected a tiny flat phial.

"I'm very glad you're so sensible and not giving me a lot of trouble. I have anticipated your wishes. Tincture Kelacine was exactly the medicine I had prescribed!"

Edna, wide awake now, watched the drama being played, frozen with horror. Rustem she recognized; the long chain about his ankle explained many things.

There was furniture in the cavern, and apparently near at hand was a water supply, for the doctor disappeared through an opening and came back with a glass half filled with water, some of which he spilled on the ground.

"What is the effect of this dope?" asked Rustem.

The doctor did not answer: drop by drop, little colourless beads were falling from the mouth of the phial.

"One minim produces paralysis," he said slowly; "two or three drops, according to your constitution,

death. I am giving you six—or rather, you are taking six of your own free will."

"Make it sixty," said Arthur Rustem coolly. "I should like it over very quickly."

Again the doctor smiled.

"Spoken like a gentleman," he said, and emptied the contents of the phial into the glass.

Stoofer, the servant, watched, fascinated. Edna could just see past him, saw Rustem take the glass with a trembling hand. He held it up to the light.

"Do you mind unfastening my anklet first? I'd hate to die in chains."

Blanter looked at him quickly, took a key from his pocket, and, stooping, turned it. A snapping sound and the anklet hinged back.

"Thank you."

Rustem was politeness itself; but for his quivering hand, none might imagine that he laboured under any stress of emotion.

"Now, before I go, I'll tell you a secret." He was watching the big man closely. "If I had escaped this I intended going into a monastery." He spoke with great deliberation.

Blanter's eyebrows went up and his big mouth opened.

It was a grimace which invariably accompanied his intense amusement, and was invariably followed by his deafening laughter. Nobody knew this better than Rustem. As the big mouth opened, with a quick jerk of his wrist he dashed the contents of the glass into the man's face. Blanter staggered back; his hand reached to his pocket; and then, with a squeal of agony, he fell to his knees, his face blue.

His servant rushed forward and caught him by the arm. In that second Rustem made his leap; he gripped the girl by the arm and jerked her to her feet.

"Run!" he snarled.

The gate was unlocked. He crashed it back, hoping it would close of itself. The outer gate, he knew, was locked, but he had snatched up the key which the doctor had dropped, and with trembling hands he turned it in the lock.

He heard feet stumbling behind him, had not the courage to stop and lock the gate, but ran.

"Do you know the way to your house?" gasped Rustem.

Between fear and weakness she could hardly keep on her feet. She could only gasp something which was unintelligible to the man.

Somebody was running behind them—the servant

probably. It seemed impossible to the girl that she could last out. The house was a terrifying distance away, the ground so uneven that she stumbled with every few steps.

Rustem looked over his shoulder, and, to his horror, saw the looming figure of the doctor. They had reached the corner of the wire compound, when she stumbled and fell against the wire. It swung away from her and she realized it was the door. Rustem had seen the avenue of escape and ran in after her, slamming the gate behind him, but it did not fasten.

She flew ahead, heard the sound of a struggle behind her and fled toward the cottage. Then something rose in front of her, and she stood stock still. The scream that rose to her throat was never uttered; she was paralyzed with fear, for four green eyes looked out of the blackness, and suddenly she heard a hideous howl from the Things before her which made her blood turn to ice.

Panthers! Two great black panthers! She knew what they were—and then her senses left her, and she went down to the ground in a heap. Something else was engaging the attention of the two beasts—a shouting, panting huddle of men. Again that scream from the panthers. One leaped forward, and Dr.

Blanter turned to meet the charge. Twice he fired, and then there was an unearthly howl of pain and the second panther leaped. As he struck, a rifle exploded near at hand, and then another. The black beast slid wearily from his mangled victim by the side of his dead mate.

CHAPTER XXI

IT WAS a bad dream, Edna Gray decided, and tried to sit up on the couch where she was lying. Her head was swimming; she was curiously weak, and she sank back again. Somebody was washing her forehead and neck with eau-de-Cologne; she hoped, for the sake of the proprieties, that it was her maid.

"You keep quiet, young lady."

It was Luke's voice. When she opened her eyes again he was sitting on a stool by the side of the couch, looking singularly old, as a man might pardonably look when he had shot at a panther in the dark and was not absolutely certain whether the bullet would hit the beast or its victim, was not even sure that the prey of the beast was not the woman he loved.

It was two o'clock in the morning when she became quite sensible and demanded the story.

"No more hysteria," he warned her.

"It wasn't hysteria, it was nerves," she said indignantly.

"I came down; it was a whim of mine—one of those inspirations, I suppose, that every clever police officer has. I didn't dream I was going to shoot a panther, or pick up a bedraggled female in a dead faint."

His tone was flippant, but she realized something of what he had endured.

"Yes, they were Goodie's panthers; that is why he lived in a cage. He bred them; they had the run of the compound, which included the house. They lived in an underground vault, which was probably at some time the vault of a church in which your illustrious ancestors laid their old bones. That is why I didn't want the police to go there until I'd dealt with these beasties. They never came out in the daytime, but by night they were a very effective guard against burglars! Goodie didn't realize the effect they'd have on horses, and had to move them to new stables, well away from the smell of the big cats.

"Goodie had a lot of secrets in that little cottage, including an autobiography which I'm going to read with great enjoyment. He swears there's nothing in it that could convict him, but we may alter all that."

She told him of the cavern, but he had heard that

from Rustem before the ambulance had taken him to hospital.

"Yes, I know. That's where they kept poor old Garcia. He recognized the horse that he thought was in Germany in the string with Goodie's other horses. He came down here to make sure, and stayed at the Red Lion. Rustem must have had him watched, and, when he realized the secret was out there was a consultation.

"You remember Rustem came in a hurry to Doncaster? It was to tell the gang that Garcia was staying in the village and had recognized the horse. Rustem told me that he discovered that and went up to Doncaster to tell the others. In some way they got hold of Garcia that same night, and imprisoned him up in the cavern. Probably he made an attempt to escape, for they had a chain fixed to the wall; I think you'll find it's a fairly recent innovation.

"They seem to have treated him as well as they could; you remember the remnants of luncheon which you saw near the mouth of the cave? In some way or other Garica got the leg iron off, made his way through the cave, and, by a miracle, found the passage which led to the smallest of the caves. He

broke down the flimsy gate with a stone, and for days lay in hiding.

"His escape nearly put the cat amongst the pigeons. He knew that Field of Glory was not Field of Glory at all, but Vendina, from the Argentine. I don't know how they found him, but he was run to earth and taken to a little cottage, the property of Goodie. He was there transferred to the doctor's car and taken either to Maidenhead or to Half Moon Street—I think the former place.

"I don't think he was ill treated; I believe his death was due to natural causes, or else to the administration of the dope which they shot into him with the idea of keeping him quiet until they could smuggle him out of England.

"Rustem arranged all the telegrams which came from Germany. The person they were scared of was you."

"Me?" she said, in amazement.

He nodded.

"At first they didn't want you to be there, because you overlook their ground, and Goodie thought that you'd find out about the panthers and raise cain with the local authorities. Then you became important

because you were the only person in the world, or in England at any rate, who could supply information about Garcia. The third danger turned up in poor Punch.

"He must have seen the horse and known it was not the colt he sold. It was easy to identify: one foot was smaller than the others. The night this discovery was made Goodie took the real Field of Glory and shot it. They were going for their last coup, on the Cambridgeshire, and the best authority tells me that if they'd won they'd have cleared half a million pounds. They had to get rid of Punch, and he played into their hands.

"It was an idea of the doctor's—Rustem didn't tell me this, because he doesn't know—one of his freakish, mad whims, to leave the body of Garcia in my room. It was easy for him to get in because he had a key, and the foggy night helped him. It was whilst he was there that Punch telephoned through, as he promised to do at half-past ten. Dr. Blanter knew the game was up; Punch stood between him and an immense fortune. He made an appointment with the man, asked him to meet him on the Embankment. He would have known that on that night the fog on the Embankment was thicker than in any

other part of London. I don't think Punch knew the doctor, even by sight. He must have been shot down at close quarters."

"Have you arrested Dr. Blanter or has he got away?"

"In a sense he's got away," said Luke, and she shivered.

CHAPTER XXII

"GUILTY," said the jury.

Goodie looked round the court with expressionless eyes.

"And do you find the prisoner, Arthur Ralph Rustem, guilty or not guilty of obtaining money by fraud?"

"Guilty," said the jury.

"And do you find the prisoner, Joseph Phidias Trigger, guilty or not guilty of fraudulent practice?"

"Not guilty," said the jury.

Mr. Trigger stepped down from the dock.

They say that Goodie expected seven years and was relieved to get five; that Rustem expected three and was annoyed to get the same sentence as his confederate.

"The truth is," he said, speaking from the darkness of the motor police van that carried them to Wandsworth Prison, "we're extraordinarily lucky not to be standing on the drop, as Stoofer will. You are, anyway. Five years . . ." Goodie heard him sigh.

Then, in a brighter tone, Rustem said: "If we get the usual reduction of sentence for good behaviour we shall be out in time for Ascot."

The warder in charge listened with grim amusement. It was a time when prisoners might talk.

"That girl Gray, now—she married Luke on the day we were sentenced. I call that indecent."

THE END

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