NEDL TRANSFER
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THE MIDNIGHT GUEST

BY FRED M. WHITE

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an enemy, who is prepared to run the risk of being hanged for killing him? And why does he want to go round to his studio at such an hour in the morning?"

"I thought of all that," Venables said grimly. "Depend upon it, your unfortunate friend had some secret chapters in his life of which the world will probably never know anything. But what has all this got to do with fellow Stevens?"

"I was just coming to that point. If I had been the coroner I should have asked Stevens a great many more questions this morning. As it was, the authorities seemed content to let him go after he had given evidence to the effect that he had seen Mrs. Delahay with her husband. He told the court that he had been prowling and spying about Fitzjohn Square for some months, and he gave a pretty plain hint to the effect that he could tell a story or two about some of the inhabitants there. Now, for six months or more before Delahay went to Florence to be married, he lived a bachelor life at this house; and all this time Stevens was prowling about the neighbourhood after dark. It is not a very pleasant thing to have to do, but I should like to talk the matter over with Stevens and see if he can give us any information as regards Delahay. If you will telephone to Scotland Yard and get them to give you Stevens' address, we will go round to his rooms and interview him at once."

It was no difficult matter to get the address in question, and presently the two friends reached the shabby house in the dingy street where Stevens lived. An exceedingly dirty child informed the visitors that Mr. Stevens was out at present, but that he always left his

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whereabouts behind him in case he might be required professionally. At the present moment, the precocious child informed the strangers, Mr. Stevens could be found at the Imperial Palace Theatre in Vauxhall Bridge Road.

"That is a bit of a coincidence," Venables remarked. "However, we can't do better than go down to the theatre."

There was some little trouble in finding Stevens, and the performance was nearly at an end before he was pointed out to Walter by one of the attendants. He appeared to be none too sober, judging by his flushed face and somewhat unsteady gait; though, since the morning, his wardrobe had undergone a decided change for the better. The greasy, seedy frock-coat had vanished. Also the dilapitated silk hat. In fact the man looked quite prosperous.

"I would suggest that we don't speak to him in here," Venables said. "Let us follow him out into the road."

Walter fell in at once with the idea. In the road Stevens paused as if waiting for somebody, and presently from the stage door there appeared the slim, graceful figure of Valdo. For some moments the two men stood in earnest conversation together, and from their attitude it was plainly evident that they were in hot dispute upon some point. The discussion lasted some little time. Then with a shrug of his shoulders, Valdo put his hand in his pocket and passed a coin or two over to his companion. Stevens was understood to say something to the effect that that would suffice for the present. Then he lounged off down the road and paused presently before a public-house which glittered invitingly opposite.

"Catch him before he goes in there," Venables whis-

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