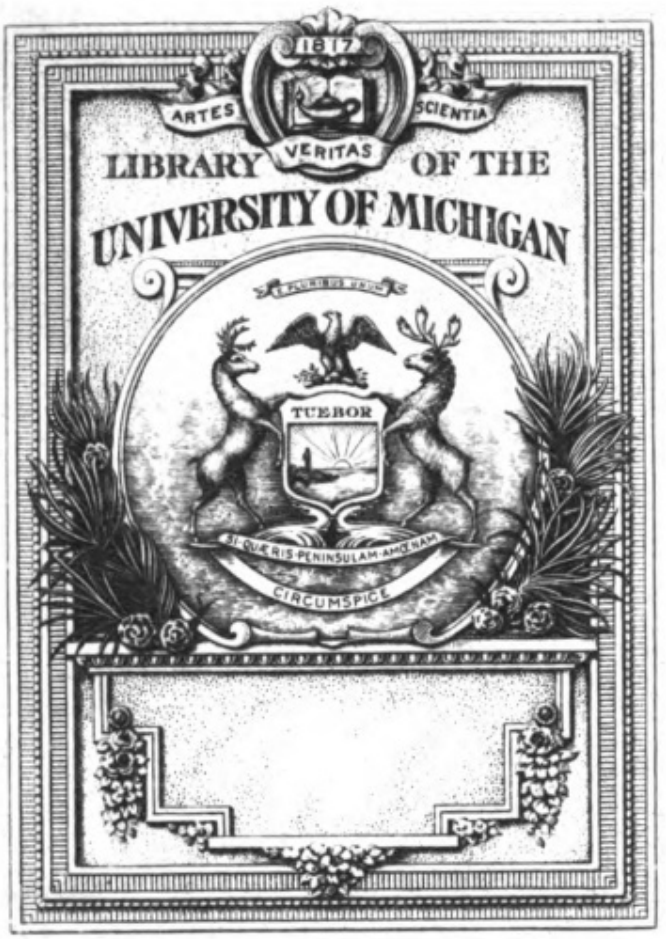
A 511138

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



THE GIFT OF
Edward Barrett

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

828
F62 v.6
1924

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

NOVELS BY

J. S. FLETCHER

The Great Brighton Mystery
The Bedford Row Mystery
The Lost Mr. Linthwaite
The Valley of Headstrong Men
Exterior to the Evidence
The Root of all Evil
The Heaven Kissed Hill
The Copper Box
The Secret of the Barbican
and other stories

HODDER AND
STOUGHTON
Ltd., London

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

THE SECRET OF THE BARBICAN

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

J. S. FLETCHER

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED LONDON

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Made and Printed in Great Britain by C. Tinling & Co., Ltd.
Liverpool, London, and Prescot.

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Contents

PAGE

I

AGAINST TIME 7

II

THE EARL, THE WARDER AND THE WAYWARD HEIRESS 28

III

THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY CROZIER . . . 55

IV

THE YELLOW DOG 75

V

ROOM 53 94

VI

THE SECRET OF THE BARBICAN 111

VII

THE SILHOUETTE 135

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

PAGE

VIII

BLIND GAP MOOR 153

IX

ST. MORKIL'S ISLE 169

X

EXTRA-JUDICIAL 191

XI

THE SECOND CAPSULE 215

XII

THE WAY TO JERICHO 231

XIII

PATENT NO. 33 252

XIV

THE SELCHESTER MISSAL 275

XV

THE MURDER IN THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR . 294

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

AT five minutes to one o'clock on that spring Saturday afternoon, Ledbitter, senior clerk at Watson & Metcalfe's, contractors, of Walford, had no other idea in his mind than that of joy that the week-end interval was near at hand. He was a hard-working, cheerfully energetic young man, who never shirked his job from Monday to Saturday—but he was always thankful when Saturday arrived. Saturday meant so much. Ledbitter was a husband of three years' standing, and there was a youthful Ledbitter at home, who was just beginning to walk and talk. On Saturday afternoons Ledbitter took him out in the Park, guiding his tottering steps, and conversing with him about the ducks and wild-fowl on the ponds. Moreover, Saturday heralded Sunday. On Sunday you could stay in bed an hour longer and eat all your meals without hurrying; on Sunday Mr. and Mrs. Ledbitter took the rising hope to see his grandparents. Oh, yes, Saturday and Sunday were oases in the desert of labour—splendid days of rest and leisure. No fear, said Ledbitter, of a man like himself failing to appreciate them. Three minutes more, and the clock would strike one, and he would be free to race home, and——

Sharman, the manager, came across to Ledbitter's desk as the clerk was locking it up.

"You posted that tender of Steel & Cardyke's all right yesterday?" he asked.

"Yesterday, yes!" answered Ledbitter. "Last night it was."

"Registered it, of course?" said Sharman.

"Yes, it was registered," replied Ledbitter.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Sharman took up a book that lay on the desk and turned it over.

"I don't see the receipt," he remarked. "Haven't you pasted it up?"

"It's in another waistcoat pocket at home," answered Ledbitter. "I'll bring it Monday."

"Don't forget," said Sharman. "You should always paste these receipts up at once. It's all we've got to show the governors that a tender's been sent."

He turned away to his own desk, and Ledbitter said good-morning and hurried out. He was glad to get out, glad that Sharman had not kept him talking—had not looked at him. For in the very act of telling Sharman that he had posted the tender to London, and that the receipt for it was at home, Ledbitter suddenly remembered that he had neither posted it nor had any receipt for it, and he went away from the office curiously afraid.

Ledbitter was one of those wise young men who know when they have got a good job, and who would rather do anything than lose it. He had been with Watson & Metcalfe seven years, and his salary was four pounds per week, and it was steadily increasing. He was a good servant, and he had good masters, and up to now he never remembered making a mistake since he picked up a pen in Watson & Metcalfe's service. But here was a bad one. He had forgotten to post a tender which involved a sum of half a million of money! It was no formidable document in appearance, to be sure. The tender, a mere matter of round figures, was written—by Watson himself—on an ordinary sheet of office notepaper and enclosed in an ordinary office envelope, sealed and blue pencilled.

If it had only been a big, heavy document, Ledbitter would never have forgotten it. But, being as small as it was, he had slipped it within an inside pocket of a winter waistcoat which he was wearing on the previous morning, intending to register it when he went home

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

to dinner—and it had escaped his memory. How he could have been so forgetful he could not think. But he did remember that on going home he had found that winter waistcoat becoming much too warm, and had changed it for a lighter one. Of course, the tender was safe enough—he would hurry home and get it off. And, after all, it would be in time. The tenders which Steel & Cardyke were inviting had to be delivered, by post or by hand, at their office in London by four o'clock on the following Monday. Heaps of time—if he got the tender off at once, as he would take care to do. The only thing he was afraid of was that Sharman, if he inspected the post-office receipt, might notice that the letter had not been handed in on Friday, but on Saturday. However, Sharman would be satisfied, most likely, to hear that the receipt had been pasted up in the book kept for that purpose, and would not even glance at it. And the great thing was to get the tender off so that it would be in London first thing on Monday morning.

Ledbitter lived in a small bandbox of a house, just outside the centre of the town. There was a pleasant odour of beefsteak and onions in the hall when he opened the door, and his wife, on hearing his step, immediately called to him that dinner was ready.

But Ledbitter self-denyingly shouted an entreaty for delay, and darted up the stairs to his bedroom. He dashed at a wardrobe wherein he kept his garments, and a moment later began to yell over the top of the staircase :

"Fanny, where's that winter waistcoat of mine?" he vociferated. "Where's it got to? You know, the one I took off yesterday noon when I came home to dinner."

Mrs. Ledbitter looked out of the back-parlour door.

"Bless me, Herbert," she exclaimed, "you must be losing your memory! Don't you remember that you told me a fortnight ago, that you'd about done

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

with that old waistcoat, and that when you left it off this spring I could sell it with a lot of other old clothes of yours? I sold a whole bundle of stuff yesterday afternoon. And, by the by——"

Ledbitter let out a groan that seemed to shake the house. He made two leaps down the stairs. His wife opened her lips to scream, but the scream died as she caught a full sight of his white face.

"You—you sold it!" he stammered hoarsely. "Good heavens! To whom?"

"Milson's, of course!" answered Mrs. Ledbitter. "But, as I was saying——"

Ledbitter was already at the door. He was quite deaf and half blind as he dashed at the gate of the little garden and darted into the street. His wife's cry might as well have been addressed to the paving-stones.

"Herbert, Herbert, come back! I say, Herbert!" she called after him. "If you're wanting——"

But Ledbitter was utterly obsessed by one idea, and he ran madly away towards the town.

Milson was well known in Walford. He dealt—extensively—in second-hand clothing. He would buy every and any article, no matter what its age and condition. He gave good prices for what he bought. That was one side of his business. The other was his selling side. It was a mystery to the curious what Milson did with the cast-off garments that he purchased. But there was this fact, that he had always in stock an enormous quantity of second-hand clothes, at ridiculously cheap figures, which looked almost as good as new. Cast-off garments went into one department at Milson's, passed through some extraordinary transformation in another, and emerged in a third looking quite spick and span, carefully cleaned and pressed, and ticketed at prices which encouraged purchasers to buy half a dozen suits at once.

Ledbitter dashed into Milson's main shop and ran

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

up against Milson himself—a little podgy man with a goatee beard and a large cable chain of heavy gold across his ample girth. He buttonholed him without ceremony, and made an effort to get his breath.

"You bought some cast-off clothes from my wife yesterday!" he gasped. "Mrs. Ledbitter, Acacia Terrace—you know."

"Quite right, my boy," answered Milson affably. "Price quite satisfactory, I hope?"

"Hang the price!" said Ledbitter. "I want a certain winter waistcoat that was amongst those things—a dark red ground with black spots in it, flannel-lined. Must have it. She shouldn't have sold it."

"Very sorry, my boy, but it's impossible," replied the second-hand clothes dealer, rubbing his beringed hands. "Odd, now, but I sold that there waistcoat as soon as I'd bought it. I put your wife's little lot down on that very counter to sort 'em out when I came in from calling on her, and just then there was a feller walked in as took a fancy to that waistcoat, and bought it straight off—with other warm things what he'd come special for. He was a feller, my boy, as was just going to emigrate, d'ye see, to Canada."

"Canada!" exclaimed Ledbitter. "Is—is he off?"

Milson removed a large cigar from the corner of his lips and waved it in the air expansively.

"I should say he might by now, my boy," he answered. "It runs in my mind that he said he was going to-day. He was a feller, d'ye see, that was going what they call going prospecting, in the old regions of ice and snow, where the bitter winds do blow, my boy, and he thought it 'ud be a good notion to take a nice bundle of warm stuff out with him. Which," concluded Milson, digging his hands into his pockets and rattling his money—"which, my boy, I sold him with pleasure. And with profit—mutual, of course."

Ledbitter had grown deadly calm. For the first

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

time in his life he began to know what book-writing folk mean when they talk about the calmness of despair.

"You don't know where this man lived in Walford ?" he asked.

"You're wrong, my boy, for I do ! " replied Milson. "Or I should say did, for, as I observed previous, I should think he's gone. He was a navvy feller, d'ye see, and his name was Terry, and his address was Barcoe's lodging-house, round the corner in Mill Street. I sent him his parcel there last night. And what might you be wanting that particular waistcoat for, Mr. Ledbitter, now ? Because——"

But Ledbitter was out of the door and running across the road towards Mill Street. That was a narrow alley in the poorest quarter of the town, and it was celebrated for its registered lodging-houses. Ledbitter looked for Barcoe's as he might have looked for something of inexpressible value. He caught sight of the name at last, in white letters on a black board, and he dashed through a group of men, sitting on the door-steps, into a white-washed passage, to find himself confronting the deputy, a big, bullying-looking fellow who scowled at him as if he took him for an unwelcome visitor.

"Now, then, mister ? " demanded this person.

"Have you got a man named Terry here ? " panted Ledbitter. "He was here yesterday, I know. Milson, the clothes-dealer, says he was here. I want him—at once."

"Do yer ? " sneered the deputy. "Don't you wish yer may get him, then ! He's off, mister."

"Where ? " demanded Ledbitter.

"Canada," retorted the deputy. "That's where he's gone. 'Taint exactly next door, neither."

"But—which way ? " entreated Ledbitter. "Where—you know what I mean—what place is he sailing from ? "

The deputy folded his enormous arms, bared to the

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

shoulders, and scratched his elbows. He sized Ledbitter up.

"What do you want to know for?" he growled. "I ain't going to give my customers' private business away to no strangers. You ain't a 'tec.—I knows that, but you might be a lawyer's clerk by the look of yer."

Ledbitter rose to the occasion—gladly.

"That's it!" he exclaimed. "We want this Terry—something to his advantage—bit of money, you know. If I can catch him before he sails, eh?"

He slipped a half-crown into the deputy's hand, and the deputy relaxed.

"Oh, if that's it, mister!" he said. "Well, he went off to Liverpool this morning—him and a mate of his name of Scaby. They expected to sail late to-night or early to-morrow, didn't know which, so they went in good time. On the Starnatic they was going, so I heard 'em say—steerage, ov course. You ain't ever seen this Terry? Big, red-haired chap—"

But Ledbitter was off again. He leapt through the idlers at the door, ran down the street, and made for the Central Station. As he ran three names beat themselves on his aching brain like unappeasable steam-hammers: Terry—Liverpool—Starnatic! Starnatic — Liverpool — Terry! Liverpool—Terry—Starnatic! Everything else in the world was blotted out. He had no home, no wife, no baby, no nothing! He never would have anything until he seized that infernal letter.

He dashed into the booking-office of the big station and clapped a sovereign on the ledge of the ticket window, hoarsely demanding to be booked to Liverpool.

"How—how soon is there a train?" he faltered. "Soon?"

The clerk turned an unconcerned eye at the clock.

"If you do double time up No. 6," he answered, as he pushed ticket and change across the ledge, "you'll just catch or just miss one."

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Ledbitter ran. He was dimly aware of colliding with various moving bodies in his progress. Some of them were soft and yielding, and they cried out. Some were hard, and they hurt him. Then a guard used severe language, and threw him into some receptacle, where he fell into a corner. Presently he looked up, and found himself in an otherwise empty carriage. The train was moving. Outside its windows he caught a glimpse of the big dome of Walford Town Hall. It slid away. So did the spire of the parish church. So did the roofs and chimneys of the last outskirts of Walford. Then Leadbitter realised matters, and he put his throbbing head in his hands and groaned heavily.

Against Time — *Part II*

LEDBITTER'S first proceeding, on recovering his breath, was to form an accurate idea of where he was and what he was after. That took rather more time than might be thought. He got a clear conception at last. He was at the beginning of a hundred mile run between Walford and Liverpool. It would take nearly three hours; he would reach Liverpool, then, by say, five o'clock. Once there, he had to find a ship called the Starnatic. She would probably have a few hundred passengers on her books—he had to find a man named Terry, a steerage passenger. There might be a score of Terrys. Also, by the time he found the Starnatic, or, rather, got to hear of her, she might have sailed. In that case, he, Ledbitter, was ruined for life, and might as well drown himself in the Mersey. But the deputy had said, "Late to-night or early in the morning." There was hope—much hope. Let him hope—and meanwhile he counted his money.

Ledbitter realized that money would be an immense factor in the successful prosecution of this enforced campaign against fate; he did not know where he

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

might not have to go before he recovered that letter. So he turned out his purse. He had had seven shillings in it when he went to the office that morning, and to that he had added his week's salary—four pounds. He had given the lodging-house man half-a-crown, and paid eight shillings and ninepence for his ticket to Liverpool. So he had three pounds fifteen shillings and ninepence on him. He could do a lot on that. And then he suddenly remembered that he had left his wife without anything. Instead of handing over the usual house-keeping money to her—his invariable proceeding on Saturdays—he had rushed away after that beastly waistcoat. Well, it was no great matter. She would be all right, perfectly all right—she had money in a box. But he realised that he must send her a wire as soon as he reached his journey's end.

Ledbitter by this time was enormously hungry. He had had nothing to eat since eight o'clock that morning. Now that he had nothing to do but sit still and be carried on to events at which he could only guess, his hunger asserted itself to the exclusion of all other feelings. He began to wonder if the train—an express—would run right through. Some trains, he knew, did make a non-stop run between Walford and Liverpool. But fortunately the train did stop—for a few minutes—at Manchester, and he ran to the nearest refreshment room, swallowed a glass of ale, and grabbed a bag of sandwiches. And as the train moved off again Ledbitter satisfied his hunger in some degree and concocted the necessary telegram.

That telegram, Ledbitter decided, must be sent as soon as he set foot on the Liverpool platform. He foresaw that he might not be able to present himself at the office first thing on Monday morning. His notion was that if he recovered the tender that night, or on Sunday, he would make sure of its delivery by taking it to London himself. His money would just enable him to do that. But until he could assure his

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

employers that he had repaired his failure to post the tender, and that it had been duly handed in, he did not want them to know what was happening. Therefore, he must wire careful instructions to his wife.

The train ran into the Exchange Station on time—5.15—and Ledbitter immediately made his way to the telegraph office. And after further cogitation he got off the longest private message he had ever sent in his life:

"After waistcoat. If not home by breakfast-time Monday morning, send excuse to firm. Say suddenly called away, family affliction. No account mention where I am nor what after. Love.

"Herbert."

That, with the address, came to thirty-six words, and cost Ledbitter one and ninepence. He picked up the coppers which remained out of a two-shilling piece, and went forth from the big station—a compound of misery and hope. The active part of his quest had begun.

Ledbitter had never been in Liverpool before. He had never had occasion to think of Liverpool, or to formulate any idea of it. He was troubled to find it was such a big place. Nevertheless, he kept his wits. And, picking out a man who looked like a seafaring person, he asked him if he could tell him where he would be likely to find a ship called the Starnatic.

"Starnatic!" said the man. "That'll be the North Canada Line. Go down Water Street, and you'll see their office—big place; you can't miss it."

He obligingly showed the way to Water Street, and Ledbitter set forward. And presently he found himself in a palatial building amid much plate glass and mahogany counter, and he began to realize that a shipping office in these days is something more than a mere shed on a quay-side.

A clerk came forward to attend to Ledbitter's

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

requirements, and Ledbitter, having been a clerk himself ever since he left school, and seeing good-humour in this fellow-clerk's face unburdened himself—fully. He told of his unaccountable lapse of memory, of what it meant to him to recover that letter and its important enclosure—told it all. And the shipping clerk comprehended, and smiled, and sympathized—and shook his head.

"You've a nice job on, old man!" he said, with evident fellow-feeling. "There are five or six hundred emigrants going out on that boat. Like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay!"

"But I know the man's name!" said Ledbitter.

"Pooh!" answered the clerk. "Names! Some of 'em are Smiths when they leave home and Brown by the time they strike Liverpool. And if you boarded the Starnatic and the word was passed for Terry, ten to one Terry wouldn't respond—he'd think he was wanted. See?"

"What's to be done?" asked Ledbitter miserably.

"The Starnatic," answered the clerk, who was obviously anxious to assist, "is in the river. She's lying off the landing-stage—black funnels with green bands. She won't go out before one o'clock Sunday afternoon—probably about twelve-thirty, as a matter of fact. You can board her this evening, if you like. But I don't think that'll be much good, you know."

"For heaven's sake, why?" demanded Ledbitter. "I understand the man's going to sail on her."

The clerk shrugged his shoulders.

"Ay, just so," he answered. "And, like many or most of 'em, he'll join her at the last minute! If they like, these emigrants can sleep on board to-night. Some of 'em will—they'll be the lot that have no money to waste on shore. But most of 'em'll have a last night of it in old England, and they'll be scrambling aboard up to the very last second. Some, of course, never will get aboard. See?"

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Ledbitter saw——and groaned. He had never anticipated this awful possibility.

"What's to be done?" he asked again. "I thought I should have nothing to do but walk on to the ship, ask for this man, and——"

"No doubt, but you thought wrong," said the clerk. "Well, I'll tell you what you must do. I'll give you a line to the purser. You board the boat pretty late to-night, and tell the purser all you've told me. If the man's aboard then, he'll find him. If not, go back at noon to-morrow. I tell you this man you want mayn't board the Starnatic till last thing!"

Ledbitter thanked his informant gratefully, took the note he gave him, and went away. It was scarcely six o'clock, and he had nothing to do for hours. He wandered about. He went down to the landing stage and picked out the Starnatic by her black funnel and green bands. He turned into a cheap restaurant, and fed himself—cheaply. All the evening he hung about the landing-stage, examining every likely-looking face, to see if he could recognise the description of Terry. And at ten o'clock he hired a boat and was rowed across to the ship. It had begun to rain; it was very cold—Ledbitter had no overcoat; he was thoroughly miserable.

The purser, a fat man, who was drinking rum in his cabin, asked Ledbitter if he and the writer of the letter thought he was going to spend the whole night and all Sunday forenoon asking the names of every Tom, Dick, and Harry who was then in or would come into the steerage. But, when Ledbitter had pressed half a sovereign into his palm and had told his woeful story, the purser relented. He treated his shivering visitor to a glass of good Jamaica, and told him that he would give him the best of advice. Let him go ashore and get a bed and a good night's sleep. Let him come aboard at precisely twelve o'clock next day. By that time he—the purser—would have ascertained

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

if Terry was aboard ; if not, Ledbitter could watch the gangway and scrutinize every arrival until the Starnatic tooted a farewell to the Mersey.

Ledbitter had no option but to do as he was told. He went ashore again. He got a cheap bed at a riverside inn ; he indulged in more Jamaica before retiring, but his spirits were very low when he sought his couch. He was doubtful, anxious, miserable. And all night the steamers in the river hooted and whistled, and kept him awake. When he did sleep a little, in the early morning, it was to dream that the Starnatic had escaped him, that she was steaming at fifty knots an hour down the Mersey, and that a big, red-haired man was standing in the stern, waving a waistcoat at him with shouts of derisive laughter.

The riverside inn folk, cheap as they were, gave Ledbitter a good, solid breakfast that Sunday morning. It cheered him up. He went out into a beautiful sunshiny day and felt mightily encouraged. And from half-past nine until half-past eleven he haunted the landing-stage, watching.

He saw various boatloads put off to the Starnatic, but he saw no big, red-haired man. And at twenty minutes to twelve he himself bargained with a boatman, and went off on his forlorn hope.

The purser shook his head at Ledbitter.

" There ain't no such man on board—yet," he said. " I've seen to it myself. Now I'll put you in touch with every steerage passenger that sets foot on our decks from this out—and I can't do more ! "

He stationed Ledbitter at a certain railed-in place near the gangway, and left him. And Ledbitter, whose heart was beating as fiercely as the engines were about to beat, watched and watched. Scores of men and women came from tenders and tugs and boats —had to pass him—and not a man had red hair !

The purser came along, too, and whispered :

" We're off in ten minutes ! " he said. " You'll have

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

to go presently. If he isn't here with this last lot——"

Just then Ledbitter was aware of a big, Milesian-looking, roughly-dressed fellow, who came swaggering and smiling along the deck, one big bundle under his arm, another slung over his shoulder. His hair was—but red was a modest term to apply to it.

Ledbitter seized his man with the grip of despair.

"You're name's Terry!" he exclaimed. "You're from Walford?"

The fiery-haired one looked down from his six-foot three with all the ease of conscious innocence.

"And phwat's if that's me name, misther?" he asked gaily. "Ye have it very pat on yer tongue, I'm thinkin'!"

"You bought a waistcoat from Milson on Friday," said Ledbitter hurriedly, but with extraordinary clearness. "A dark red ground with black spots. My wife sold it to Milson. There's a letter in it—of importance. I've followed you to get that letter. Have you found it—have you got it? Get the waistcoat out of your bundles. I'll give you half a sovereign for that letter!"

The red-haired giant dropped his bundles and scratched his head.

"I'd give ye the letther for nothing, misther, if I had it!" he exclaimed. "But I never seen it, and I haven't the weskut. 'Twas this way, d'ye see," he went on, as Ledbitter almost fainted. "When I got here to Liverpool yisterda' afthernoon, I overhauled me kit. And some of it I sold to a fellow at the lodgin' house, and the weskut among the rest. Shure, it was too small! So—I haven't it!"

"What lodging-house? What fellow?" gasped Ledbitter. "Quick!"

"Brannigan's Lodgin'-House, Orange Court," said Terry. "But the feller's name—ah, I niver heard no name of him! A little weeshy feller——"

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Now, then, come on, you!" bawled a man in Ledbitter's ear. "All ashore! We're off!"

"With a bad squint in one eye of him, misther!" shouted Terry, as Ledbitter was forced down the gangway. "Ye'd easy find him by the squint he has on him. Good luck to ye, misther!"

When Ledbitter became fully alive again, he was on the landing-stage once more. He glanced across the river—the Starnatic had already gone half a mile on her way towards Canada. And Ledbitter was still on his way in search of the waistcoat. But which way now? He turned towards the city muttering.

"Brannigan's Lodging-House, Orange Court," he repeated over and over again. "A little weeshy feller with a bad squint on him! Great Scott!"

Against Time — *Part III*

LEDBITTER strolled along, almost aimlessly, sick at heart, until, on the wide, open space beyond the landing-stage, he ran up against a policeman. That gave him an idea.

"Can you tell me where Orange Court is?" he asked.

The policeman immediately pointed along the road which flanked the line of docks.

"Third to your right, second to the left o' that," he answered. "Nice place, too!"

"Dangerous?" asked Ledbitter, almost indifferently.

"Roughish part down there," said the policeman. "What might you be wanting, now, if it's a fair question?"

Ledbitter was so hungry for human sympathy that he gave this casual acquaintance a brief account of his trouble. The policeman whistled.

"Nice job!" he remarked. "Well, you might find this man. And, again, you mightn't. Some of 'em's there for a night, and then the world swallows 'em up

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

again. Come and go, d'ye see, in a manner of speaking. But I'll give you a tip: Don't you go pulling your money out inside Brannigan's. If you find this man get him to walk up into the main road there with you. Don't let him see what you've got about you—in Brannigan's at any rate."

Ledbitter thanked his informant and went off in the direction indicated. He was presently plunged into a network of unsavoury courts and alleys, and when he eventually found Brannigan's he felt uncommonly timid about crossing its threshold. But a man who stood at the door in his shirt sleeves, smoking his pipe and reading the Sunday newspaper, eyed him as with authority.

"Wanting somebody in here, Mister?" he demanded cautiously. "You ain't a police chap, I know, 'cause yer wouldn't be alone if you were. What's your game? Scripcher reader? Mission'ry?"

"Are you the lodging-house keeper?" asked Ledbitter.

"That's me, guv'nor" admitted the man. "And I asks again—what might you be?"

Ledbitter thought it best to be candid. He told his story, carefully insisting on the fact that the letter contained nothing of any value, not even a postal-order. But—"was that man there?"

The lodging-house keeper pocketed Ledbitter's half-crown, and nodded.

"Shifty!" he said. "That's the bloke! Shifty so called 'cause he squints. Don't know no other name for him. He's here now, asleep. Make it another half-dollar, guv'nor, and I'll have him out to you in a jiffy!"

Ledbitter parted with a further two-and-sixpence, and waited on the flags outside the lodging-house. And presently there emerged a little, suspicious, furtive-eyed rat of a man, who looked his visitor well over from top to toe before he drew near him. Ledbitter had to reassure him at some yards distance before he

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

would approach. It was for all the world like coaxing a wild animal who fears a trap.

But eventually he persuaded the man to walk up the court with him, and to convince him that all he wanted was the waistcoat which he had bought from the red-haired stranger the day before. And then, for the second time that morning Ledbitter nearly fainted when Shifty replied that he hadn't got the much-desired garment.

Ledbitter stood like a statue of despair while Shifty explained matters. He, Shifty, had been in funds when Terry was overhauling his kit and offering some of its contents for sale, and he had bought a few articles, the waistcoat amongst them. But later he and some of his mates had got playing pitch-and-toss, and he had lost his money. Therefore to see him over the Sunday, he had bundled up his purchases, repaired to the pawnbroker's, and raised four bob on them.

Accordingly, the waistcoat was now at Mr. Mordecai Aaron's establishment round the second corner.

"Which, guv'nor, is a safe place," concluded Shifty. "So your bit of a letter can't come to no harm. Only"—here he paused and regarded his interviewer with a squint of extraordinary strength—"pawnbrokers isn't open on Sundays. And I'm off Wigan way to-night. Got a job there at six to-morrow morning."

"I must have that waistcoat?" said Ledbitter firmly. "Can't you stop?"

"There's a way, guv'nor," interrupted Shifty, squinting more than ever. "I can't stop, nohow. But you buys that pawn-ticket off of me! See? Then to-morrow morning you goes and takes them things out o' pawn, and you gets your letter. How's that guv'nor?"

Supplementing this, Shifty put his hand somewhere inside his clothing and drew out a pawn-ticket. He held it before Ledbitter's eyes, pointing to various items.

"Pair o' cloth trousers," he said, "weskit—that's

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

your'n, guv'nor—knitted cardigan—three on 'em. Pawned for four bob. Now, as yer p'r'aps don't know, guv'nor, a pawnbroker never lends more nor one-fourth the vally of a article. Accordingly, them things is worth sixteen bob. Then, of course, there's my loss of 'em. I should ha' took 'em out next time I was in Liverpool. So make it a quid, guv'nor, and the ticket's yours."

Ledbitter had to give way. He extracted a sovereign from his decreasing store, took the pawn-ticket and hurried off to more salubrious regions. And when he reached a respectable street he turned into the first respectable tavern he saw, and spent fourpence on a bottle of ale, with intense joy. He would get it first thing Monday morning; he would catch the next train to London with it.

At this point he suddenly thought of his financial resources, and he sat down in the corner of the saloon bar into which he had wandered, and with a bit of pencil and a scrap of paper did a little reckoning. He had set out from home with £4 7s. Up to that moment, what with various expenses—boatmen, the tips to the purser and to the lodging-house keeper, and the sovereign paid for the pawn-ticket—he had laid out £2 15s.; he had accordingly had £1 12s. left. Out of that he had to find himself in food and lodgings until next morning; there would be four shillings and a copper or two to pay at the pawnbroker's; he would have to reserve at least a sovereign for his fare to London. So it came to this—he had about four shillings whereon to live, to eat, drink, sleep until next day. Of course he could do it—he would have to do it—he must do it. Only let him get that letter; only let him get to London and to Steel and Cardyke's office, there, by four o'clock on Monday afternoon, and all would be well. As to getting home again from London to Walford—well, he would trust to luck. Nothing mattered but the handing in of the tender by the specified time.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

That was the most miserable Sunday Ledbitter had ever spent in his life. The sea air blowing off the Irish Channel made him hungry, and he dared not eat—at least to satisfaction. He lunched off bread and cheese and beer; he spent the afternoon wandering about Liverpool. He indulged in a meat tea in a cheap restaurant when evening came. He wandered about again, and went supperless to bed in a place where you could stop the night for a shilling. He had another sleepless night. Next morning he breakfasted at a coffee-stall for threepence. And at nine o'clock he was at Mordecai Aaron's establishment, and by five minutes past had explained matters, produced the pawn-ticket, and put down the necessary principal and interest. Two minutes later the much-desired waistcoat was in his hands. Trembling with excitement, he plunged his fingers into the inner pocket.

Empty!

"Th'elp me if I thought ath how you'd find anythink, mithter," said the Jew youth to whom Ledbitter had explained matters. "Afther pathing through all them handth wathn't likely ath how you would find it, wath it, now?"

Ledbitter made certain. Then he flung the redeemed articles down and turned on his heel.

"Wath to be done with theeth, mithter?" asked the Jew youth.

But Ledbitter walked out without answering, and he had gone a good mile away from that shop before he realized that he had really left it. Then he suddenly woke up from his abstraction and saw that he was at the Exchange Station.

It was all over now. Of course he was ruined. The firm would sack him at once. He would never get another job. He and his wife and the kid would all have to go the poor-house. All right. It was fate. No, it was his own confounded carelessness. No, something had gone wrong with his beastly head. No, it

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

was—he did not know what it was. But it had happened. It was all over. He was down—deep, deep, deep down—and out.

And suddenly he realized that there would be no going to London and that the sovereign which he had reserved for that purpose was in his pocket. He realized something else, too ; he was ravenously hungry. And the fare home to Walford was only eight-and-nine.

Without a word he walked into the station restaurant. Magnificent in his acceptance of defeat, he ordered a waiter to bring him two boiled eggs and a couple of thick mutton chops. Then he picked up a newspaper, and for an hour ate and drank and trifled with the news. There was an account in the newspaper of the execution of a criminal—the unfortunate man, it said, ate a hearty breakfast before walking to his doom. Ledbitter understood him.

He felt better after that breakfast, but he had to go home. And after trifling about a bit, and wondering whether he had better not sneak into Walford at night, he took heart and boarded an express.

At three o'clock that afternoon he quietly walked into his own parlour, and found his wife calmly sewing a new pinafore for the baby.

Mrs. Ledbitter screamed, and threw her arms round him. Ledbitter gently disengaged her, sat down and fixed her with a look.

" Fanny," he said, " we're ruined ! There was a letter in that waistcoat which I'd forgotten to post. I've been to Liverpool after it, and it's—lost. To-morrow morning I shall get the sack. I——"

Mrs. Ledbitter, not to be repressed, threw her arms round him again.

" Herbert ! " she exclaimed. " Oh, if you'd only waited one second when you rushed off ! I called you back, and you wouldn't look round. Milson called you back when you ran away from his shop. He came up to tell me, guessing what you were after, but you

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

wouldn't listen to him. I found the letter when I sold him the things, Friday, and I went out and posted and registered it at once. Here's the receipt. I forgot all about it on Friday and Saturday, too, because of baby's teeth. And you needn't bother at all about the firm. I sent them a note this morning, saying you were in bed with a sick headache."

Ledbitter took the scrap of paper, looked at it to reassure himself, and then lifted his hand and shook his fist. He was about to swear that he would have Milson's blood for not pursuing him to the station, when he suddenly remembered that out of the wreck of his week's money he had bought his wife and the baby a box of chocolates. In that remembrance the recollection of his week-end misery floated into thin air.

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The Ten Thousand Pounds Wager — *Chapter I*

THE Earl of Normanstowe flung away the newspaper which had just been handed to him, and looked defiantly round the semi-circle of faces, all eager and youthful as his own, which surrounded his armchair, set in a corner of the smoking-room which at that, his pet club, was regarded as the peculiar preserve of himself and his set.

"I will lay any man an even ten thousand pounds," he said in calm but forceful accents, "that I walk out of this club to-night and hide myself in London for the space of one month without being found, let whatever efforts to find me be made by whoever likes to make 'em! Who takes me?"

The attendant faces slowly withdrew themselves from the contemplation of Lord Normanstowe's healthy countenance and gave themselves to turning elsewhere. From the lips of one came a deep sigh.

"Wish I'd got ten thousand to lay at that game," said their owner. "I guess I'd ferret you out in less than a month, Normanstowe."

"I repeat that I'll lay any man ten thousand pounds," said Lord Normanstowe. "But—there'll be conditions."

"What conditions?" asked a member of the group. "Stiff 'uns, of course."

"No, easy ones. All I would ask is 16 hours' start. To be plain and matter-of-fact, I'll put it like this: I'll engage to walk out of this room at precisely 8 o'clock this evening and disappear in my own way. Whoever takes my bet engages not to do anything in the way of searching for me until 12 noon to-morrow. That's giving me the 16 hours' start I asked for, isn't it?"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"And when the search begins, is the searcher to have a free hand? Can he do what he pleases? Employ the police, for instance," asked somebody else. "Can he offer a reward? Can he stick up bills, placards?"

"He can do whatever he jolly well likes! He can offer a reward in hundreds or in thousands. He can subsidize all the private detectives, inquiry agents and investigation offices in London. He can get the whole of Scotland Yard at his back if it's possible. All I say is that I'll lay ten thousand to his ten thousand that I disappear at 8 o'clock to-night, and that I'm not found until I walk into this room at 8 o'clock in the evening precisely one month hence."

"And you wouldn't go out of town."

"I wouldn't go out of town."

"What's town to mean?" inquired a dark-visaged young gentleman who sat in a tilted chair in the corner. "Radius of one mile from St. James' Street, say?"

"Rot!" answered Lord Normanstowe. "Radius of five miles from Charing Cross."

"That's a lot of country to cover," remarked the young man in the corner. "There are thick coverts and deep woods within that bit."

"It's London, anyhow," said Normanstowe. "What is it we've been talking about? Here's an account in the newspaper about a chap walking out of a club in Pall Mall and disappearing so effectually that he can't be found. You fellows say it's impossible for any man of note to disappear in London except by collusion and design. I say that's nonsense. I believe I'm pretty well known in more ways than one. Very good. But I say that without any help from anybody I will disappear for the space of a month. That's my conviction. And I'll back it to the extent of ten thousand."

The dark-visaged young gentleman tilted his chair a little more.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I'll take you," he said.

The semblance of a gentle sigh ran round the semi-circle. Normanstowe, phlegmatic as ever, half-turned towards a table furnished with writing materials.

"Good!" he said. "We'll put it down in formal fashion. Chisholm, how did they do these things in the days of our grandfathers?"

"In the days of our grandfathers," replied the man addressed, who was also the eldest of the group, "they kept a book in these places and entered up individual bets. As we don't possess such an iniquitous thing here, we must make a half-sheet of the club notepaper suffice."

He reached over to the table, and took paper and pen and laid a blotting pad on his knee.

"I'll write it down," he said. "I think I remember the phrasing of the old-time wagers. This is about it." And he read slowly, as he wrote:

"'Lord Normanstowe bets Sir Charles Wrigge ten thousand pounds that he, Lord Normanstowe, walks out of the Melatherium Club at 8 o'clock p.m., on October 20, 1904, disappears, and is not found by Sir Charles Wrigge nor by any person Sir Charles Wrigge employs to search for him, before he walks into the club at 8 o'clock p.m. on November 20, 1904. Lord Normanstowe engages not to go out of a radius of five miles from Charing Cross during the time of his disappearance.' How's that?" concluded Chisholm.

"All right, as regards me," replied Normanstowe. "But now for Wrigge."

"Oh, that's similarly worded, with small differences," said Chisholm, continuing to write, "This is it: 'Sir Charles Wrigge bets Lord Normanstowe ten thousand pounds that he, Sir Charles, or persons employed by him, will find Lord Normanstowe, dead or alive, within the time and under the conditions specified in the bet made by Lord Normanstowe with him. Sir Charles

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Wrigge engages to give Lord Normanstowe 16 hours start dating from 8 o'clock p.m. on October 20, 1904.' Now, if you'll both initial this sheet of paper," concluded Chisholm, "I'll put it in my pocketbook, and the thing's done."

Wrigge laughed as he took and carefully put away his bit of paper.

"I shall find you before a fortnight's up, Normanstowe," he said, confidently.

"I'll lay you another ten thousand you don't," exclaimed Normanstowe, with equal confidence. "Won't have it? All right." He pulled out his watch. "It's 6.30. I'm going to make my preparations. When they are made, I shall dine here, comfortably, quietly. At precisely 8 o'clock I shall walk out of the dining-room and the house and into the street. And you will see me no more for one month."

"During which time all London will ring with your name and fame," remarked Chisholm. "Get your preparations made and we'll all dine together."

Dropped Out — *Chapter II*

LORD NORMANSTOWE'S preparations were of a simple and an elementary character. He went over to a quiet corner and wrote a note to his sister, Lady Tremen-tower, who enjoyed a widespread reputation as being the most gossipy woman in London. It was a brief and a characteristic epistle.

"My dear Gabble: For reasons of my own, I am about to disappear from the world—I mean our world—for the space of one month from to-night. My disappearance will naturally cause much comment. It will also give you something new to talk about. You may expatiate on several hypotheses—that I may have gone into retreat, to meditate on my sins, or be writing

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

an epic poem in a Bloomsbury attic, or have disguised myself as a crossing sweeper in order to study life. The only reason I have for writing this note, is to privately assure you that I shall be quite well and happy, and that I shall reappear to a much-concerned world at 8 o'clock on the evening of November 20 next.

"Your affectionate brother,

CARROTS."

This communication Lord Normanstowe laid aside for posting later in the evening. Meanwhile he proceeded upstairs to a bedroom, which was perpetually reserved for him, and wherein he kept various suits of clothes, changes of linen, and articles of toilet. Before dressing for dinner he looked out a small and well-worn kit-bag and into this he packed an old tweed suit of a nondescript grey which he had carefully preserved from the hands of his valet because it possessed certain sentimental associations. Also he packed in the kit bag a shaving outfit, a pair of brogues and a couple of fairly heavy dumb-bells. Locking up the bag he made his evening toilet. And that accomplished, he went downstairs to take an early dinner.

It was remarked by those who dined with Lord Normanstowe that evening, that his appetite was noticeable. He ate with great gusto; he was particular in selecting a certain burgundy for which the cellar of the Melatherium is justly famous. Yet while he ate and drank with such relish, he was careful to leave himself time to smoke an excellent cigar after dinner. He sighed once or twice as he sniffed its fragrance and sipped his coffee. But at precisely five minutes to 8 o'clock he jumped to his feet with alacrity, threw away the cigar, and left the room. At one minute to eight he reappeared at the door, wearing a dark coat over his evening dress, and carrying the small kit bag. The men who were in the secret, headed by Sir Charles Wrigge and Chisholm, joined him in the hall.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"It seems, somehow," said one, "as if we were about to assist at an execution. You are really off, Normanstowe?"

Normanstowe smiled affectionately upon the group, gripped his kit bag, and, as the hall clock struck eight, walked down the steps into St. James's Street. The men whom he left behind saw him disappear in the shadows. One of them remarked, quite unnecessarily: "He's gone!"

Malicious Damage — *Chapter III*

NORMANSTOWE, carrying his kit bag, walked up the street in leisurely fashion until he reached Piccadilly. At the corner he signalled to the driver of a passing taxicab.

"Take me," said Normanstowe, as he entered, "to Paddington railway station."

The driver observed nothing in his fare's manner or speech that could cause him to hesitate. To him the young earl seemed to be no more than an ordinary young gentleman of the superior classes who might be inclined to put half-a-crown into his hand at the end of the journey, without any unnecessary words or reference to the state of the meter. In this pleasant conjecture the driver proved to be right; when he pulled up at the first-class booking office at Paddington, his fare duly presented him with the coin in question before lounging slowly into the station. A porter standing near suddenly started, and, touching his cap, made for the small kit bag.

"No, thank you, my man," said Normanstowe.

He passed forward, and the rebuffed porter looked at the driver, who was pouching his half-crown before attending to his meter.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Know 'im?" asked the porter.

"Not from Adam," answered the driver.

"Lord Normanstowe, thet is," said the porter with pride. "Hearl of Normanstowe, y'know—'im wot done thet there charge with the Imperial Yeomanry at one of them scraps in the Boe-er war. Know him well 'ere, we do—got a plice dahn the line."

"Oh—that 'im?" said the driver. He pulled out the half-crown and spat on it before returning it to his pocket and moving off. And the porter, looking round, and into the booking office, saw Lord Normanstowe approach the ticket window.

Normanstowe had purposely thrown open his overcoat as he entered the booking office.

The clerk who dispensed first class tickets, and knew him well, recognized him as he demanded a first single for a certain station beyond Newbury, which was in close proximity to Normanstowe Park. He saw him stroll off in the direction of the train—he remembered all this, two days later, when the news of the young peer's unaccountable disappearance began to be noised abroad. It was the opinion of that clerk that his lordship went to join a train which was about to leave for the West of England.

Normanstowe, however, joined no trains. He went out of the booking office by its western exit, lingered a moment at the bookstall, passed along the platform, and going downstairs to the dressing rooms, engaged one, paid for it, and locked himself within its privacy. That done, he set down his bag on the toilet table, and took a careful look at himself.

What Normanstowe saw in the glass was the apparition of a very ordinary type of young man. He had neither grace of figure nor distinction of feature. His hair was inclined—very much inclined—to be red; his face was a homely one; he possessed a snub nose and a wide smile, and his eyes were of that indefinite blue which is commonly associated with people who are

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

called Smith or Robinson. He wore a moustache which was rather lighter in colour than his hair; he also wore small side whiskers—a vulgar habit which he had adopted out of sheer contrariness. And as he looked at himself in the dressing mirror, he grinned with what might have seemed to a beholder (had there been one present) a fatuous and a foolish delight.

"Common!" he murmured. "As common as ever they make 'em! The sort of young man who calls with a note book and a pencil to inspect the gas meter or take orders for the grocer. And the whiskers and moustache—or, rather, the disappearance of them—will make all the difference in the world."

These conclusions led him to divest himself of his dinner jacket, waistcoat, and dress shirt, and to shave his face as clean as that of a schoolboy who has been asked out to dinner. The disappearance of the moustache and the whiskers made him a very inconspicuous person indeed; with them all suggestion of a long line of ancestors seemed to disappear. He grinned again—more fatuously than before. That done, he drew off his trousers, kicked off his elegant boots, and took the old tweed suit, a coloured shirt, and a noncommittal necktie from the kit bag.

In ten minutes Normanstowe, looking at the results of his labours in the mirror, saw the reflection of a good, typical specimen of the very ordinary young man. He had kept his eyes open in his journey through his twenty-eight years of life, and he knew that you could meet just such a young man as he now looked to be by the thousand; you passed them in the streets, you saw them in the pits of the theatres, they were massed together in the shilling enclosures of the football fields; they huddled against the railings on the race-courses. He grinned again with increased delight.

"A very ordinary type indeed!" he said. "Excellent!"

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Then, with a last glance at himself, he turned to the garments which he had discarded. He packed every one of them into the kit bag. There was money in the pockets of the trousers—gold, silver and copper. He took it in his hand and gazed thoughtfully at it. In the end he selected a shilling, a sixpence, four pennies and a halfpenny, and put them in the watch pocket of his vest ; the rest of the money he restored to his dress clothes. Then he packed up the shaving outfit and the discarded white shirt and tie ; finally he crammed the overcoat and the two dumb-bells into the kit bag, which he proceeded to lock. He glanced around him ; no, he had not overlooked anything. Normanstowe's idea had been to walk out of Paddington Station to the canal which runs at the side of it and to drop his weighted bag into that part of the dismal waterway which is spanned by a bridge at the end of Warwick Avenue. He had once or twice been up that way, seeing home a sprightly lady who was associated with musical comedy, and who lived in that neighbourhood, and it had struck him as being a likely spot for getting rid of his present encumbrances. But, upon reflection, he thought that he might go one better—he would deposit his bag at the cloak room. They had a trick, these fellows, he said to himself, of dragging canals for dead bodies, and though the kit bag had neither name nor initials upon it, he knew that its contents would speedily be recognized. But it would remain in the cloak room, comfortably lost, for a long time.

Through sheer habit Normanstowe pulled out his watch. At the sight of it he whistled, not from any surprise in connection with the time, but because he suddenly recognized his own stupidity. Go where he meant to go with a valuable watch on which his initials and crest were enamelled ! That would never do ! He hastily took it off, and, unlocking the bag once more, put the watch safely inside. Then he

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

remembered that the sleeve links in the cuffs of his coloured shirt were also ornamented with his initials, and he took them off, too. But when he had relocked the bag, he breathed freely, for he remembered that his undergarments and his shirt and his handkerchief and collar were all unmarked—he had once sent out for a supply of such things from the club in a hurry and these were part of that supply, and there was nothing upon them that could betray him. He was denuded of everything

He presently opened the door, looked cautiously around him, and, seeing nobody about, seized the bag and marched off. He passed two men and one lady on the platform with whom he was on intimate terms of friendship—not one of them knew him. So he marched still more confidently forward and slammed the bag down on the counter of the cloak room.

"Name?" demanded the person in attendance, beginning to fill out the ticket.

"Smith—John," answered Normanstowe, readily enough. He put down sixpence and presently took up fourpence in coppers, and walked off. "Now for it!" he muttered, and turned out of the station into the covered entrance-way.

Normanstowe knew exactly what he was going to do. For a young gentleman of his rank his knowledge of London was extensive and peculiar. Knowing what he wanted, he went straight to his object. That was the police station in the Harrow Road, close to Paddington Green. Five minutes walk brought him to it. He put his hands in his pockets and looked at its lighted windows. He sauntered past the open door and saw uniformed individuals moving about inside. And, having thus prospected, he walked around the corner by Paddington town hall and filled the pockets of his jacket with stones which he kicked out of the road surface with the help of toe and heel.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Then Normanstowe went back, ready to carry out his nefarious design upon the innocent tenants of the police station. Just then the Harrow Road was fairly quiet at that point. There was no great stream of traffic ; only a few people were about on the pavements. But amongst the few were two police constables, one on duty, the other off, who were exchanging remarks in close proximity to the door of the station. That was precisely what Normanstowe wanted ; he desired to draw attention to himself as quickly as possible. Wherefore, having carefully selected three of his largest stones, he took a deliberate aim and threw one of them through a window of the charge office. As the crash aroused the attention of everybody who was near he threw a second stone through another window.

The two constables started into sudden activity, caught sight of the aggressor, saw him cast the second stone, and made a heavy dart for him. And Normanstowe, drawing back with a laugh, threw the third stone, with even more effect, just as various uniformed individuals came tumbling over each other out of the front door and down the steps of the station. Then, for the first time in his life, Normanstowe knew what it was to be forcibly grasped by the hands of authority. He became aware that they were no very gentle hands, and his ideas grew mixed and confused. It reminded him, this event, of a rough-and-tumble loose scrimmage in a hotly-contested football match, in which he appeared to be taking all the kicks and bruises. He came out of it mauled and breathless, to find himself within the building which he had so shamelessly attacked, the cynosure of many pairs of indignant eyes and the object of attention by a particularly truculent-looking inspector, who glared at him as if he meant to order his immediate execution.

"Now, then," demanded this awful being, "what did you do that for ?"

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Fun!" answered Normanstowe unblushingly, and not without impudence.

The high official glared at him still more fiercely. In a purely official voice he asked his name and address. Normanstowe rudely bade him to find out these particulars for himself.

"Not that they matter," he added, still more impudently.

The inspector motioned to those who held the prisoner in a firm grip.

"Go through him," he commanded.

Somebody went through Normanstowe in thorough and systematic fashion, but they found nothing but the very small amount of small change which he had placed in his pocket at the railway station. For Normanstowe had kept his wits about him all through his adventures, and having made a tiny hole in the lining of his jacket, he had thrust into it the cloak room ticket which he had taken out for his kit bag. Wherefore there was not a scrap of paper upon him. All that was upon him, as an official voice presently announced, was one shilling and eightpence half-penny, in silver and bronze, and five stones, obviously picked up from the road outside.

Three minutes later Normanstowe, seventh earl of his line, and owner of one of the finest estates in England, to say nothing of a town house, a Highland shooting-box and a stud of race horses, found himself in a police station cell. In the light of a feeble gas jet, placed where he could not interfere with it, he looked around him and grinned in his characteristic fashion, and his mind turned to sundry experiences in South Africa, not unconnected with want of food and with shelter that a respectable dog would have shaken its ears at.

"All a matter of taste," he observed calmly.

Then he sat down on the plain wooden bench, and, folding his arms, listened attentively to an inebriated

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

lady, who, in the next cell, was cheering her present circumstances with hearty song.

The Birth Mark — *Chapter IV*

In the grey gloom of a dull October morning Normanstowe entered the dock of the police court, and afforded its habitués some occasion of interest and merriment. Officialdom could make nothing of him. He pleaded guilty with alacrity. He refused to give any name or address. The police were unanimous in testifying to his sobriety; nothing but his extraordinary conduct of the previous night suggested any doubts as to his sanity. Incidentally, it was reported, that when he was asked why he had done this thing, he answered that he had done it for fun. But at that the magistrate shook his head, and looked at the prisoner with a certain amount of speculative inquisitiveness.

"Did you bréak these windows for fun?" he asked.

"No," answered Normanstowe, "not at all!"

The magistrate looked down at the charge sheet, and then at Normanstowe.

"Why did you break them, then?" he inquired mildly.

"Why did I? Oh, by way of protest!" replied Normanstowe. "Protest, of course!"

"Protest against what?" inquired the magistrate.

Normanstowe looked at the edge of the dock, and then at the ceiling of the court, and then at a point somewhere between the top and bottom buttons of the magistrate's waistcoat.

"Oh, I don't know!" he answered. "Anything—everything! The Government, you know!"

The magistrate looked at the policeman who had brought Normanstowe to the seat of justice.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Have you noticed anything about this man?" he inquired.

"Nothing, your worship," answered the policeman. "Excepting that, when he had eaten his breakfast this morning, he asked if he couldn't have another."

"Well, I offered to pay for it," interjected the prisoner. "You have one-and-eightpence-halfpenny of mine."

The magistrate favoured Normanstowe with a look which a very observant person would have taken to mean many things.

"Fined twenty shillings and costs, and you will have to pay for the damage you have done," he said tersely, "or you will go to prison for twenty-eight days."

"I am much obliged to you," said Normanstowe. "I will go to prison for twenty-eight days. Unless you like to take my one-and-eightpence-halfpenny as a first instalment, and——"

The magistrate made a slight motion of his pen, and Normanstowe found himself ushered out of the dock by a gruff-voiced person who asked him pertinently how long he wanted to keep the next gentleman waiting.

After that, Normanstowe himself waited at other people's pleasure in a comfortless, whitewashed receptacle, until such time as a cargo of evil-doers was ready for conveyance to Wormwood Scrubs. Some of his fellow passengers sang as Black Maria carried them westward. Normanstowe occupied himself in speculating on the best method of profitably spending the moments of what he was determined to regard as a rest cure.

For the various little preliminary rites of prison life Normanstowe was rigidly resolved to feel no distaste; certainly he would die before he would show any. He cheerfully did all that he was ordered to do. He looked confidingly, and in quite a polite manner at the various officials with whom he now commenced

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

acquaintanceship. And suddenly he saw a face of which he had some curious recollection. It was the face of a warder; a youngish, good-looking, smartly-set-up fellow, who moved about with alert steps.

"Where have I seen that man before?" asked Normanstowe of himself. "I certainly remember his face. Suppose, now, that he remembers mine."

But then he comforted himself by his shorn-off moustache. Oh, no, not even Wrigge nor Chisholm would know him now, attired as he was. For at that moment he was wearing no more than a shirt, and the obligatory bath was literally at the end of his toes.

"In with you!" commanded the voice of authority.

That particular voice happened to be the voice of the warder whom Normanstowe was sure he had seen somewhere, and who was just then in charge of the ablutions. He was about to make some further remarks or orders when they were suddenly arrested. And, if Normanstowe had looked around he would have seen the warder's eyes fixed, as if they were fascinated, upon a certain mark which showed distinct and conspicuous upon the prisoner's left shoulder. But Normanstowe was just then engaged in a punctilious discharge of the duty required of him, and if he had thought to spare it was in the direction of thankfulness that the water was fresh and clean. He obeyed the prison regulations with scrupulous fidelity When he had accomplished them in that instance he glanced at the warder of the somewhat familiar face, and became aware that he was looking at his prisoner with puzzled eyes.

"I hope to goodness that chap dosen't think he recognizes me as somebody he's known!" thought Normanstowe. "It may be awkward if he gets ideas of that kind into his head."

It fell to the lot of that particular warder to march Normanstowe to his cell, and to instruct him as to rules and routine. All the time that he talked, the

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

warder was staring at the prisoner in disconcerting fashion; and it required much self control on Normanstowe's part to refrain from requesting him to look elsewhere.

When the man had departed, Normanstowe sat down on his stool and considered matters. Supposing he was recognized! It would be unpleasant. It might lead to complications which would result in his losing his bet. But renewed confidence came to him.

"No, he can't know me," he decided. "It's impossible. All the same, I'm sure I've seen that chap before somewhere. In which case, he may have seen me."

During the next two or three days Normanstowe caught that warder looking at him narrowly. He looked at him as a man looks at something which puzzles him very much. Sometimes he looked at him when Normanstowe was on his way to and from the prison chapel; sometimes when he was taking the air in the exercise yard; sometimes when he visited his cell. Normanstowe began to feel as a highly sensitive insect may feel which is kept in a glass-covered receptacle by an inquisitive scientist who takes uncertain and speculative glances at it from time to time, wondering what it really is. He grew a little uneasy under these searching looks, and he got to be afraid of meeting the warder's eyes.

And on the fourth day, at a quiet hour of the afternoon, Normanstowe being busily engaged in sewing stout sacks together, the warder stole gently into the cell, and closed the door behind him. Normanstowe bent his head over his work; the warder coughed lightly.

"Er—my lord!" he whispered. "My—er—lord!"

Normanstowe looked up. The warder was winking mysteriously, and his right hand held out to the prisoner a scrap of paper. Once more his lips shaped

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

themselves to emit another tremulous whisper:

"Your—er—lordship!"

Social Ambitions — *Chapter V*

NORMANSTOWE possessed the family temper. He forgot where he was, and he snarled angrily.

"Don't talk damned rot!" he said, snappily.

The warder shook his head.

"Beg pardon, my lord, but I felt sure I knew your lordship from the very first," he said. "It was the—the birthmark, my lord. When your lordship was—beg pardon for mentioning it—stripped."

Then Normanstowe remembered the birthmark, and felt inclined to kick himself for having forgotten it. It was a birthmark that ran in the family—a definite strawberry mark, and Normanstowe had always affirmed that it meant that he was some day to get two steps in the peerage, and be a duke. But how should this man know he had it?

He suddenly dashed his sacking and his needle on the floor of his cell.

"Who the devil are you?" he demanded. "Why do you come and interfere in this way? You're exceeding your duties, my man!"

The warder made signs which besought hushed conversation.

"Beg your pardon, I'm sure, my lord, but—the birth-mark! Your lordship doesn't remember me—I was in your troop, my lord, during the war. Doesn't your lordship remember that awful hot day when we all bathed in the Orange River, near Bethulie? I saw the birthmark then. My name's Copper, my lord—ex-Trooper Copper."

Normanstowe resignedly picked up his work. That had got to be done, at any rate.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Oh, all right, Copper," he said. "Sorry I spoke sharply. Thought I knew you, too, only I couldn't place you. Well, what do you want, Copper—I mean, sir?"

For he suddenly remembered what he was, and that it was his duty to address warders with respect.

"Sir—of course," he repeated. "I'd forgotten, of course, Copper—I mean, sir."

"Just so, my lord," said Copper. "Er—I'm a bit mixed, my lord."

"So am I," said Normanstowe, stitching away at his sack.

Copper looked all round him, as if he sought inspiration.

"To see you here!" he murmured. "Sewing sacks!"

"Seems a bit odd, doesn't it?" replied Normanstowe. "Ups and downs of life, you know. What's that scrap of newspaper?"

Copper brightened. He handed the scrap over.

"That's just it, my lord," he whispered. "That's what I came for. Read it."

Normanstowe read. What he read was just what he would have expected to read had newspapers come in his way. It was an excited announcement of his own disappearance. Half the world seemed to be searching for him. Also, three thousand pounds were being offered for news of him.

"That's Wrigge!" he muttered to himself. "He might have made it five. Well, Copper," he said aloud, "you see I'm at your mercy. Between ourselves, this is all because of a bet. I thought I should be safe here. But I never foresaw that anyone who could recognize that birth-mark would be here!"

"But—but the life, my lord!" exclaimed Copper.

"It is quiet, certainly," said Normanstowe. "I like it. It's a rest cure."

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"And this grub," my lord!"

"Plain—very, Copper. But wholesome and regular—and there were times in South Africa, Copper—when——"

"Yes, I know," said Copper. "I've not forgotten, my lord. Well, this is a rum go. And your lordship really means to stick it out?"

"I mean to stick it out, Copper, and I shall stick it out, unless——"

But the warder suddenly opened the door of the cell, poked his head out into the corridor, looked up and down, withdrew his body after his head, and vanished as rapidly as he had come. Normanstowe sighed.

"An entirely unforeseen contingency," he murmured.

Two days later Copper again appeared, bearing a second scrap of newspaper.

"The reward's gone up to five thousand pounds now," he whispered. Then his face became gloomy. "Five thousand pounds is an awful lot of money," he said.

Normanstowe laid down his needle.

"Copper," he said, "let's talk business. As our opportunities are limited, let us be business-like. I don't want to leave this peaceful retreat until my time is up. Now, then, can't I square you to hold your tongue?"

Copper flushed.

"I—I shouldn't like to do anything low, my lord," he said. "I wouldn't give your lordship away for anything. I'm sure. But five thousand——"

"I stand to win ten thousand if I'm not found for a month," said Normanstowe. "You hold your tongue and I'll set you up for life. Look here, do you think there's anybody else in this hole who might recognize me? Has anybody any suspicion?"

Copper shook his head with decision. No, he was

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

certain there was no suspicion and no danger. If it hadn't been for the birth-mark——"

"All right," said the prisoner. "Now we come to business." He cocked a shrewd and whimsical eye at Copper, and the warder began to fidget under its inspection. "What's your idea, Copper?" he asked.

Copper suddenly grew bold and found his tongue.

"To get a better job than this," he answered promptly and firmly.

"What, for instance?" asked Normanstowe.

"Well, I'd like to go back to South Africa with money in my pocket," replied Copper. "I could make a fortune out there, if I'd capital."

"You shall have it," replied the prisoner. "Only keep your mouth shut until my time is up, and I'll see to you. Anything else, Copper?"

The warder rubbed his chin and smiled.

"Well," he said, half coyly, "there is a little of something else. The fact is, I've always had a sort of desire to see a bit of high life, just to—to see what it's really like, my lord. If your lordship could give me a taste of it, now——"

Normanstowe laid down his needle and his sack, and after staring at the warder, laughed, as loudly as he dared.

"Social ambitions, eh, Copper?" he said. Then he looked the man over. "You're an uncommonly good-looking chap, too," he continued. "You look much more like a peer of the realm than I do. All right—before you depart for South Africa I'll show you round a bit. And now go away, Copper, and let me get on with my daily task. There was one thing that I learnt in my soldiering days, Copper, and that was to obey orders. And while I'm here I mean to do my duty like a man. Well, that's settled. Hold your tongue, and hand in your notice, or resignation, or whatever it is."

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

So the warder went away and the prisoner resumed his stitching as if his life depended on it.

The Well-Feathered Nest — *Chapter VI*

The reappearance of the Earl of Normanstowe in the merry world of Mayfair roused almost as much commotion as his sudden quitting of that fascinating stage had aroused precisely a month before.

His disappearance had set up a nine-days' wonder; the newspaper reporters, the police, the private inquiry agents, had racked their brains and used up all their energies in their attempts to find him. Certainly, said those who were acquainted with the youthful nobleman's career, there was nothing surprising about Normanstowe's sudden disappearance; it was like him to set everybody talking. His whole life, from his Eton days onward, had been a succession of episodes of the noticeable order.

It was he who painted the Provost's door a brilliant vermilion. It was he who drove a zebra and a dromedary, tandem fashion, round the park, himself attired in Arab costume, and accompanied by a gigantic Zulu, clothed to the manner, desperately armed. It was he who made a daring parachute descent at Ranelagh. It was he who, dressed up in wonderful garments of the East, and accompanied by a suite of singularly disguised friends, presented himself at the Mansion House, and introduced his person and company to the Lord Mayor as an Oriental potentate from the undiscovered regions of Asia. It was he who organized the famous hoax on the Prime Minister, whereby Downing Street and Whitehall were filled one afternoon with the equipages of all the ambassadors, diplomatists, and political luminaries of London. It was he who sent four Punch and Judy

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

shows, a merry-go-round, and a travelling circus to the garden party at Lambeth Palace, which garden party was being given by the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Colonial bishops and their ladies.

Most people who kept themselves acquainted with things knew of Lord Normanstowe and his eccentricities: his disappearance merely seemed to them to be another of his little ways. The probability was, said they, that he was enjoying himself in Paris or Vienna, and would return again, with more mischief in his head, when he was least expected.

But Normanstowe presented himself at the Melatherium to the moment, loudly demanding his £10,000 as soon as he had greeted the select coterie which awaited his coming with suppressed excitement. They stared at him, wonderingly. That he had shaved off his famous whiskers, and even got rid of his moustache, was at once apparent; it was also apparent that he was a little thin. But he brought in with him an alert manner and bright, clear eyes, and he looked uncommonly fit, as if he had been in strict training. And then everybody wanted to know where he had hidden himself.

"That," replied Normanstowe, carefully putting Wrigge's cheque away in his pocket, "is my secret. I have, of course, remained within the circumscribed area provided for in the terms of our wager. But as to where I have been, how I got there, what I did there, how I came away from there—that, my friends, is a secret which will never be revealed by me from now to Doomsday."

"Well, you've done it anyway," said Chisholm.

"Didn't I say I'd do it?" replied Normanstowe. "Of course I've done it. I'll do it again next year on similar terms. It's easy as lighting this cigar. But in the meantime I return to the calm and quiet routine of my usual life."

It was speedily noticed that in pursuing this routine

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Lord Normanstowe was accompanied almost everywhere by a quiet young man whom he introduced to his set and circle as Mr John Copperthwaite. According to Normanstowe he had made the acquaintance in South Africa, and had been greatly delighted to renew it. Mr. Copperthwaite proved to be a quiet, well-behaved person, who united modest manners with eminently good looks; it was evident that on his recent arrival in this country he had patronised the best tradesmen in Saville Row and Bond Street, and his well set up, irreproachably garbed and groomed figure, handsome features, and quiet air impressed everybody who met him. And Normanstowe, who was entertaining him royally in the family mansion in Mount Street, used to laugh heartily when they were alone at night.

"'Pon my honour, Copper," he would say, "this is great fun! You're a consummate actor, by gad!"

"No," answered Copper, "I'm only perfectly natural—I never could act. I just take things as they come."

Whereupon Normanstowe would laugh more than ever in his high falsetto voice, and slap his guest on the back and declare that he was the best fun he had had for ages, and that they would keep things up. For Lord Normanstowe was never happy unless he was playing some mischievous game, and it delighted him to take the ex-trooper, ex-warder, out to dinners and dances—all to see him solemnly "playing pretty," as Normanstowe phrased it.

"Gad!" he used to say, "it's better than a play!" And he enjoyed it all the more—a characteristic of his—because he had the secret all to himself.

But one morning when Normanstowe was alone, occupied in the engrossing task of seeing how much his racing establishment had cost him that year, there entered to him his sister, Lady Trementower, who was some twelve years older than himself, and in addition

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

to being an incurable gossip, was also a lady of observation and penetration. She closed the door of her brother's study, sacred to the serious reading of Ruff's Guide to the Turf and the latest French fiction, and dropped into a chair by his desk. Normanstowe took a sly glance at her, and saw signs of bad weather.

"Look here, Normanstowe," said her ladyship abruptly, "who is this man Copperthwaite?"

"Chap I knew in South Africa," answered Normanstowe, promptly and truthfully.

"I dare say you knew a lot of chaps, as you call them, in South Africa," observed his sister. "But who is he?"

"Name's John Copperthwaite," said Normanstowe. "Come from Windebusch, Orange Free State."

"That conveys nothing to me. I want to know who he is. Is he a gentleman?" demanded Lady Trementower.

"What's he look like?" asked Normanstowe.

"He is certainly a very well-mannered young man," replied his sister thoughtfully. "And much more modest than most of you young men are nowadays. But that doesn't explain him, and such strange people come from South Africa."

"Yes, live in Park Lane, most of 'em," said Normanstowe.

"I'm not talking of that sort," said Lady Trementower. "I want to know who this man is."

"What's the matter?" asked Normanstowe.

Lady Trementower coughed.

"Well, of course you introduced him as a friend of yours——"

"Excellent friend, thoroughly dependable, keeps his word," murmured Normanstowe. "Yes, go on."

"And so, of course I received him as such," continued her ladyship. "And he's come to us and we've

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

been here, and we meet him at a great many places to which you take him, and, well, I'm uneasy about Alma Stuvesant."

Normanstowe lifted his hands in the air, opened his large mouth to its widest extent, and then pursed his lips in a shrill whistle.

"Whew! What—the heiress?" he exclaimed.

"That's just it," replied Lady Trementower. "Alma Stuvesant has a quarter of a million in her own right, Normanstowe. Not even her father can touch it. And think of what she expects to get from him—one of the richest men in Chicago!"

"But I thought you and she were fishing for nothing under a Marquis?" said Normanstowe. "You both gave me the frozen eye, anyhow."

"What girl do you suppose would marry you until you've settled down?" demanded Lady Trementower. "But, really, Normanstowe, I do believe the girl is in love with this Copperthwaite. And she's of age, and her own mistress, and you know what these American girls are!"

"Well, not quite, but I don't want to know any more," answered Normanstowe. "You—you surprise me greatly, I had no idea that Alma's amorous propensities——"

"When is this young man going back to South Africa?" asked Lady Trementower hastily.

"Don't know. I'll ask him," replied Normanstowe. "I think—yes, I believe—soon."

"Well, I hope so," said his sister, rising. "I hope so. The fact is that he and Alma are meeting every day—in the park, or in Kensington Gardens, or at one or other of the museums. I know. I've had her watched."

"What horrible depravity!" exclaimed Normanstowe. "Ah, these American manners. Sad, aren't they? So different to ours. However, I'll speak to Copper—I mean Mr. Copperthwaite."

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

That night in the privacy of the smoking-room, Normanstowe addressed his guest in fatherly fashion.

"I say, Copper, I had my sister here this morning," he said. "She was on to me like a thousand of bricks—about you."

"I trust I have done nothing to give her ladyship pain," answered the guest modestly.

"You'll give her ladyship an apopletic fit if you don't mend your manners," answered the host. "You've been playing the meet-me-by-moonlight-alone game with the packed-pork maiden."

Copper drew himself up.

"My father was more than equal in rank to Miss Stuvesant's father," he said. "He was a clergyman, though a poor one—and if family reverses——"

"Oh, chuck that," said Normanstowe. "Miss Stuvesant is over here to marry a duke, or something of the sort. Why, man, she wouldn't have me! And don't you see, my sister would get into an awful hole if—but there, what's the use of talking? When do you think of leaving England to start that South African game, Copper?"

"I'm leaving England almost at once," replied Copper, tersely.

"That's all right," said Normanstowe. "Well, you've kept, and I'm sure you'll keep, your word to me. You're never to let it out about where we met, you know. Half the fun of my recent adventure is that all these fellows who were in at it are biting their tongues with vexation because they can't find out where I put myself. And here's the five thousand I promised you, Copper, and I hope you'll turn it into a million. And now let's have a turn at billiards, and you leave the Chicago beauty to espouse strawberry leaves."

Copper pocketed the cheque with a single word of thanks, and said no more. He went out of the house very early next morning, and Normanstowe formed the opinion that he had gone to book his passage to South

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Africa. But just about noon, as he was thinking of strolling out to one of his clubs, Lady Trementower rang him up on the telephone, and as soon as she had got his ear, poured out a breathless flood into it.

"Normanstowe!" she screamed, "is that you? That headstrong girl has married that Copperthwaite person—married him, I tell you! At the Kensington Registry Office this morning. She's just sent me a note. Stay in, Normanstowe, do you hear? I'm coming round to see you at once. You must do something to have it annulled or——"

Normanstowe calmly dropped the receiver and rang off. Presently the bell again rang sharply; he took no notice. Instead he rang another bell for his valet.

"Beevers," he said, "we go to Paris, on our way South, by the 2.20 from Charing Cross. Pack all I shall immediately want, and all that you want, and meet me at the train. And oh, Beevers, tell Johnson that if anybody calls this morning—Lady Trementower, for instance—I'm out, and nobody knows when I shall be in."

Then Normanstowe walked out of the house, and began to shake the dust of Mayfair off his feet.

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

After Four Hundred Years *Chapter I*

LINKWATER, senior and most trusted of the half dozen vergers of the Wyechester Cathedral, was having a day to himself on a job which could only be placed in the hands of a thoroughly responsible man. Abutting upon the chancel of the Wyechester Cathedral there is, as every tourist in those parts knows, an ancient building in which is housed the library of the Dean and Chapter. The walls are lined with old books and manuscripts, from enormous folios to tiny duodecimos; where there is any space between the bookstands there are pictures and engravings of nearly as venerable an antiquity as the books. And there are also glass-topped cases set up in the room, wherein are displayed the curiosities and treasures which gather about our old buildings—some of them at Wyechester are unique and all of them are of considerable value.

Rarely as those cases are unlocked, dust penetrates into them and settles there. And the librarian—a reverend member of the Chapter—noticing that dust one day, suggested to Linkwater that he should close the library against everybody some morning and get to work with a feather brush and a duster.

Linkwater was now at work. The one door of the library, which gave access to the north aisle of the choir, was locked; nobody could enter. The large centre table had been denuded of the objects which usually rested upon it; upon the space thus cleared Linkwater was laying out one by one the various objects which he carefully removed from the unlocked glass cases, all in order. They were many and curious—bits of

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Roman pottery and glass, dug up under the cathedral, old minerals, books of hours, fragments of manuscripts in uncial characters: each was sufficient to make an antiquary's mouth water. And most conspicuous amongst them, if not apparently most valuable, was the fifteenth-century crozier which had belonged to Bishop John de Palke, holder of the see 1411-1431, and somehow had escaped when the cathedral was robbed of its treasures in the time of Henry VIII. Maybe, somebody had hidden it at that time, and had in later years restored it; anyway, there it had been, taken care of more or less, and now, more than ever, for the last two or three centuries, the most notable object in the larger of the two glass cases.

Linkwater lifted the crozier from the two metal rests on which it reposed, and—being a man of some taste—admired its workmanship for the hundredth time. It was certainly a fine specimen of mediaeval art work, of a period in which craftsmen took vast delight in their labours and great pains in their detailed perfection. The shaft was of ebony, the ornaments and the light and graceful crook at the head of parcel-gilt, which was scarcely tarnished with age. Linkwater took up his cleanest duster, and gave the crozier a loving rub along its entire length. And whether it was that he used more force than was necessary, or that the passage of four centuries had made woodwork and metal work loose, the crozier suddenly parted into two pieces in his hands, and he found himself holding the crook in one and the shaft in the other.

Linkwater, his first moment of surprise over, immediately saw what had happened. Where the crook and the shaft met there was a jointure, which had been concealed by a band of metal. It was odd that no one—in his time, at any rate—had never noticed that the shaft could be detached from the crozier; and yet easily detached it could be, and there it was. He laid the two sections gently on the big table, and

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

in doing so noticed that the shaft was hollow. Some time, perhaps when it was made, perhaps at a later period—a bore had been cut through it of a size big enough to admit a man's thumb. And that bore was filled up with wadding of some sort—wadding which looked like lint or cotton wool. Linkwater's curiosity was aroused by that. Why should anyone want to plug that bore with cotton wool? Why should the bore have ever been cut through the solid ebony of the staff? Here was certainly some mystery which he must solve.

And forthwith he drew out his penknife. The penknife had a thin corkscrew attached to it. With this he delicately disturbed the surface of the compressed wadding. It was wool—the softest wool taken from the under part of a fleece, where it is softest and silkiest. And Linkwater began to draw it out of the hollow shaft, strand after strand of it, which had been forced in until it had been firmly packed in the cavity. But suddenly something quite different to the wool appeared. There dropped from the hollow, and lay on the table before the verger's astonished eyes a great blazing ruby. And following it came a stream of sawdust, and in that stream more rubies, and with the rubies sapphires, and with the sapphires diamonds. This shower of precious stones tinkled on the table and caught the shafts of mid-day sun which poured in through the old stained window of the library, and Linkwater drew a deep breath and rubbed his eyes.

After that, being essentially a man of common sense, he reassured himself that the one door of the place was securely locked. Then he counted the stones. Nine magnificent rubies, seven sapphires, eighteen diamonds They were all of considerable size, especially the rubies. He swept them together into a little heap, which flashed back red and blue and white light; then he took from his pocket a wash-leather bag, in which he usually carried his money, and, having emptied it of its silver,

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

he placed the strangely discovered treasure in it. Then he put the bag in his pocket, cleared away the sawdust and the wool, and calmly applied himself to fitting the shaft and the crook of the crozier together. It would be a long time—a very, very long time—he thought, before anyone ever discovered that little matter again, for he took special care to effect the new jointure in such a fashion that the two sections would not readily come apart. And while he thus worked, Linkwater thought.

Like everybody else who was connected officially with it, Linkwater knew that Wyechester Cathedral had been possessed of an extraordinary amount of treasure in mediaeval times. He had heard learned men talk of the possessions of the church—heard them many a time, in that very library. He had heard descriptions of the jewels which ornamented the shrines and altars, the reliquaries and vestments, in the pre-Tudor days—and he had also listened with vast interest to those learned men, wondering where all those rare things went to. Much of the treasure, of course, had been appropriated by the crown, under Henry VIII, but Linkwater remembered that he had heard more than one eminent antiquary express the opinion that a great deal of it had been secretly hidden. And now he inclined to that belief—for here was a fine proof of its value as a theory! Someone, four hundred years ago, had, without doubt, hidden those precious stones in the old crozier, cunningly hollowed out for part of its length to make room for them. And he, Linkwater, after all these years, had had the rare good luck to find them.

And—nobody knew!

The ancient library was very spick-and-span, free of dust, all in order, when Linkwater quitted it that afternoon. The fifteenth century crozier lay in its usual place within the big glass-topped case and Linkwater duly handed the key of that case to the librarian, said nothing to the librarian about the contents of his wash-

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

leather bag, and once he reached his own cottage in Friary Lane he locked the bag safely up in a certain box which he kept screwed down to the floor, under his bed. Linkwater was one of those men who can keep a secret. He was a confirmed bachelor—always had been, always meant to be. But if he had possessed a wife he would still have had secrets—and this was one which no wife would ever have got out of him.

The Ditty Box — *Chapter II*

LINKWATER made ready, and consumed his tea-supper, and while he ate and drank his mind was busy. In spite of the fact that he was almost as much a part of the ecclesiastical establishment of Wyechester as the Dean himself, Linkwater was impassive on questions of strict commercial morality as any one of the gargoyles on the cathedral tower. It was his principle that every man should do the best he can for himself. The more a man does for himself, said he, the less other folks will have to do for him. Therefore, whenever, and if ever, an extraordinary piece of good luck comes in a man's way, he is a fool, and worse, if he does not take full advantage of it. Besides, who had a better right to these precious stones than himself? The venerable folk to whom they had belonged were dead and gone over 400 years ago—their bones were somewhere under the pavements of the cloisters. Dead and gone! Yes, centuries ago, but Linkwater felt warmly and kindly towards them just then—they had put by a nice little store for him. And—he would use it to the best advantage.

His tea-supper over, Linkwater washed up his crockery, mended his fire, and went out. He repaired to the adjacent Mechanics' Institute, and asked the librarian for the best encyclopædia on the shelves. He

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

selected three volumes from this—those beginning with D. R. and S. and, carrying them over to a quiet corner he began to read all about diamonds, rubies and sapphires. Now Linkwater was a highly intelligent man, and this was very good reading. He became deeply interested. He was himself a mine of information by the time he had finished his task. He learnt that diamonds have been known for a very, very long period; that they are mentioned by the earliest historians; that they are pure carbon in a crystallized form—that did not interest him greatly; that India was believed for a long time to be the oniy diamond-producing country; that all the diamonds known to be ancient came from India; that nowadays diamonds came from South America and South Africa. He learnt, too, with some surprise and great satisfaction, that the diamond is not the most precious of precious stones, and that the ruby is. This made him turn to the articles on rubies with added zest. He got somewhat puzzled over the chemical and scientific terms, but he found it established that rubies are of all stones the most precious, and that the best come from Burma and Siam. And when he had further learnt that the sapphire is also a stone of great value, and that the most valuable variety is the cornflower-blue one, Linkwater restored the encyclopædia to its place and went home highly satisfied.

"Nine rubies, seven sapphires, eighteen diamonds!" mused Linkwater, as he sat over his fire a little later, comforting himself with a pipe of tobacco and a glass of rum and water. "I ought to get a very nice thing out of the lot. And now—how to dispose of 'em to the best advantage."

That, however, was only one out of many questions which Linkwater addressed to himself that evening. For there were many things to think about. He meant to dispose of his find for his own benefit. Very good; but having done so—satisfactorily—he would

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

be a man of much increased wealth. He would have to give some account—to somebody—of how his increase of wealth had come about. Of course, he could, if he liked, leave Wyechester altogether, and go clean away where he was not known.

But Linkwater had no desire to leave Wyechester. He was very comfortable. He had a good salary—and in spring and summer, when the tourists and Americans came around, his tips ran to a handsome total. Besides, in a very few years he would be entitled to a pension. No: Linkwater desired to stay where he was—until his pension fell due anyway. And he also desired to have a good and plausible reason for suddenly becoming a better-off man. For you cannot become better off, said Linkwater, without letting people know it, unless you are a miserly hermit, and hide all your money where it does no good to you. And Linkwater was not the sort to hide his money; his notion was that money makes money, and he had already decided that, as soon as he had converted those precious stones into cash, he would buy some property—house property—in Wyechester which would bring him a nice amount in rents. Now, you cannot buy property without its becoming known—you have to employ lawyers and so on, and in a small cathedral town everybody knows everybody else's business. Therefore it was necessary that Linkwater should presently invent some good plausible story in explanation of his sudden influx of riches.

But Linkwater was a man of resource and ingenuity. By the time he rose next morning he had hit on a plan which seemed to him a remarkably good one. Secure in his knowledge that he himself was not a Wyechester man, and had never set foot in the place until his first coming to it twenty years before, he invented a brother. He even gave this imaginary brother a name—Nelson. Nelson Linkwater sounded very well, and quite nautical. And it was necessary,

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

for the purpose of Linkwater's story, that the brother should be a man who had gone down to the sea in ships.

Next day, Linkwater took his weekly half-holiday, and got in the train for Salport, twenty miles away on the coast. It was not often that he visited that famous town of ships and sailors, but he knew it well enough to make a bee-line for what he wanted. In the queer little streets off the Hard, and in the nooks and corners of the Hard itself, there were shops of a sort which are never found in any but seaport towns—shops in which all sorts of odds and ends, from bits of old metal to pieces of rare ivory, accumulate. It would be difficult to give a fitting name to these shops; when you have said that their proprietors are general dealers you have said little, for the word "general" is too narrow a term. Linkwater spent half an hour in examining the windows of these establishments staring at the curious things which generations of seafaring men had picked up in all quarters of the globe and sold on coming home—usually for about a hundredth part of their value. And, finally, stepping into one kept by Issachar, a Semitic gentleman, he asked if there was such a thing in store as a second hand ditty box.

Now, the ditty box, as most folks are aware who know anything about nautical matters, is a small chest, often no longer than a cigar box, in which sailors are wont to keep their private belongings. Into this ditty box Jack puts all manner of queer things which he picks up in his travels. And Mr. Issachar had several in various states of repair. Linkwater picked out one that smelled strongly of the East, a square box made of some fragrant wood and fitted with a lock and key. It was by no means a new box, though it was in excellent repair; it looked as if it had been made by some Oriental craftsman at least a hundred years previously. This was precisely what

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Linkwater wanted, and he did not haggle about the price.

But his subsequent proceedings puzzled the vendor, who was well aware, from his semi-ecclesiastical rig, that Linkwater was not a seafaring man. For Linkwater began to buy things indiscriminately. He bought two or three old medals from a tray in the window, some Eastern coins, a string or two of beads, some pieces of embroidery, some carvings in bone, and at least one in ivory, a worked tobacco pouch and some queer pipes, a bit of canvas or two, two or three Indian images the size of his thumb, an ancient purse of black leather, ornamented with a skull and cross-bones in silver—these were but items amongst other matters. As he purchased each he stored it in the ditty box; when the ditty box was full he paid the reckoning, had the box wrapped in canvas and brown paper, and went away. He had spent between four and five pounds, and he considered that he had laid out his money to good purpose.

Linkwater was very busy when he got home that night. Having locked up his cottage and drawn his blinds, he got out the precious stones from the chest beneath his bed, and stored them away in the queer old purse, wrapped the purse in one of the pieces of canvas, and deposited the parcel in the ditty box beneath all the other odds and ends. This done, and the box safely locked, he proceeded to wrap the oldest of his scraps of canvas round it, and afterwards to seal everything with wax. He used two or three sticks of wax in this sealing process. But if any second person had been present he would have been greatly surprised at Linkwater's next proceeding.

For as soon as all the seals were firmly set and quite hard Linkwater deliberately broke them. He broke them just as any recipient of the parcel would have broken them—by tearing the canvas wrapping off the box. And as soon as this was done, he wrapped the

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

canvas loosely round the box again, put the lot under his arm, turned down his lamp and set off to call on the sub-dean.

The Sub-Dean's Advice — *Chapter III*

THE sub-dean, a bachelor clergyman for whom Linkwater had a great respect, lived in rooms in the High Street, and he was toasting his toes at his fire, and reading a new pamphlet which had just been issued on a debatable point of Greek grammar, when the verger, carrying his parcel, was shown in to him. He stared over his spectacles as Linkwater set the parcel on the table.

"Hallo, Linkwater!" he said. "What have you got there? What's that mysterious looking object?"

"Sorry to intrude upon you, sir," replied Linkwater in his suavest tone. "I ventured to call, sir, desiring your advice. The fact is, sir—I don't think you knew I had a brother—Nelson Linkwater, sir?"

"No," answered the sub-dean. "Hadn't any idea of it."

"This is his ditty box, sir," continued the verger, with a side glance at his parcel. "He was a seafaring man. A ditty box, sir, is what they keep their little belongings in. The fact is, sir, my brother is—. deceased. I had not seen him for many years. But he remembered me, sir. I have been over to Salport to-day, to receive this box from the hands of another seafaring person, to whom my brother entrusted it—on his death-bed, sir, for conveyance to me. Just arrived from Bombay, sir, this person I speak of. And—there are matters in that box, sir, on which I should be glad of your advice."

"Nothing—nothing alive, I hope?" suggested the

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

sub-dean a little anxiously. "No snakes—nor centipedes—eh, Linkwater?"

"Nothing of that sort, sir," said Linkwater, producing the key. "No, sir—far different matters; you needn't be afraid, sir. Just the little things, curiosities and the like, sir, that a sailorman picks up and keeps," he continued, as he threw back the lid, and began to lay before the sub-dean's astonished eyes the odds and ends which he had bought of Mr. Issachar. "You see the sort of thing, sir. No great value, sir; but this purse, sir, contains something very different."

He took the strip of canvas from the purse, unfastened the clasp and shook out the jewels. The sub-dean gasped, as the light from his lamp caught the gleam of diamonds, the blood-red of the rubies, the delicate blue of the sapphires.

"Bless my heart, Linkwater!" he exclaimed. "Why, those stones must be worth a fortune! And—your brother's left them to you?"

Linkwater coughed behind his lifted hand.

"The seafaring man's words, sir—name of Sprigg, sir, Silas Sprigg—quite a stranger to me until this afternoon, sir—were that my brother entrusted this box to him with a message," he said. "All that was in it for brother, James Linkwater—with his blessing, sir. So I suppose these are rightfully mine, sir. You consider them valuable, sir?"

The sub-dean polished his spectacles, and locked carefully at the stones, turning them over gingerly with the tip of his little finger.

"I am no great hand in judging these things, Linkwater," he said presently. "But I should say these stones are very valuable. Why, look at the size—and the fire of these diamonds! And those rubies! Rubies are exceedingly valuable, you know."

"Indeed, sir?" remarked Linkwater. "Ah, I wasn't aware of that, sir. Naturally I haven't any

c

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

knowledge of these things. Do you think Mr. Waterman, the jeweller, would buy them from me, sir ? "

" Waterman ! " exclaimed the sub-dean. " Dear me ! I don't suppose Waterman could afford it, Linkwater ! Why, my good friend, these stones may be worth thousands ! Where do you suppose your brother got them ? "

Linkwater shook his head solemnly.

" I couldn't say, sir," he replied. " Nelson was a rolling stone, sir. He saw many strange places in his time. He was a great deal in India—and in Burma, sir."

" Burma, I believe, is a great place for rubies," remarked the sub-dean. " Dear me, this is very interesting ! Well, I know what I would do if I were in your place, Linkwater—I should offer them to one of the great London firms. There must be—there are—great London jewellers who buy precious stones. I'll tell you what I'll do if you like. I have to go to town the day after to-morrow and I shall stay there for two or three days. I'll make inquiries for you."

Linkwater, always the politest of men, bowed his thanks.

" If I might be allowed to suggest, sir," he said, " and if it would be no trouble to you, perhaps you wouldn't mind showing these things to one of those firms you speak of ? You would know better what to say to them. If it is not trespassing too much on your time, sir ? "

" All right, all right, I will," replied the sub-dean, who was a very good-natured man. " I remember now—there's Morkin's of Bond Street. They're very famous people. But it's rather a responsibility having those stones on hand, Linkwater. Won't you be anxious about them ? "

Linkwater smiled in a confidently superior manner.

" Not at all, sir," he answered. " So long as you have them. I believe you have a safe, sir—if you

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

wouldn't mind putting the jewels in there until you go up to town."

The sub-dean pulled out his keys. Then he and the verger counted the stones and locked them up. After which Linkwater went away with the ditty box and the clergyman returned to his pamphlet, and found himself wondering between every line however Nelson Linkwater came to possess those diamonds and rubies.

Expert *Chapter IV*

THE obliging sub-dean, who was celebrated for his kindness of heart and disposition, and who had no other business in London than to pay a visit to his tailor and to look around a few old book shops, made his way to Morkin's, of Bond Street, the very morning after his arrival. And to a very solemn and grave gentleman, who from his appearance might have been a Harley Street specialist rather than a seller of precious stones and metals, he explained his errand. There was no reason why he should not tell Linkwater's story of his brother Nelson's remarkable legacy, so he told it in full to the jeweller shop. And the jeweller, listening within the privacy of a parlour behind with great attention seemed to see nothing at all remarkable in the story. But when he came to examine the diamonds and the sapphires and the rubies, he appeared to find the contemplation of them extremely interesting; so much so, indeed, that he remained looking them over in silence for some minutes.

"You find those stones interesting?" suggested the sub-dean.

"Very interesting, indeed, sir," replied the jeweller, "remarkably so!"

"And—er—valuable?" asked the sub-dean.

"I should say—from a first inspection of them—

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

that they are valuable," answered the jeweller cautiously.

"Of considerable value?"

"They may be of considerable value. Naturally, they need very careful inspection."

The sub-dean as anxious on Linkwater's behalf as if the stones had been his own ventured a direct question.

"Are you disposed to purchase them, then?"

"I think we should be disposed to purchase them," replied the jeweller. "But I should like an expert's opinion on them. The fact is," he continued, giving the sub-dean a candid look, "although I have had twenty-five years of experience, I have never seen stones like these before! They appear to be of—well considerable antiquity. You are staying in town?"

"Until to-morrow at any rate," replied the sub-dean.

"If you will leave these stones with me," said the jeweller "and will call here again at four o'clock this afternoon I will in the meantime have them carefully examined by the greatest expert of the day—Mr. Levandine—and will give you his opinion upon them."

"You are very kind," assented the sub-dean. "That will suit me very well. At four o'clock, then?"

When the sub-dean went back at four o'clock he found the jeweller in his little parlour in company with a stoutish, shortish gentleman who was gazing at the jewels laid out on the table before him with an expression of deep interest. He looked up at the newcomer with keen eyes which were full of curiosity.

"This, sir, is Mr. Levandine," said the jeweller. "He has examined these stones very carefully and with great attention."

"You find them of interest?" remarked the sub-dean seating himself and looking at the expert with curiosity. "They are unusual?"

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Mr. Levandine pulled out a queer looking old snuff box and helped himself to a pinch of its contents.

"Um," said he. "Unusual! Interesting! I am not much of an expert in words, sir, but I am an expert in precious stones. Everybody knows me—wherever these things are bought and sold. Mr. Morkin, there, has told me your story about these things. Sent by a man in India to a man in England. Um! Well, I will tell you something. These stones are very old. They have all been at some time taken out of settings. I will stake my professional reputation that it is hundreds of years since they were so taken—hundreds of years since they were cut, polished, prepared! Fact, sir!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed the sub-dean, "I am deeply interested!"

"These diamonds, now," continued the expert, moving the stones about with his delicately tipped fingers. "Perhaps you don't know, but those who do know can tell something—a good deal—about the age of diamonds by the way they are cut. For many a hundred years nobody knew how to cut diamonds. Then somebody found out that you can cut and polish a diamond with—another diamond! They called that 'bruting,' and it was the only method they had—rubbing one diamond against another, for many a century. Then they began better methods—in India, and in China, and in Alexandria. But the man who invented the proper method—the polishing wheel, to be used with diamond dust—was Louis de Berquem, a Bruges man, who lived about 1450, or so.

"And so, sir, I will stake my professional reputation that these very diamonds that we see here were cut and polished about that time—probably by de Berquem's cutters in Bruges under the Dukes of Burgundy in the fifteenth century—and nobody's ever cut, polished, or interfered with these diamonds since. Except," concluded Mr. Levandine, significantly,

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

" except—to take 'em out of their settings. And that was done long, long, long ago ! "

The sub-dean was listening with wide, wide open eyes.

" Dear me," he exclaimed, " that is interesting. It would appear, then, that these stones must have gone from Europe to India, eh ? "

Mr. Levandine sniffed—and took another pinch of snuff.

" If you want my honest opinion, sir," he answered, " These stones—all of them—have at some time been taken from ecclesiastical ornaments. We all know that there were vast stores of precious stones in our old cathedrals before the Tudor times. They were set in shrines, in reliquaries, in vestments, in mitres, in copies of the sacred book. Old Harry the Eighth got lots of them, but a great many completely disappeared. Perhaps the cathedral clergy hid them. There were two or three English cathedrals which were particularly rich in treasure—York was one, yours of Wyechester was another. And," concluded Mr. Levandine, as he arose and picked up his umbrella and made for the door, " my opinion, sir, as an expert, is that all these stones originally belonged to your cathedral, and have been found in some place where they had been hidden—four hundred years ago ! Good day, sir."

The expert marched out, and the sub-dean turned wonderingly to the jeweller.

" That is really remarkably interesting," he said, " and a little disconcerting. I have no reason whatever for doubting our senior verger's story. He is a most exemplary, well-conducted, thoroughly reliable man, and—er—not at all a man of any imagination. He could not—literally could not !—have invented the story which he told me. Besides, I myself saw, with my own eyes, the box which had been sent to him from his dead brother in Bombay. Of course, we

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

don't know how the brother became possessed of these stones. They may have been cathedral property once, and then gone on their travels, as it were, eh ? "

" Precisely," said the jeweller, a little drily, " But I have never known Mr. Levandine to be wrong. Do you still wish to dispose of these stones on your man's behalf, sir ? "

" Well—er—I should be glad to know what you are disposed to offer for them," replied the sub-dean.

" We are willing," answered the jeweller, " to pay four thousand pounds for them. Cash, of course."

" Hem ! " observed the sub-dean. " Four thousand pounds ! That is their value, then ? "

The jeweller coughed discreetly.

" Oh, well, not perhaps their value," he answered, smiling a little. " That is what we are prepared to put down for them. We should look to profit by our dealing, you know, sir."

" Frankly," said the sub-dean, " what is their value, between ourselves now ? "

" Well, perhaps, from five to six thousand pounds," answered the jeweller. " Perhaps, rather more. But, as I said, we are willing, if your verger wants to sell, to pay four thousand—cash."

The sub-dean thought a minute and then rose.

" I will communicate with him," he said. " In the meantime perhaps you will lock the stones in your safe ? "

He went away after that and began a course of mental speculation which lasted the entire evening. It was really very remarkable. He had often heard the local antiquaries talk of the pre-Reformation treasures of Wyechester Cathedral and of the gems and jewels which had blazed in its chapels and shrines. Could it really be possible that the respectable Link-water had come upon some hidden hoard, appropriated its contents and invented the story of the seafaring

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

brother's legacy? Dreadful! Dreadful! But he would not think it. A vision of Linkwater's solemn face and grave mien rose up before him—almost reprovingly.

"No, no!" he muttered. "No, I cannot doubt Linkwater's probity. He is the image of propriety in every way. And yet——"

And yet he was doubtful and disquieted. He went to bed feeling unhappy. But in the night a brilliant idea came to him. He suddenly remembered that he himself was a very wealthy man and that he had just then a great many thousands of pounds lying at his banker's. Good, excellent! He would buy the jewels and keep the fact a secret, even from the good Linkwater. That would be most satisfactory, Linkwater could have his money; and he would have the jewels—well worth the money—and if they were ever proved to belong to the cathedral—well, he would give them to the cathedral with great pleasure. Next morning the sub-dean left his hotel early and hurried into the nearest telegraph office. A few minutes later he dispatched a message expressed in plain, if concise, terms:

"Will you take four thousand pounds cash?"

Then he went back to his hotel for breakfast, and while he ate and drank Linkwater's reply arrived:

"Offer accepted, with much gratitude for your kind services."

The sub-dean heaved a sigh of relief. This was really the best way of doing things; he heartily disliked the notion of an inquiry and of the scandal which might perhaps result. And so, during the morning, he took the jewels away from Mr. Morkin, repaired to his bank, drew four thousand pounds in notes, finished his business in London and went home. That night he handed the banknotes over to the verger. Linkwater took them, with more expressions of gratitude. He asked no questions and the sub-dean

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN