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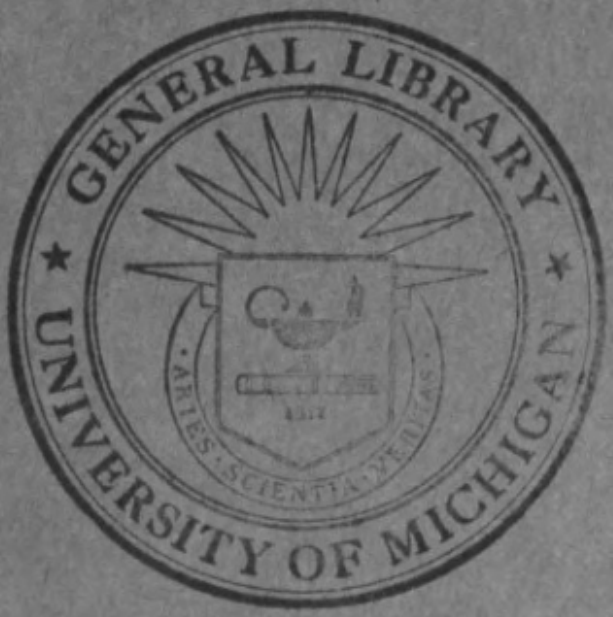


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"The jewel box!" Speight exclaimed. "Why whatever for? It's quite empty, as you've seen for yourself."

The Sergeant certainly had seen this for himself. But he had also noticed that the jewel box was of silver and brightly polished. If the thief had removed its contents he must first have opened it to do so. He must therefore have touched it, and polished silver was an almost ideal surface for recording fingerprints. However, he had no wish to explain all this to Speight.

"It is possible that it might assist in the investigation," he replied.

Speight looked doubtful. "Well, you'll have to take it away if you want to, I suppose," he said. "I think I won't say anything about it to my wife, though. She wouldn't like it at all, I'm sure. She values that box very highly, you know. She was very fond of her godmother, who has been dead for several years."

"I assure you that the greatest care shall be taken of it, Mr. Speight," said the Sergeant. "I wonder if you could let me have a cardboard box and a few sheets of newspaper?"

Speight produced these without difficulty. The Sergeant fetched the jewel box, being careful to hold it at one point only. Then he placed it in the cardboard box, packing it round very carefully with newspaper. He tied the package to the handlebars of his bicycle and rode away, promising Mr. Speight he would hear again from him very shortly.

As he left the house Wragge looked at the clock in the hall—it was barely half past eleven. Plenty of time for him to do what he had to do and then enjoy his dinner. He would enjoy it with the greater zest because he felt distinctly pleased with himself. That paper cap had indeed been a lucky find.

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## CHAPTER II

IMMEDIATELY upon his return to Culverden, Sergeant Wragge communicated with his superior, the Superintendent of the district. As a result of their conversation, Mrs. Speight's jewel box was dispatched that afternoon by a trusty messenger to Scotland Yard. Since Inspector Waghorn of the Criminal Investigation Department was on duty, the package was delivered to him.

Inspector Waghorn was a young man with a university education who had entered the police force by the medium of the Police College at Hendon. At this time he was acting as assistant to Superintendent Hanslet, well known as one of the leading lights of the Yard. To his friends in the Force, who were many, the Inspector was popularly known as Jimmy. He was already beginning to gain something of a reputation as a smart officer.

The arrival of the silver box with its accompanying request for examination by the Fingerprint Department was to Jimmy no more than a matter of routine. Finding himself with nothing particular to do that afternoon, he took the box to the Fingerprint Department himself. The officer in charge of that department, with whom Jimmy was on excellent terms, eyed the box critically.

"What's this, Jimmy?" he asked. "It looks expensive whatever it is. I can't bring myself to believe that you're bringing me the freedom of the City in a silver casket."

"Fine bit of plate, isn't it?" Jimmy replied. "It's been sent up from a place called Culverden for your inspection. From what I can gather something has been stolen from it,



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