

HUME FERGUS

THE GREEN

MUMMY

Fergus Hume

The Green Mummy

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CHAPTER I. THE LOVERS

"I am very angry," pouted the maid.

"In heaven's name, why?" questioned the bachelor.

"You have, so to speak, bought me."

"Impossible: your price is prohibitive."

"Indeed, when a thousand pounds –"

"You are worth fifty and a hundred times as much. Pooh!"

"That interjection doesn't answer my question."

"I don't think it is one which needs answering," said the young man lightly; "there are more important things to talk about than pounds, shillings, and sordid pence."

"Oh, indeed! Such as –"

"Love, on a day such as this is. Look at the sky, blue as your eyes; at the sunshine, golden as your hair."

"Warm as your affection, you should say."

"Affection! So cold a word, when I love you."

"To the extent of one thousand pounds."

"Lucy, you are a – woman. That money did not buy your love, but the consent of your stepfather to our marriage. Had I not humored his whim, he would have insisted upon your marrying Random."

Lucy pouted again and in scorn.

"As if I ever would," said she.

"Well, I don't know. Random is a soldier and a baronet; handsome and agreeable, with a certain amount of talent. What objection can you find to such a match?"

"One insuperable objection; he isn't you, Archie – darling."

"H'm, the adjective appears to be an afterthought," grumbled the bachelor; then, when she merely laughed teasingly after the manner of women, he added moodily:

"No, by Jove, Random isn't me, by any manner of means. I am but a poor artist without fame or position, struggling on three hundred a year for a grudging recognition."

"Quite enough for one, you greedy creature."

"And for two?" he inquired softly.

"More than enough."

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense, nonsense!"

"What! when I am engaged to you? Actions speak much louder than remarks, Mr. Archibald Hope. I love you more than I do money."

"Angel! angel!"

"You said that I was a woman just now. What do, you mean?"

"This," and he kissed her willing lips in the lane, which was empty save for blackbirds and beetles. "Is any explanation a clear one?"

"Not to an angel, who requires adoration, but to a woman who – Let us walk on, Archie, or we shall be late for dinner."

The young man smiled and frowned and sighed and laughed in the space of thirty seconds – something of a feat in the way of emotional gymnastics. The freakish feminine nature perplexed him as it had perplexed Adam, and he could not understand this rapid change from poetry to prose. How

could it be otherwise, when he was but five-and-twenty, and engaged for the first time? Threescore years and ten is all too short a time to learn what woman really is, and every student leaves this world with the conviction that of the thousand sides which the female of man presents to the male of woman, not one reveals the being he desires to know. There is always a deep below a deep; a veil behind a veil, a sphere within a sphere.

“It’s most remarkable,” said the puzzled man in this instance.

“What is?” asked the enigma promptly.

To avoid an argument which he could not sustain, Archie switched his on to the weather.

“This day in September; one could well believe that it is still the month of roses.”

“What! With those wilted hedges and falling leaves and reaped fields and golden haystacks, and – and – ”

She glanced around for further illustrations in the way of contradiction.

“I can see all those things, dear, and the misplaced day also!”

“Misplaced?”

“July day slipped into September. It comes into the landscape of this autumn month, as does love into the hearts of an elderly couple who feel too late the supreme passion.”

Lucy’s eyes swept the prospect, and the spring-like sunshine, revealing all too clearly the wrinkles of aging Nature, assisted her comprehension.

“I understand. Yet youth has its wisdom.”

“And old age its experience. The law of compensation, my dearest. But I don’t see,” he added reflectively, “what your remark and my answer have to do with the view,” whereat Lucy declared that his wits wandered.

Within the last five minutes they had emerged from a sunken lane where the hedges were white with dust and dry with heat to a vast open space, apparently at the World’s-End. Here the saltings spread raggedly towards the stately stream of the Thames, intersected by dykes and ditches, by earthen ramparts, crooked fences, sod walls, and irregular lines of stunted trees following the water-courses. The marshes were shaggy with reeds and rushes, and brown with coarse, fading herbage, although here and there gleamed emerald-hued patches of water-soaked soil, fit for fairy-rings. Beyond a moderately high embankment of turf and timber, the lovers could see the broad river, sweeping eastward to the Nore, with homeward-bound and outward-faring ships afloat on its golden tide. Across the gleaming waters, from where they lipped their banks to the foot of low domestic Kentish hills, stretched alluvial lands, sparsely timbered, and in the clear sunshine clusters of houses, great and small, factories with tall, smoky chimneys, clumps of trees and rigid railway lines could be discerned. The landscape was not beautiful, in spite of the sun’s profuse gildings, but to the lovers it appeared a Paradise. Cupid, lord of gods and men, had bestowed on them the usual rose-colored spectacles which form an important part of his stock-in-trade, and they looked abroad on a fairy world. Was not SHE there: was not HE there: could Romeo or Juliet desire more?

From their feet ran the slim, straight causeway, which was the King’s highway of the district – a trim, prim line of white above the picturesque disorder of the marshes. It skirted the low-lying fields at the foot of the uplands and slipped through an iron gate to end in the far distance at the gigantic portal of The Fort. This was a squat, ungainly pile of rugged gray stone, symmetrically built, but aggressively ugly in its very regularity, since it insulted the graceful curves of Nature everywhere discernible. It stood nakedly amidst the bare, bleak meadows glittering with pools of still water, with not even the leaf of a creeper to soften its menacing walls, although above them appeared the full-foliaged tops of trees planted in the barrack-yard. It looked as though the grim walls belted a secret orchard. What with the frowning battlements, the very few windows diminutive and closely barred, the sullen entrance and the absence of any gracious greenery, Gartley Fort resembled the Castle of Giant Despair. On the hither side, but invisible to the lovers, great cannons scowled on the river they protected, and, when they spoke, received answer from smaller guns across the stream. There less

extensive forts were concealed amidst trees and masked by turf embankments, to watch and guard the golden argosies of London commerce.

Lucy, always impressionable, shivered with her hand in that of Archie's, as she stared at the landscape, melancholy even in the brilliant sunshine.

"I should hate to live in Gartley Fort," said she abruptly. "One might as well be in jail."

"If you marry Random you will have to live there, or on a baggage wagon. He is R.G.A. captain, remember, and has to go where glory calls him, like a good soldier."

"Glory can call until glory is hoarse for me," retorted the girl candidly. "I prefer an artist's studio to a camp."

"Why?" asked Hope, laughing at her vehemence.

"The reason is obvious. I love the artist."

"And if you loved the soldier?"

"I should mount the baggage wagon and make him Bovril when he was wounded. But for you, dear, I shall cook and sew and bake and –"

"Stop! stop! I want a wife, not a housekeeper."

"Every sensible man wants the two in one."

"But you should be a queen, darling."

"Not with my own consent, Archie: the work is much too hard. Existence on six pounds a week with you will be more amusing. We can take a cottage, you know, and live, the simple life in Gartley village, until you become the P.R.A., and I can be Lady Hope, to walk in silk attire."

"You shall be Queen of the Earth, darling, and walk alone."

"How dull! I would much rather walk with you. And that reminds me that dinner is waiting. Let us take the short cut home through the village. On the way you can tell me exactly how you bought me from my step-father for one thousand pounds."

Archie Hope frowned at the incurable obstinacy of the sex. "I didn't buy you, dearest: how many times do you wish me to deny a sale which never took place? I merely obtained your step-father's consent to our marriage in the near future."

"As if he had anything to do with my marriage, being only my step-father, and having, in my eyes, no authority. In what way did you get his consent – his unnecessary consent," she repeated with emphasis.

Of course it was waste of breath to argue with a woman who had made up her mind. The two began to walk towards the village along the causeway, and Hope cleared his throat to explain – patiently as to a child.

"You know that your step-father – Professor Braddock – is crazy on the subject of mummies?"

Lucy nodded in her pretty wilful way. "He is an Egyptologist."

"Quite so, but less famous and rich than he should be, considering his knowledge of dry-as-dust antiquities. Well, then, to make a long story short, he told me that he greatly desired to examine into the difference between the Egyptians and the Peruvians, with regard to the embalming of the dead."

"I always thought that he was too fond of Egypt to bother about any other country," said Lucy sapiently.

"My dear, it isn't the country he cares about, but the civilization of the past. The Incas embalmed their dead, as did the Egyptians, and in some way the Professor heard of a Royal Mummy, swathed in green bandages – so he described it to me."

"It should be called an Irish mummy," said Lucy flippantly. "Well?"

"This mummy is in possession of a man at Malta, and Professor Braddock, hearing that it was for sale for one thousand pounds –"

"Oh!" interrupted the girl vivaciously, "so this was why father sent Sidney Bolton away six weeks ago?"

“Yes. As you know, Bolton is your step-father’s assistant, and is as crazy as the Professor on the subject of Egypt. I asked the Professor if he would allow me to marry you – ”

“Quite unnecessary,” interpolated Lucy briskly.

Archie passed over the remark to evade an argument.

“When I asked him, he said that he wished you to marry Random, who is rich. I pointed out that you loved me and not Random, and that Random was on a yachting cruise, while I was on the spot. He then said that he could not wait for the return of Random, and would give me a chance.”

“What did he mean by that?”

“Well, it seems that he was in a hurry to get this Green Mummy from Malta, as he feared lest some other person should snap it up. This was two months ago, remember, and Professor Braddock wanted the cash at once. Had Random been here he could have supplied it, but as Random was away he told me that if I handed over one thousand pounds to purchase the mummy, that he would permit our engagement now, and our marriage in six months. I saw my chance and took it, for your step-father has always been an obstacle in our path, Lucy, dear. In a week Professor Braddock had the money, as I sold out some of my investments to get it. He then sent Bolton to Malta in a tramp steamer for the sake of cheapness, and now expects him back with the Green Mummy.”

“Has Sidney bought it?”

“Yes. He got it for nine hundred pounds, the Professor told me, and is bringing it back in The Diver – that’s the same tramp steamer in which he went to Malta. So that’s the whole story, and you can see there is no question of you being bought. The thousand pounds went to get your father’s consent.”

“He is not my father,” snapped Lucy, finding nothing else to say.

“You call him so.”

“That is only from habit. I can’t call him Mr. Braddock, or Professor Braddock, when I live with him, so ‘father’ is the sole mode of address left to me. And after all,” she added, taking her lover’s arm, “I like the Professor; he is very kind and good, although extremely absent-minded. And I am glad he has consented, for he worried me a lot to marry Sir Frank Random. I am glad you bought me.”

“But I didn’t,” cried the exasperated lover.

“I think you did, and you shouldn’t have diminished your income by buying what you could have had for nothing.”

Archie shrugged his shoulders. It was vain to combat her fixed idea.

“I have still three hundred a year left. And you were worth buying.”

“You have no right to talk of me as though I had been bought.”

The young man gasped. “But you said – ”

“Oh, what does it matter what I said. I am going to marry you on three hundred a year, so there it is. I suppose when Bolton returns, my father will be glad to see the back of me, and then will go to Egypt with Sidney to explore this secret tomb he is always talking about.”

“That expedition will require more than a thousand pounds,” said Archie dryly. “The Professor explained the obstacles to me. However, his doings have nothing to do with us, darling. Let Professor Braddock fumble amongst the dead if he likes. We live!”

“Apart,” sighed Lucy.

“Only for the next six months; then we can get our cottage and live on love, my dearest.”

“Plus three hundred a year,” said the girl sensibly then she added, “Oh, poor Frank Random!”

“Lucy,” cried her lover indignantly.

“Well, I was only pitying him. He’s a nice man, and you can’t expect him to be pleased at our marriage.”

“Perhaps,” said Hope in an icy tone, “you would like him to be the bridegroom. If so, there is still time.”

“Silly boy!” She took his arm. “As I have been bought, you know that I can’t run away from my purchaser.”

“You denied being bought just now. It seems to me, Lucy, that I am to marry a weather-cock.”

“That is only an impolite name for a woman, dear. You have no sense of humor, Frank, or you would call me an April lady.”

“Because you change every five minutes. H’m! It’s puzzling.”

“Is it? Perhaps you would like me to resemble Widow Anne, who is always funereal. Here she is, looking like Niobe.”

They were strolling through Gartley village by this time, and the cottagers came to their doors and front gates to look at the handsome young couple. Everyone knew of the engagement, and approved of the same, although some hinted that Lucy Kendal would have been wiser to marry the soldier-baronet. Amongst these was Widow Anne, who really was Mrs. Bolton, the mother of Sidney, a dismal female invariably arrayed in rusty, stuffy, aggressive mourning, although her husband had been dead for over twenty years. Because of this same mourning, and because she was always talking of the dead, she was called “Widow Anne,” and looked on the appellation as a compliment to her fidelity. At the present moment she stood at the gate of her tiny garden, mopping her red eyes with a dingy handkerchief.

“Ah, young love, young love, my lady,” she groaned, when the couple passed, for she always gave Lucy a title as though she really and truly had become the wife of Sir Frank, “but who knows how long it may last?”

“As long as we do,” retorted Lucy, annoyed by this prophetic speech.

Widow Anne groaned with relish. “So me and Aaron, as is dead and gone, thought, my lady. But in six months he was knocking the head off me.”

“The man who would lay his hand on a woman save in the way of – ”

“Oh, Archie, what nonsense, you talk!” cried Miss Kendal pettishly.

“Ah!” sighed the woman of experience, “I called it nonsense too, my lady, afore Aaron, who now lies with the worms, laid me out with a flat-iron. Men’s fit for jails only, as I allays says.”

“A nice opinion you have of our sex,” remarked Archie dryly.

“I have, sir. I could tell you things as would make your head waggle with horror on there shoulders of yours.”

“What about your son Sidney? Is he also wicked?”

“He would be if he had the strength, which he hasn’t,” exclaimed the widow with uncomplimentary fervor. “He’s Aaron’s son, and Aaron hadn’t much to learn from them as is where he’s gone too,” and she looked downward significantly.

“Sidney is a decent young fellow,” said Lucy sharply. “How dare you miscall your own flesh and blood, Widow Anne? My father thinks a great deal of Sidney, else he would not have sent him to Malta. Do try and be cheerful, there’s a good soul. Sidney will tell you plenty to make you laugh, when he comes home.”

“If he ever does come home,” sighed the old woman.

“What do you mean by that?”

“Oh, it’s all very well asking questions as can’t be answered nohow, my lady, but I be all of a mubble-fubble, that I be.”

“What is a mubble-fubble?” asked Hope, staring.

“It’s a queer-like feeling of death and sorrow and tears of blood and not lifting your head for groans,” said Widow Anne incoherently, “and there’s meanings in mubble-fumbles, as we’re told in Scripture. Not but what the Perfesser’s been a kind gentleman to Sid in taking him from going round with the laundry cart, and eddicating him to watch camphorated corpses: not as what I’d like to keep an eye on them things myself. But there’s no more watching for my boy Sid, as I dreamed.”

“What did you dream?” asked Lucy curiously.

Widow Anne threw up two gnarled hands, wrinkled with age and laundry work, screwing up her face meanwhile.

"I dreamed of battle and murder and sudden death, my lady, with Sid in his cold grave playing on a harp, angel-like. Yes!" she folded her rusty shawl tightly round her spare form and nodded, "there was Sid, looking beautiful in his coffin, and cut into a hash, as you might say, with – "

"Ugh! ugh!" shuddered Lucy, and Archie strove to draw her away.

"With murder written all over his poor face," pursued the widow. "And I woke up screeching with cramp in my legs and pains in my lungs, and beatings in my heart, and stiffness in my – "

"Oh, hang it, shut up!" shouted Archie, seeing that Lucy was growing pale at this ghoulish recital, "don't be fool, woman. Professor Braddock says that Bolton'll be back in three days with the mummy he has been sent to fetch from Malta. You have been having nightmare! Don't you see how you are frightening Miss Kendal?"

"'The Witch' of Endor, sir – "

"Deuce take the Witch of Endor and you also. There's a shilling. Go and drink yourself into a more cheery frame of mind."

Widow Anne bit the shilling with one of her two remaining teeth, and dropped a curtsy.

"You're a good, kind gentleman," she smirked, cheered at the idea of unlimited gin. "And when my boy Sid do come home a corpse, I hope you'll come to the funeral, sir."

"What a raven!" said Lucy, as Widow Anne toddled away in the direction of the one public-house in Gartley village.

"I don't wonder that the late Mr. Bolton laid her out with a flat-iron. To slay such a woman would be meritorious."

"I wonder how she came to be the mother of Sidney," said Miss Kendal reflectively, as they resumed their walk, "he's such a clever, smart, and handsome young man."

"I think Bolton owes everything to the Professor's teaching and example, Lucy," replied her lover. "He was an uncouth lad, I understand, when your step-father took him into the house six years ago. Now he is quite presentable. I shouldn't wonder if he married Mrs. Jasher."

"H'm! I rather think Mrs. Jasher admires the Professor."

"Oh, he'll never marry her. If she were a mummy there might be a chance, of course, but as a human being the Professor will never look at her."

"I don't know so much about that, Archie. Mrs. Jasher is attractive."

Hope laughed. "In a mutton-dressed-as-lamb way, no doubt."

"And she has money. My father is poor and so – "

"You make up a match at once, as every woman will do. Well, let us get back to the Pyramids, and see how the flirtation is progressing."

Lucy walked on for a few steps in silence. "Do you believe in Mrs. Bolton's dream, Archie?"

"No! I believe she eats heavy suppers. Bolton will return quite safe; he is a clever fellow, not easily taken advantage of. Don't bother any more about Widow Anne and her dismal prophecies."

"I'll try not to," replied Lucy dutifully. "All the same, I wish she had not told me her dream," and she shivered.

CHAPTER II. PROFESSOR BRADDOCK

There was only one really palatial mansion in Gartley, and that was the ancient Georgian house known as the Pyramids. Lucy's step-father had given the place this eccentric name on taking up his abode there some ten years previously. Before that time the dwelling had been occupied by the Lord of the Manor and his family. But now the old squire was dead, and his impecunious children were scattered to the four quarters of the globe in search of money with which to rebuild their ruined fortunes. As the village was somewhat isolated and rather unhealthily situated in a marshy country, the huge, roomy old Grange had not been easy to let, and had proved quite impossible to sell. Under these disastrous circumstances, Professor Braddock – who described himself humorously as a scientific pauper – had obtained the tenancy at a ridiculously low rental, much to his satisfaction.

Many people would have paid money to avoid exile in these damp waste lands, which, as it were, fringed civilization, but their loneliness and desolation suited the Professor exactly. He required ample room for his Egyptian collection, with plenty of time to decipher hieroglyphics and study perished dynasties of the Nile Valley. The world of the present day did not interest Braddock in the least. He lived almost continuously on that portion of the mental plane which had to do with the far-distant past, and only concerned himself with physical existence, when it consisted of mummies and mystic beetles, sepulchral ornaments, pictured documents, hawk-headed deities and suchlike things of almost inconceivable antiquity. He rarely walked abroad and was invariably late for meals, save when he missed any particular one altogether, which happened frequently. Absent-minded in conversation, untidy in dress, unpractical in business, dreamy in manner, Professor Braddock lived solely for archaeology. That such a man should have taken to himself a wife was mystery.

Yet he had been married fifteen years before to a widow, who possessed a limited income and one small child. It was the opportunity of securing the use of a steady income which had decoyed Braddock into the matrimonial snare of Mrs. Kendal. To put it plainly, he had married the agreeable widow for her money, although he could scarcely be called a fortune-hunter. Like Eugene Aram, he desired cash to assist learning, and as that scholar had committed murder to secure what he wanted, so did the Professor marry to obtain his ends. These were to have someone to manage the house, and to be set free from the necessity of earning his bread, so that he might indulge in pursuits more pleasurable than money-making. Mrs. Kendal was a placid, phlegmatic lady, who liked rather than loved the Professor, and who desired him more as a companion than as a husband. With Braddock she did not arrange a romantic marriage so much as enter into a congenial partnership. She wanted a man in the house, and he desired freedom from pecuniary embarrassment. On these lines the prosaic bargain was struck, and Mrs. Kendal became the Professor's wife with entirely successful results. She gave her husband a home, and her child a father, who became fond of Lucy, and who – considering he was merely an amateur parent – acted admirably.

But this sensible partnership lasted only for five years. Mrs. Braddock died of a chill on the liver and left her five hundred a year to the Professor for life, with remainder to Lucy, then a small girl of ten. It was at this critical moment that Braddock became a practical man for the first and last time in his dreamy life. He buried his wife with unfeigned regret – for he had been sincerely attached to her in his absent-minded way – and sent Lucy to a Hampstead boarding school. After an interview with his late wife's lawyer to see that the income was safe, he sought for a house in the country, and quickly discovered Gartley Grange, which no one would take because of its isolation. Within three months from the burial of Mrs. Braddock, the widower had removed himself and his collection to Gartley, and had renamed his new abode the Pyramids. Here he dwelt quietly and enjoyably – from his dry-as-dust point of view – for ten years, and here Lucy Kendal had come when her education was completed. The arrival of a marriageable young lady made no difference in the Professor's habits, and he hailed her thankfully as the successor to her mother in managing the small establishment. It

is to be feared that Braddock was somewhat selfish in his views, but the fixed idea of archaeological research made him egotistical.

The mansion was three-story, flat-roofed, extremely ugly and unexpectedly comfortable. Built of mellow red brick with dingy white stone facings, it stood a few yards back from the roadway which ran from Gartley Fort through the village, and, at the precise point where the Pyramids was situated, curved abruptly through woodlands to terminate a mile away, at Jessum, the local station of the Thames Railway Line. An iron railing, embedded in moldering stone work, divided the narrow front garden from the road, and on either side of the door – which could be reached by five shallow steps – grew two small yew trees, smartly clipped and trimmed into cones of dull green. These yews possessed some magical significance, which Professor Braddock would occasionally explain to chance visitors interested in occult matters; for, amongst other things Egyptian, the archaeologist searched into the magic of the Sons of Khem, and insisted that there was more truth than superstition in their enchantments.

Braddock used all the vast rooms of the ground floor to house his collection of antiquities, which he had acquired through many laborious years. He dwelt entirely in this museum, as his bedroom adjoined his study, and he frequently devoured his hurried meals amongst the brilliantly tinted mummy cases. The embalmed dead populated his world, and only now and then, when Lucy insisted, did he ascend to the first floor, which was her particular abode. Here was the drawing-room, the dining-room and Lucy's boudoir; here also were sundry bedrooms, furnished and unfurnished, in one of which Miss Kendal slept, while the others remained vacant for chance visitors, principally from the scientific world. The third story was devoted to the cook, her husband – who acted as gardener – and to the house parlor maid, a composite domestic, who worked from morning until night in keeping the great house clean. During the day these servants attended to their business in a comfortable basement, where the cook ruled supreme. At the back of the mansion stretched a fairly large kitchen garden, to which the cook's husband devoted his attention. This was the entire domain belonging to the tenant, as, of course, the Professor did not rent the arable acres and comfortable farms which had belonged to the dispossessed family.

Everything in the house went smoothly, as Lucy was a methodical young person, who went by the clock and the almanac. Braddock little knew how much of his undeniable comfort he owed to her fostering care; for, prior to her return from school, he had been robbed right and left by unscrupulous domestics. When his step-daughter arrived he simply handed over the keys and the housekeeping money – a fixed sum – and gave her strict instructions not to bother him. Miss Kendal faithfully observed this injunction, as she enjoyed being undisputed mistress, and knew that, so long as her step-father had his meals, his bed, his bath and his clothes, he required nothing save the constant society of his beloved mummies, of which no one wished to deprive him. These he dusted and cleansed and rearranged himself. Not even Lucy dared to invade the museum, and the mere mention of spring cleaning drove the Professor into displaying frantic rage, in which he used bad language.

On returning from her walk with Archie, the girl had lured her step-father into assuming a rusty dress suit, which had done service for many years, and had coaxed him into a promise to be present at dinner. Mrs. Jasher, the lively widow of the district, was coming, and Braddock approved of a woman who looked up to him as the one wise man in the world. Even science is susceptible to judicious flattery, and Mrs. Jasher was never backward in putting her admiration into words. Female gossip declared that the widow wished to become the second Mrs. Braddock, but if this was really the case, she had but small chance of gaining her end. The Professor had once sacrificed his liberty to secure a competence, and, having acquired five hundred a year, was not inclined for a second matrimonial venture. Had the widow been a dollar heiress with a million at her back he would not have troubled to place a ring on her finger. And certainly Mrs. Jasher had little to gain from such a dreary marriage, beyond a collection of rubbish – as she said – and a dull country house situated in a district inhabited solely by peasants belonging to Saxon times.

Archie Hope left Lucy at the door of the Pyramids and repaired to his village lodgings, for the purpose of assuming evening dress. Lucy, being her own housekeeper, assisted the overworked parlor maid to lay and decorate the table before receiving the guests. Thus Mrs. Jasher found no one in the drawing-room to welcome her, and, taking the privilege of old friendship, descended to beard Braddock in his den. The Professor raised his eyes from a newly bought scarabeus to behold a stout little lady smiling on him from the doorway. He did not appear to be grateful for the interruption, but Mrs. Jasher was not at all dismayed, being a man-hunter by profession. Besides, she saw that Braddock was in the clouds as usual, and would have received the King himself in the same absent-minded manner.

“Pouf! what an abominal smell!” exclaimed the widow, holding a flimsy lace handkerchief to her nose. “Kind of camphor-sandal-wood charnel-house smell. I wonder you are not asphyxiated. Pouf! Ugh! Bur-r-r

The Professor stared at her with cold, fishy eyes. “Did you speak?”

“Oh, dear me, yes, and you don’t even ask me to take a chair. If I were a nasty stuffy mummy, now, you would be embracing me by, this time. Don’t you know that I have come to dinner, you silly man?” and she tapped him playfully with her closed fan.

“I have had dinner,” said Braddock, egotistic as usual.

“No, you have not.” Mrs. Jasher spoke positively, and pointed to a small tray of untouched food on the side table. “You have not even had luncheon. You must live on air, like a chameleon – or on love, perhaps,” she ended in a significantly tender tone.

But she might as well have spoken to the granite image of Horus in the corner. Braddock merely rubbed his chin and stared harder than ever at the glittering visitor.

“Dear me!” he said innocently. “I must have forgotten to eat. Lamplight!” he looked round vaguely. “Of course, I remember lighting the lamps. Time has gone by very rapidly. I am really hungry.” He paused to make sure, then repeated his remark in a more positive manner. “Yes, I am very hungry, Mrs. Jasher.” He looked at her as though she had just entered. “Of course, Mrs. Jasher. Do you wish to see me about anything particular?”

The widow frowned at his inattention, and then laughed. It was impossible to be angry with this dreamer.

“I have come to dinner, Professor. Do try and wake up; you are half asleep and half starved, too, I expect.”

“I certainly feel unaccountably hungry,” admitted Braddock cautiously.

“Unaccountably, when you have eaten nothing since breakfast. You weird man, I believe you are a mummy yourself.”

But the Professor had again returned to examine the scarabeus, this time with a powerful magnifying glass.

“It certainly belongs to the twentieth dynasty,” he murmured, wrinkling his brows.

Mrs. Jasher stamped and flirled her fan pettishly. The creature’s soul, she decided, was certainly not in his body, and until it came back he would continue to ignore her. With the annoyance of a woman who is not getting her own way, she leaned back in Braddock’s one comfortable chair – which she had unerringly selected – and examined him intently. Perhaps the gossips were correct, and she was trying to imagine what kind of a husband he would make. But whatever might be her thoughts, she eyed Braddock as earnestly as Braddock eyed the scarabeus.

Outwardly the Professor did not appear like the savant he was reported to be. He was small of stature, plump of body, rosy as a little Cupid, and extraordinarily youthful, considering his fifty-odd years of scientific wear and tear. With a smooth, clean-shaven face, plentiful white hair like spun silk, and neat feet and hands, he did not look his age. The dreamy look in his small blue eyes was rather belied by the hardness of his thin-lipped mouth, and by the pugnacious push of his jaw. The eyes and the dome-like forehead hinted that brain without much originality; but the lower part

of this contradictory countenance might have belonged to a prize-fighter. Nevertheless, Braddock's plumpness did away to a considerable extent with his aggressive look. It was certainly latent, but only came to the surface when he fought with a brother savant over some tomb-dweller from Thebes. In the soft lamplight he looked like a fighting cherub, and it was a pity – in the interests of art – that the hairless pink and white face did not surmount a pair of wings rather than a rusty and ill-fitting dress suit.

"He's nane sa dafty as he looks," thought Mrs. Jasher, who was Scotch, although she claimed to be cosmopolitan. "With his mummies he is all right, but outside those he might be difficult to manage. And these things," she glanced round the shadowy room, crowded with the dead and their earthly belongings. "I don't think I would care to marry the British Museum. Too much like hard work, and I am not so young as I was."

The near mirror – a polished silver one, which had belonged, ages ago, to some coquette of Memphis – denied this uncomplimentary thought, for Mrs. Jasher did not look a day over thirty, although her birth certificate set her down as forty-five. In the lamplight she might have passed for even younger, so carefully had she preserved what remained to her of youth. She assuredly was somewhat stout, and never had been so tall as she desired to be. But the lines of her plump figure were still discernible in the cunningly cut gown, and she carried her little self with such mighty dignity that people overlooked the mortifying height of a trifle over five feet. Her features were small and neat, but her large blue eyes were so noticeable and melting that those on whom she turned them ignored the lack of boldness in chin and nose. Her hair was brown and arranged in the latest fashion, while her complexion was so fresh and pink that, if she did paint – as jealous women averred – she must have been quite an artist with the hare's foot and the rouge pot and the necessary powder puff.

Mrs. Jasher's clothes repaid the thought she expended upon them, and she was artistic in this as in other things. Dressed in a crocus-yellow gown, with short sleeves to reveal her beautiful arms, and cut low to display her splendid bust, she looked perfectly dressed. A woman would have declared the wide-netted black lace with which the dress was draped to be cheap, and would have hinted that the widow wore too many jewels in her hair, on her corsage, round her arms, and ridiculously gaudy rings on her fingers. This might have been true, for Mrs. Jasher sparkled like the Milky Way at every movement; but the gleam of gold and the flash of gems seemed to suit her opulent beauty. Her slightest movement wafted around her a strange Chinese perfume, which she obtained – so she said – from a friend of her late husband's who was in the British Embassy at Peking. No one possessed this especial perfume but Mrs. Jasher, and anyone who had previously met her, meeting her in the darkness, could have guessed at her identity. With a smile to show her white teeth, with her golden-hued dress and glittering jewels, the pretty widow glowed in that glimmering room like a tropical bird.

The Professor raised his dreamy eyes and laid the beetle on one side, when his brain fully grasped that this charming vision was waiting to be entertained. She was better to look upon even than the beloved scarabeus, and he advanced to shake hands as though she had just entered the room. Mrs. Jasher – knowing his ways – rose to extend her hand, and the two small, stout figures looked absurdly like a pair of chubby Dresden ornaments which had stepped from the mantelshelf.

"Dear lady, I am glad to see you. You have – you have" – the Professor reflected, and then came back with a rush to the present century – "you have come to dinner, if I mistake not."

"Lucy asked me a week ago," she replied tartly, for no woman likes to be neglected for a mere beetle, however ancient.

"Then you will certainly get a good dinner," said Braddock, waving his plump white hands. "Lucy is an excellent housekeeper. I have no fault to find with her – no fault at all. But she is obstinate – oh, very obstinate, as her mother was. Do you know, dear lady, that in a papyrus scroll which I lately acquired I found the recipe for a genuine Egyptian dish, which Amenemha – the last Pharaoh of the eleventh dynasty, you know – might have eaten, and probably did eat. I desired Lucy to serve

it to-night, but she refused, much to my annoyance. The ingredients, which had to do with roasted gazelle, were oil and coriander seed and – if my memory serves me – asafoetida.”

“Ugh!” Mrs. Jasher’s handkerchief went again to her mouth. “Say no more, Professor; your dish sounds horrid. I don’t wish to eat it, and be turned into a mummy before my time.”

“You would make a really beautiful mummy,” said Braddock, paying what he conceived was a compliment; “and, should you die, I shall certainly attend to your embalming, if you prefer that to cremation.”

“You dreadful man!” cried the widow, turning pale and shrinking. “Why, I really believe that you would like to see me packed away in one of those disgusting coffins.”

“Disgusting!” cried the outraged Professor, striking one of the brilliantly tinted cases. “Can you call so beautiful a specimen of sepulchral art disgusting? Look at the colors, at the regularity of the hieroglyphics – why, the history of the dead is set out in this magnificent series of pictures.” He adjusted his pince-nez and began to read, “The Osirian, Scemiophis that is a female name, Mrs. Jasher – who – ”

“I don’t want to have my history written on my coffin,” interrupted the widow hysterically, for this funereal talk frightened her. “It would take much more space than a mummy case upon which to write it. My life has been volcanic, I can tell you. By the way,” she added hurriedly, seeing that Braddock was on the eve of resuming the reading, “tell me about your Inca mummy. Has it arrived?”

The Professor immediately followed the false trail. “Not yet,” he said briskly, rubbing his smooth hands, “but in three days I expect The Diver will be at Pierside, and Sidney will bring the mummy on here. I shall unpack it at once and learn exactly how the ancient Peruvians embalmed their dead. Doubtless they learned the art from – ”

“The Egyptians,” ventured Mrs. Jasher rashly.

Braddock glared. “Nothing of the sort, dear lady,” he snorted angrily. “Absurd, ridiculous! I am inclined to believe that Egypt was merely a colony of that vast island of Atlantis mentioned by Plato. There – if my theory is correct – civilization begun, and the kings of Atlantis – doubtless the gods of historical tribes – governed the whole world, including that portion which we now term South America.”

“Do you mean to say that there were Yankees in those days?” inquired Mrs. Jasher frivolously.

The Professor tucked his hands under his shabby coattails and strode up and down the room warming his rage, which was provoked by such ignorance.

“Good heavens, madam, where have you lived?” he exclaimed explosively – “are you a fool, or merely an ignorant woman? I am talking of prehistoric times, thousands of years ago, when you were probably a stray atom embedded in the slime.”

“Oh, you horrid creature!” cried Mrs. Jasher indignantly, and was about to give Braddock her opinion, if only to show him that she could hold her own, when the door opened.

“How are you, Mrs. Jasher?” said Lucy, advancing.

“Here am I and here is Archie. Dinner is ready. And you – ”

“I am very hungry,” said Mrs. Jasher. “I have been called an atom of the slime,” then she laughed and took possession of young Hope.

Lucy wrinkled her brow; she did not approve of the widow’s man-annexing instinct.

CHAPTER III. A MYSTERIOUS TOMB

One member of the Braddock household was not included in the general staff, being a mere appendage of the Professor himself. This was a dwarfish, misshapen Kanaka, a pigmy in height, but a giant in breadth, with short, thick legs, and long, powerful arms. He had a large head, and a somewhat handsome face, with melancholy black eyes and a fine set of white teeth. Like most Polynesians, his skin was of a pale bronze and elaborately tattooed, even the cheeks and chin being scored with curves and straight lines of mystical import. But the most noticeable thing about him was his huge mop of frizzled hair, which, by some process, known only to himself, he usually dyed a vivid yellow. The flaring locks streaming from his head made him resemble a Peruvian image of the sun, and it was this peculiar coiffure which had procured for him the odd name of Cockatoo. The fact that this grotesque creature invariably wore a white drill suit, emphasized still more the suggestion of his likeness to an Australian parrot.

Cockatoo had come from the Solomon Islands in his teens to the colony of Queensland, to work on the plantations, and there the Professor had picked him up as his body servant. When Braddock returned to marry Mrs. Kendal, the boy had refused to leave him, although it was represented to the young savage that he was somewhat too barbaric for sober England. Finally, the Professor had consented to bring him over seas, and had never regretted doing so, for Cockatoo, finding his scientific master a true friend, worshipped him as a visible god. Having been captured when young by Pacific black-birders, he talked excellent English, and from contact with the necessary restraints of civilization was, on the whole, extremely well behaved. Occasionally, when teased by the villagers and his fellow-servants, he would break into childish rages, which bordered on the dangerous. But a word from Braddock always quieted him, and when penitent he would crawl like a whipped dog to the feet of his divinity. For the most part he lived entirely in the museum, looking after the collection and guarding it from harm. Lucy – who had a horror of the creature's uncanny looks – objected to Cockatoo waiting at the table, and it was only on rare occasions that he was permitted to assist the harassed parlormaid. On this night the Kanaka acted excellently as a butler, and crept softly round the table, attending to the needs of the diners. He was an admirable servant, deft and handy, but his blue-lined face and squat figure together with the obtrusively golden halo, rather worried Mrs. Jasher. And, indeed, in spite of custom, Lucy also felt uncomfortable when this gnome hovered at her elbow. It looked as though one of the fantastical idols from the museum below had come to haunt the living.

"I do not like that Golliwog," breathed Mrs. Jasher to her host, when Cockatoo was at the sideboard. "He gives me the creeps."

"Imagination, my dear lady, pure imagination. Why should we not have a picturesque animal to wait upon us?"

"He would wait picturesquely enough at a cannibal feast," suggested Archie, with a laugh.

"Don't!" murmured Lucy, with a shiver. "I shall not be able to eat my dinner if you talk so."

"Odd that Hope should say what he has said," observed Braddock confidently to the widow. "Cockatoo comes from a cannibal island, and doubtless has seen the consumption of human flesh. No, no, my dear lady, do not look so alarmed. I don't think he has eaten any, as he was taken to Queensland long before he could participate in such banquets. He is a very decent animal."

"A very dangerous one, I fancy," retorted Mrs. Jasher, who looked pale.

"Only when he loses his temper, and I'm always able to suppress that when it is at its worst. You are not eating your meat, my dear lady."

"Can you wonder at it, and you talk of cannibals?"

"Let us change the conversation to cereals," suggested Hope, whose appetite was of the best – "wheat, for instance. In this queer little village I notice the houses are divided by a field of wheat. It seems wrong somehow for corn to be bunched up with houses."

“That’s old Farmer Jenkins,” said Lucy vivaciously; “he owns three or four acres near the public-house and will not allow them to be built over, although he has been offered a lot of money. I noticed myself, Archie, the oddity of finding a cornfield surrounded by cottages. It’s like Alice in Wonderland.”

“But fancy any one offering money for land here,” observed Hope, toying with his claret glass, which had just been refilled, by the attentive Cockatoo, “at the Back-of-Beyond, as it were. I shouldn’t care to live here – the neighborhood is so desolate.”

“All the same you do live here!” interposed Mrs. Jasher smartly, and with a roguish glance at Lucy.

Archie caught the glance and saw the blush on Miss Kendal’s face.

“You have answered your question yourself, Mrs. Jasher,” he – said, smiling. “I have the inducement you hint at to remain here, and certainly, as a landscape painter, I admire the marshes and sunsets. As an artist and an engaged man I stop in Gartley, otherwise I should clear out. But I fail to see why a lady of your attractions should – ”

“I may have a sentimental reason also,” interrupted the widow, with a sly glance at the absent-minded Professor, who was drawing hieroglyphics on the table-cloth with a fork; “also, my cottage is cheap and very comfortable. The late Mr. Jasher did not leave me sufficient money to live in London. He was a consul in China, you know, and consuls are never very well paid. I will come in for a large income, however.”

“Indeed,” said Lucy politely, and wondering why Mrs. Jasher was so communicative. “Soon I hope.”

“It may be very soon. My brother, you know – a merchant in Pekin. He has come home to die, and is unmarried. When he does die, I shall go to London. But,” added the widow, meditatively and glancing again at the Professor, “I shall be sorry to leave dear Gartley. Still, the memory of happy hours spent in this house will always remain with me. Ah me! ah me!” and she put her handkerchief to her eyes.

Lucy telegraphed to Archie that the widow was a humbug, and Archie telegraphed back that he quite agreed with her. But the Professor, whom the momentary silence had brought back to the present century, looked up and asked Lucy if the dinner was finished.

“I have to do some work this evening,” said the Professor.

“Oh, father, when you said that you would take a holiday,” said Lucy reproachfully.

“I am doing so now. Look at the precious minutes I am wasting in eating, my dear. Life is short and much remains to be done in the way of Egyptian exploration. There is the sepulchre of Queen Tahoser. If I could only enter that,” and he sighed, while helping himself to cream.

“Why don’t you?” asked Mrs. Jasher, who was beginning to give up her pursuit of Braddock, for it was no use wooing a man whose interests centered entirely in Egyptian tombs.

“I have yet to discover it,” said the Professor simply; then, warming to the congenial theme, he glanced around and delivered a short historical lecture. “Tahoser was the chief wife and queen of a famous Pharaoh – the Pharaoh of the Exodus, in fact.”

“The one who was drowned in the Red Sea?” asked Archie idly.

“Why, yes – but that happened later. Before pursuing the Hebrews, – if the Mosaic account is to be believed, – this Pharaoh marched far into the interior of Africa, – the Libya of the ancients, – and conquered the natives of Upper Ethiopia. Being deeply in love with his queen, he took her with him on this expedition, and she died before the Pharaoh returned to Memphis. From records which I discovered in the museum of Cairo, I have reason to believe that the Pharaoh buried her with much pomp in Ethiopia, sacrificing, I believe, many prisoners at her gorgeous funeral rites. From the wealth of that Pharaoh – for wealthy he must have been on account of his numerous victories – and from the love he bore this princess, I am confident – confident,” added Braddock, striking the

table vehemently, “that when discovered, her tomb will be filled with riches, and may also contain documents of incalculable value.”

“And you wish to get the money?” asked Mrs. Jasher, who was rather bored.

The Professor rose fiercely. “Money! I care nothing for money. I desire to obtain the funeral jewelry and golden masks, the precious images of the gods, so as to place them in the British Museum. And the scrolls of papyrus buried with the mummy of Tahoser may contain an account of Ethiopian civilization, about which we know nothing. Oh, that tomb, – that tomb!” Braddock began to walk the room, quite forgetting that he had not finished his dinner. “I know the mountains whose entrails were pierced to form the sepulchre. Were I able to go to Africa, I am certain that I should discover the tomb. Ah, with what glory would my name be covered, were I so fortunate!”

“Why don’t you go to Africa, sir, and try?” asked Hope.

“Fool!” cried the Professor politely. “To fit out an expedition would take some five thousand pounds, if not more. I would have to penetrate through a hostile country to reach the chain of mountains I speak of, where I know this precious tomb is to be found. I need supplies, an escort, guns, camels, and all the rest of it. A leader must be obtained to manage the fighting men necessary to pass through this dangerous zone. It is no easy task to find the tomb of Tahoser. And yet if I could – if I could only get the money,” and he walked up and down with his head bent on his breast.

Mrs. Jasher was used to Braddock’s vagaries by this time, and merely continued to fan herself placidly.

“I wish I could help you with the expedition,” she said quietly. “I should like to have some of that lovely Egyptian jewelry myself. But I am quite a pauper, until my brother dies, poor man. Then – ” She hesitated.

“What then?” asked Braddock, wheeling.

“I shall aid you with pleasure.”

“It’s a bargain!” Braddock stretched out his hand.

“A bargain,” said Mrs. Jasher, accepting the grasp somewhat nervously, for she had not expected to be taken so readily at her word. A glance at Lucy revealed her nervousness.

“Do sit down, father, and finish your dinner,” said that young lady. “I am sure you will have more than enough to do when the mummy arrives.”

“Mummy – what mummy?” murmured Braddock, again beginning to eat.

“The Inca mummy.”

“Of course. The mummy of Inca Caxas, which Sidney is bringing from Malta. When I strip that corpse of its green bandages I shall find – ”

“Find what?” asked Archie, seeing that the Professor hesitated.

Braddock cast a swift look at his questioner.

“I shall find the peculiar mode of Peruvian embalming,” he replied abruptly, and somehow the way in which he spoke gave Hope the impression that the answer was an excuse. But before he could formulate the thought that Braddock was concealing something, Mrs. Jasher spoke frivolously.

“I hope your mummy has jewels,” she said.

“It has not,” replied Braddock sharply. “So far as I know, the Inca race never buried their dead with jewels.”

“But I have read in Prescott’s History that they did,” said Hope.

“Prescott! Prescott!” cried the Professor contemptuously, “a most unreliable authority. However, I’ll promise you one thing, Hope, that if there are any jewels, or jewelry, you shall have the lot.”

“Give me some, Mr. Hope,” cried the widow.

“I cannot,” laughed Archie; “the green mummy belongs to the Professor.”

"I cannot accept such a gift, Hope. Owing to circumstances I have been obliged to borrow the money from you; otherwise the mummy would have been acquired by some one else. But when I find the tomb of Queen Tahoser, I shall repay the loan."

"You have repaid it already," said Hope, looking at Lucy.

Braddock's eyes followed his gaze and his brows contracted. "Humph!" he muttered, "I don't know if I am right in consenting to Lucy's marriage with a pauper."

"Oh, father!" cried the girl, "Archie is not a pauper."

"I have enough for Lucy and me to live on," said Hope, although his face had flushed, "and, had I been a pauper I could not have given you that thousand pounds."

"You will be repaid – you will be repaid," said Braddock, waving his hand to dismiss the subject. "And now," he rose with a yawn, "if this tedious feast is at an end, I shall again seek my work."

Without a word of apology to the disgusted Mrs. Jasher, he trotted to the door, and there paused.

"By the way, Lucy," he said, turning, "I had a letter to-day from Random. He returns in his yacht to Pierside in two or three days. In fact, his arrival will coincide with that of The Diver."

"I don't see what his arrival has to do with me," said Lucy tartly.

"Oh, nothing at all – nothing at all," said Braddock airily, "only I thought – that is, but never mind, never mind. Cockatoo, come down with me. Good night! Good night!" and he disappeared.

"Well," said Mrs. Jasher, drawing along breath, "for rudeness and selfishness, commend me to a scientist. We might be all mud, for what notice he takes of us."

"Never mind," said Miss Kendal, rising, "come to the drawing-room and have some music. Archie, will you stop here?"

"No. I don't care to sit over my wine alone," said that young gentleman, rising. "I shall accompany you and Mrs. Jasher. And Lucy," he stopped her at the door, through which the widow had already passed, "what did your father mean by his hints concerning Random?"

"I think he regrets giving his consent to my marriage with you," she whispered back. "Did you not hear him talk about that tomb? He desires to get money for the expedition."

"From Random? What rubbish! Sooner than that – if our marriage is stopped by the beastly business – I'll sell out and –"

"You'll do nothing of the sort," interrupted the girl imperiously; "we must live if we marry. You have given my father enough."

"But if Random lends money for this expedition?"

"He does so at his own risk. I am not going to marry Sir Frank because of my step-father's requirements. He has no rights over me, and, whether he consents or not, I marry you."

"My darling!" and Archie kissed her before they followed Mrs. Jasher into the drawing-room. All the same, he foresaw trouble.

CHAPTER IV. THE UNEXPECTED

For the next two or three days, Archie felt decidedly, worried over his projected marriage with Lucy. Certainly he had – to put it bluntly – purchased Braddock's consent, and that gentleman could scarcely draw back from his plighted word, which had cost the lover so much. Nevertheless, Hope did not entirely, trust the Professor, as, from the few words which he had let drop at the dinner party, it was plain that he hankered after money with which to fit out the expedition in search of the mysterious tomb to which he had alluded. Archie knew, as did the Professor, that he could not supply the necessary five thousand pounds without practically ruining himself, and already he had crippled his resources in paying over the price of the green mummy. He had fondly believed that Braddock would have been satisfied with the relic of Peruvian humanity; but it seemed that the Professor, having got what he wanted, now clamored for what was at present beyond his reach. The mummy was his property, but he desired the contents of Queen Tahoser's tomb also. This particular moon, which he cried for, was a very expensive article, and Hope did not see how he could gain it.

Unless – and here came in the cause of Archie's worry – unless the five thousand pounds was borrowed from Sir Frank Random, the Professor would have to content himself with the Maltese mummy. But from what the young man had seen of Braddock's longing for the especial sepulchre, which he desired to loot, he believed that the scientist would not readily surrender his whim. Random could easily lend or give the money, since he was extremely rich, and extremely generous, but it was improbable that he would aid Braddock without a quid pro quo. As the sole desire of the baronet's heart was to make Lucy his wife, it could easily be guessed that he would only assist the Professor to realize his ambition on condition that the savant used his influence with his step-daughter. That meant the breaking of the engagement with Hope and the marriage of the girl to the soldier. Of course such a state of things would make Lucy unhappy; but Braddock cared very little for that. To gratify his craze for Egyptian research, he would be willing to sacrifice a dozen girls like Lucy.

Undoubtedly Lucy would refuse to be passed along from one man to another like a bale of goods, and Archie knew that, so far as in her lay, she would keep to her engagement, especially as she denied Braddock's right to dispose of her hand. All the same, the Professor, in spite of his cherubical looks, could make himself extremely disagreeable, and undoubtedly would do so if thwarted. The sole course that remained, should Braddock begin operations to break the present engagement, would be to marry Lucy at once. Archie would willingly have done so, but pecuniary difficulties stood in the way. He had never told any one of these, not even the girl he loved, but they existed all the same. For many years he had been assisting needy relatives, and thus had hampered himself, in spite of his income. By sheer force of will, so as to force Braddock into giving him Lucy, he had contrived to secure the necessary thousand pounds, without confusing the arrangements he had made to pay off certain debts connected with his domestic philanthropy; but this brought him to the end of his resources. In six months he hoped to be free to have his income entirely to himself, and then – small as it was – he could support a wife. But until the half year elapsed he could see no chance of marrying Lucy with any degree of comfort, and meanwhile she would be exposed to the persecutions of the Professor. Perhaps persecutions is too harsh a word, as Braddock was kind enough to the girl. Nevertheless, he was pertinacious in gaining his aims where his pet hobby was concerned, and undoubtedly, could he see any chance of obtaining the money from Random by selling his step-daughter, he would do so. Assuredly it was dishonorable to act in this way, but the Professor was a scientific Jesuit, and deemed that the end justified the means, when any glory to himself and gain to the British Museum was in question.

"But I may be doing him an injustice," said Archie, when he was explaining his fears to Miss Kendal on the third day after the dinner party. "After all, the Professor is a gentleman, and will probably hold to the bargain which he has made."

"I don't care whether he does or not," cried Lucy, who had a fine color and a certain amount of fire in her eyes. "I am not going to be bought and sold to forward these nasty scientific schemes. My father can say what he likes and do what he likes, but I marry you – to-morrow if you like."

"That's just it," said Archie, flushing, "we can't marry."

"Why?" she asked, much astonished.

Hope looked at the ground and drew patterns with his cane-point in the sand. They were seated in the hot sunshine – for the Indian summer still continued – under a moldering brick wall, which ran around the most delightful of kitchen gardens. This was situated at the back of the Pyramids, and contained a multiplicity of pot herbs and fruit trees and vegetables. It resembled the Fairy Garden in Madame D'Alnoy's story of *The White Cat*, and in the autumn yielded a plentiful crop of fine-flavored fruit. But now the trees were bare and the garden looked somewhat forlorn for lack of greenery. But in spite of the lateness of the season, Lucy often brought a book to read under the glowing wall, and there ripened like a peach in the warm sunshine. On this occasion she brought Archie into the old-world garden, as he had hinted at confidences. And the time had come to speak plainly, as Hope began to think that he had not treated Lucy quite fairly in hiding from her his momentarily embarrassed position.

"Why can't we marry at once?" asked Lucy, seeing that her lover held his peace and looked confused.

Hope did not reply directly. "I had better release you from your engagement," he said haltingly.

"Oh!" Lucy's nostrils dilated and she threw back her head scornfully. "And the other woman's name?"

"There is no other woman. I love you and you only. But – money."

"What about money? You have your income!"

"Oh yes – that is sure, small as it is. But I have incurred debts on behalf of an uncle and his family. These have embarrassed me for the moment, and so I cannot see my way to marrying you for at least six months, Lucy." He caught her hand. "I feel ashamed of myself that I did not tell you of this before. But I feared to lose you. Yet, on reflection, I see that it is dishonorable to keep you in the dark, and if you think that I have behaved badly – "

"Well, I do in a way," she interrupted quickly, "as your silence was quite unnecessary. Don't treat me as a doll, my dear. I wish to share your troubles as well as your joys. Come, tell me all about it."

"You are not angry?"

"Yes, I am – at your thinking I loved you so little as to be biased against our marriage because of money troubles. Pooh!" she flicked away a speck of dust from his coat, "I don't care that for such things."

"You are an angel," he cried ardently.

"I am a very practical girl just now," she retorted. "Go on, confess!"

Archie, thus encouraged, did so, and it was a very mild confession that she heard, involving a great deal of unnecessary sacrifice in helping a pauper uncle. Hope strove to belittle his good deeds as much as possible, but Lucy saw plainly the good heart that had dictated the giving up of his small income for some years. When in possession of all the facts, she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

"You are a silly old boy," she whispered. "As if what you tell me could make any difference to me!"

"But we can't be married for six months, dearest."

"Of course not. Do you believe that I as a woman can gather together my trousseau under six months? No, my dear. We must not marry in haste to repent at leisure. In another half year you will enjoy your own income, and then we can marry."

“But meanwhile,” said Archie, after kissing her, “the Professor will bother you to marry Random.”

“Oh no. He has sold me to you for one thousand pounds. There! There, do not say a single word. I am only teasing you. Let us say that my father has consented to my marriage with you, and cannot withdraw his word. Not that I care if he does. I am my own mistress.”

“Lucy!” – he took her hands again and looked into her eyes – “Braddock is a scientific lunatic, and would do anything to forward his aims with regard to this very expensive tomb, which he has set his heart on discovering. As I can’t lend or give the money, he is sure to apply to Random, and Random – ”

“Will want to marry me,” cried Lucy, rising. “No, my dear, not at all. Sir Frank is a gentleman, and when he learns that I am engaged to you, he will simply become a dear friend. There, don’t worry any more about the matter. You ought to have told me of your troubles before, but as I have forgiven you, there is no more to be said. In six months I shall become Mrs. Hope, and meanwhile I can hold my own against any inconvenience that my father may cause me.”

“But – ” He rose and began to remonstrate, anxious to abase himself still further before this angel of a maiden.

She placed her hand over his mouth. “Not another word, or I shall box your ears, sir – that is, I shall exercise the privilege of a wife before I become one. And now,” she slipped her arm within his, “let us go in and see the arrival of the precious mummy.”

“Oh, it has arrived then.”

“Not here exactly. My father expects it at three o’clock.”

“It is now a quarter to,” said Archie, consulting his watch. “As I have been to London all yesterday I did not know that The Diver had arrived at Pierside, How is Bolton?”

Lucy wrinkled her brows. “I am rather worried over Sidney,” she said in an anxious voice, “and so is my father. He had not appeared.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Well,” she looked at the ground in a pondering manner, “my father got a letter from Sidney yesterday afternoon, saying that the ship with the mummy and himself on board had arrived about four o’clock. The letter was sent on by special messenger and came at six.”

“Then it arrived in the evening and not in the afternoon?”

“How particular you are!” said Miss Kendal, with a shrug. “Well, then, Sidney said that he could not bring the mummy to this place last night as it was so late. He intended – so he told my father in the letter – to remove the case containing the mummy ashore to an inn near the wharf at Pierside, and there would remain the night so as to take care of it.”

“That’s all right,” said Hope, puzzled. “Where’s your difficulty?”

“A note came from the landlord of the inn this morning, saying that by direction of Mr. Bolton – that is Sidney, you know – he was sending the mummy in its case to Gartley on a lorry, and that it would arrive at three o’clock this afternoon.”

“Well?” asked Hope, still puzzled.

“Well?” she rejoined impatiently. “Can’t you see how strange it is that Sidney should let the mummy out of his sight, after guarding it so carefully not only from Malta to England, but all the night in Pierside at that hotel? Why doesn’t he bring the mummy here himself, and come on with the lorry?”

“There is no explanation – no letter from Sidney Bolton?”

“None. He wrote yesterday, as I stated, saying that he would keep the case in the hotel, and send it on this morning.”

“Did he use the word ‘send,’ or the word ‘bring’?”

“He said ‘send.’”

“Then that shows he did not intend to bring it himself.”

“But why should he not do so?”

"I daresay he will explain when he appears."

"I am very sorry for him when he does appear," said Lucy seriously, "for my father is furious. Why, this precious mummy, for which so much has been paid, might have been lost."

"Pooh! Who would steal a thing like that?"

"A thing like that is worth nearly one thousand pounds," said Lucy in a dry tone, "and if anyone got wind of it, stealing would be easy, since Sidney, as appears likely, has sent on the case unguarded."

"Well, let us go in and see if Sidney arrives with the case."

They passed out of the garden and sauntered round to the front of the house. There, standing in the roadway, they beheld a ponderous lorry with a rough-looking driver standing at the horses' heads. The front door of the house was open, so the mummy case had apparently arrived before its time, and had been taken to Braddock's museum while they were chatting in the kitchen garden.

"Did Mr. Bolton come with the case?" asked Lucy, leaning over the railings and addressing the driver.

"No one came, miss, except myself and my two mates, who have taken the case indoor." The driver jerked a coarse thumb over his shoulder.

"Was Mr. Bolton at the hotel, where the case remained for the night?"

"No, miss – that is, I dunno who Mr. Bolton is. The landlord of the Sailor's Rest told me and my mates to take the case to this here house, and we done it. That's all I know, miss."

"Strange," murmured Lucy, walking to the front door. "What do you think, Archie? Isn't it strange?"

Hope nodded. "But I daresay Bolton will explain his absence," said he, following her. "He will arrive in time to open the mummy case along with the Professor."

"I hope so," said Miss Kendal, who looked much perplexed. "I can't understand Sidney abandoning the case, when it might so easily have been stolen. Come in and see my father, Archie," and she passed into the house, followed by the young man, whose curiosity was now aroused. As they entered the door, the two men who had taken in the case blundered out and shortly drove away on the lorry towards Jessum railway station.

In the museum they found Braddock purple with rage and swearing vigorously. He was staring at a large packing case, which had been set up on end against the wall, while beside him crouched Cockatoo, holding chisels and hammers and wedges necessary to open the treasure trove.

"So the precious mummy has arrived, father," said Lucy, who saw that the Professor was furious. "Are you not pleased?"

"Pleased! pleased!" shouted the angry man of science. "How can I be pleased when I see how badly the case has been treated? See how it has been bruised and battered and shaken! I'll have an action against Captain Hervey of The Diver if my mummy has been injured. Sidney should have taken better care of so precious an object."

"What does he say?" asked Archie, glancing round the museum to see if the delinquent had arrived.

"Say!" shouted Braddock again, and snatching a chisel from Cockatoo. "Oh, what can he say when he is not here?"

"Not here?" said Lucy, more and more surprised at the unaccountable absence of Braddock's assistant. "Where is he, then?"

"I don't know. I wish I did; I'd have him arrested for neglecting to watch over this case. As it is, when he comes back I'll dismiss him from my employment. He can go back to his infernal laundry work along with his old witch of a mother."

"But why hasn't Bolton come back, sir?" asked Hope sharply.

Braddock struck a furious blow at the head of the chisel which he had inserted into the case.

"I want to know that. He brought the case to the Sailor's Rest, and should have come on with it this morning. Instead of doing so, he tells the landlord – a most unreliable man – to send it on. And

my precious mummy – the mummy that has cost nine hundred pounds,” cried Braddock, working furiously, and battering the chisel as though it were Bolton’s head, “is left to be stolen by any scientific thief that comes along.” While the Professor, assisted by Cockatoo, loosened the lid of the packing case, a mild voice was heard at the door. Lucy turned, as did Archie, to see Widow Anne curtsying on the threshold of the door.

Braddock himself took no notice of her entrance, being occupied with his task, and even while doing it swore scientifically under his breath. He was furious against Bolton for neglect of duty, and Hope rather sympathized with him. It was a serious matter to have left a valuable object like the green mummy to the rough care of laborers.

“I beg your pardon, my lady,” whimpered Widow Anne, who looked more lean and rusty and dismal than ever; “but has my Sid come? I saw the cart and the coffin. Where’s my boy?”

“Coffin! coffin!” bellowed Braddock angrily between thunder blows. “What do you mean by calling this case a coffin?”

“Well, it do hold one of them camphorated corps, sir,” said Mrs. Bolton with another curtsy. “My boy Sid told me as much, afore he went to them furren parts.”

“Have you seen him since he returned?” questioned Lucy, while Braddock and Cockatoo strained at the lid, now nearly off.

“Why, I ain’t set eyes on him,” moaned the widow dismally, “and summat tells me as I never will.”

“Don’t talk rubbish, woman,” said Archie tartly, for he did not wish Lucy to be upset again by this ancient ghoul.

“Woman indeed, sir. I’d have you know, – oh!” the widow jumped and quavered as the lid of the packing case fell on the floor with a bang. “Oh lor, sir, the start you did give me!”

But Braddock had no eyes for her, and no ears for anyone. He pulled lustily at the straw packing, and soon the floor was littered with rubbish. But no green case appeared, and no mummy. Suddenly Widow Anne shrieked again.

“There’s my Sid – dead – oh, my son, dead! dead!”

She spoke truly. The body of Sidney Bolton was before them.

CHAPTER V. MYSTERY

After that one cry of agony from Widow Anne, there was silence for quite one minute. The terrible contents of the packing case startled and terrified all present. Faint and white, Lucy clung to the arm of her lover to keep herself from sinking to the ground, as Mrs. Bolton had done. Archie stared at the grotesque rigidity of the body, as though he had been changed into stone, while Professor Braddock stared likewise, scarcely able to credit the evidence of his eyes. Only the Kanaka was unmoved and squatted on his hams, indifferently surveying the living and the dead. As a savage he could not be expected to have the nerves of civilized man.

Braddock, who had dropped chisel and hammer in the first movement of surprise, was the quickest to recover his powers of speech. The sole question he asked, revealed the marvelous egotism of a scientist, nominated by one idea. "Where is the mummy of Inca Caxas?" he murmured with a bewildered air.

Widow Anne, groveling on the floor, pulled her gray locks into wild confusion, and uttered a cry of mingled rage and grief. "He asks that? he asks that?" she cried, stammering and choking, "when he has murdered my poor boy Sid."

"What's that?" demanded Braddock sharply, and recovering from a veritable stupor, which the disappearance of the mummy and the sight of his dead assistant had thrown him into. "Kill your son: how could I kill your son? What advantage would it have been to me had I killed your son?"

"God knows! God knows!" sobbed the old woman, "but you –"

"Mrs. Bolton, you are raving," said Hope hastily, and strove to raise her from the floor. "Let Miss Kendal take you away. And you go, Lucy: this sight is too terrible for your eyes."

Lucy, inarticulate with nervous fear, nodded and tottered towards the door of the museum; but Widow Anne refused to be lifted to her feet.

"My boy is dead," she wailed; "my boy Sid is a corp as I saw him in my dream. In the coffin, too, cut to pieces –"

"Rubbish! rubbish!" interrupted Braddock, peering into the depths of the packing case. "I can see no wound."

Mrs. Bolton leaped to her feet with an agility surprising in so aged a woman. "Let me find the wound," she screamed, throwing herself forward.

Hope caught her back and forced her towards the door. "No! The body must not be disturbed until the police see it," he said firmly.

"The police – ah, yes, the police," remarked Braddock quickly, "we must send for the police to Pierside and tell them my mummy has been stolen."

"That my boy has been murdered," screeched Widow Anne, waving her skinny arms, and striving to break from Archie. "You wicked old devil to kill my darling Sid. If he hadn't gone to them furren parts he wouldn't be a corp now. But I'll have the law: you'll be hanged, you – you –"

Braddock lost his patience under this torrent of unjust accusations and rushed towards Mrs. Bolton, dragging Cockatoo by the arm. In less time than it takes to tell, he had swept both Archie and the widow out into the hall, where Lucy was trembling, and Cockatoo, by his master's order, was locking the door.

"Not a thing shall be touched until the police come. Hope, you are, a witness that I have not meddled with the dead: you were present when I opened the packing case: you have seen that a useless body has been substituted for a valuable mummy. And yet this old witch dares – dares –" Braddock stamped and grew incoherent from sheer rage.

Archie soothed him, leaving go of Widow Anne's arm to do so. "Hush! hush!" said the young man quietly, "the poor woman does not know what she is saying. I'll go for the police and –"

“No,” interrupted the Professor sharply; “Cockatoo can go for the inspector of Pierside. I shall call in the village constable. Meanwhile you keep the key of the museum,” he dropped it into Hope’s breast-pocket, “so that you and the police may be sure the body has not been touched. Widow Anne, go home,” he turned angrily on the old creature, who was now trembling after her burst of rage, “and don’t dare to come here again until you ask pardon for what you have said.”

“I want to be near my poor boy’s corp,” wailed Widow Anne, “and I’m very sorry, Perfesser. I didn’t mean to – ”

“But you have, you witch. Go away!” and he stamped.

But by this time Lucy had recovered her self-possession, which had been sorely shaken by the sight of the dead. “Leave her to me,” she observed, taking Mrs. Bolton’s arm, and leading her towards the stairs. “I shall take her to my room and give her some brandy. Father, you must make some allowance for her natural grief, and – ”

Braddock stamped again. “Take her away! take her away!” he cried testily, “and keep her out of my sight. Is it not enough to have lost an invaluable assistant, and a costly mummy of infinite historical and archaeological value, without my being accused of – of – oh!” The Professor choked with rage and shook his hand in the air.

Seeing that he was unable to speak, Lucy seized the opportunity of the lull in the storm, and hurried the old woman, sobbing and moaning, up the stairs. By this time the shrieks of Mrs. Bolton, and the wordy wrath of Braddock, had drawn the cook and her husband, along with the housemaid, from the basement to the ground floor. The sight of their surprised faces only added to their master’s anger, and he advanced furiously.

“Go downstairs again: go down, I tell you!”

“But if there’s anything wrong, sir,” ventured the gardener timidly.

“Everything is wrong. My mummy has been lost: Mr. Bolton has been murdered. The police are coming, and – and – ” He choked again.

But the servants waited to hear no more. The mere mention of the words “murder” and “police” sent them, pale-faced and startled, down to the basement, where they huddled like a flock of sheep. Braddock looked around for Hope, but found that he had opened the front door, and had vanished. But he was too distracted to think why Archie had gone, and there was much to do in putting things straight. Beckoning to Cockatoo, he stalked into a side room, and scribbled a pencil note to the inspector of police at Pierside, telling him of what had happened, and asking him to come at once to the Pyramids with his underlings. This communication he dispatched by Cockatoo, who flew to get his bicycle. In a short time he was riding at top speed to Brefort, which was on this side of the river; facing Pierside. There he could ferry across to the town and deliver his terrible message.

Having done all that he could until the police came, Braddock walked out of the front door and into the roadway to see if Archie was in sight. He could not see the young man, but, as luck would have it, and by one of those coincidences which are much more common than is suspected, he saw the Gartley doctor walking briskly past.

“Hi!” shouted the Professor, who was purple in the face and perspiring profusely. “Hi, there, Dr. Robinson! I want you. Come! come! hurry, man, hurry!” he ended in a testy rage, and the doctor, knowing Braddock’s eccentricities, advanced with a smile. He was a slim, dark, young medical practitioner with an amiable countenance, which argued of no mighty intelligence.

“Well, Professor,” he remarked quietly, “do you want me to attend you for apoplexy? Take your time, my dear sir – take your time.” He patted the scientist on the shoulder to soothe his clamorous rage. “You are already purple in the face. Don’t let your blood rush to your head.”

“Robinson, you’re a – a – a fool!” shouted Braddock, glaring at the suave looks of the doctor. “I am in perfect health, damn you, sir.”

“Then Miss Kendal – ?”

“She is quite well also. But Bolton – ?”

“Oh!” Robinson looked interested. “Has he returned with your mummy?”

“Mummy,” bellowed Braddock, stamping like an insane Cupid – “the mummy hasn’t arrived.”

“Really, Professor, you surprise me,” said the doctor mildly.

“I’ll surprise you more,” growled Braddock, dragging Robinson into the garden and up the steps.

“Gently! gently! my dear sir,” said the doctor, who really began to think that much learning had made the Professor mad. “Didn’t Bolton – ?”

“Bolton is dead, you fool.”

“Dead!” The doctor nearly tumbled backward down the steps.

“Murdered. At least I think he is murdered. At all events he arrived here to-day in the packing case, which should have contained my green mummy. Come in and examine the body at once. No,” Braddock pushed back the doctor just as fiercely as he had dragged him forward, “wait until the constable comes. I want him to see the body first, and to observe that nothing has been touched. I have sent for the Pierside inspector to come. There will be all sorts of trouble,” cried Braddock despairingly, “and my work – most important work – will be delayed, just because this silly young ass Sidney Bolton chose to be murdered,” and the Professor stormed up and down the hall, shaking impotent arms in the air.

“Good heavens!” stammered Robinson, who was young in years and somewhat new to his profession, “you – you must be mistaken.”

“Mistaken! mistaken!” shouted Braddock with another glare. “Come and see that poor fellow’s body then. He is dead, murdered.”

“By whom?”

“Hang you, sir, how should I know?”

“In what way has he been murdered? Stabbed, shot, or – ”

“I don’t know – I don’t know! Such a nuisance to lose a man like Bolton – an invaluable assistant. What I shall do without him I really don’t know. And his mother has been here, making no end of a fuss.”

“Can you blame her?” said the doctor, recovering his breath. “She is his mother, after all, and poor Bolton was her only son.”

“I am not denying the relationship, confound you!” snapped the Professor, ruffling his hair until it stood up like the crest of a parrot. “But she needn’t – ah!” He glanced through the open door, and then rushed to the threshold. “Here is Hope and Painter. Come in – come in. I have the doctor here. Hope, you have the key. You observe, constable, that Mr. Hope has the key. Open the door: open the door, and let us see the meaning of this dreadful crime.”

“Crime, sir?” queried the constable, who had heard all that was known from Hope, but now wished to hear what Braddock had to say.

“Yes, crime: crime, you idiot! I have lost my mummy.”

“But I thought, sir, that a murder – ”

“Oh, of course – of course,” gabbled the Professor, as if the death was quite a minor consideration. “Bolton’s dead – murdered, I suppose, as he could scarcely have nailed himself down in a packing case. But it’s my precious mummy I am thinking of, Painter. A mummy – if you know what a mummy is – that cost me nine hundred pounds. Go in, man. Go in and don’t stand there gaping. Don’t you see that Mr. Hope has opened the door. I have sent Cockatoo to Pierside to notify the police. They will soon be here. Meanwhile, doctor, you can examine the body, and Painter here can give his opinion as to who stole my mummy.”

“The assassin stole the mummy,” said Archie, as the four men entered the museum, “and substituted the body of the murdered man.”

“That is all A B C,” snapped Braddock, issuing into the vast room, “but we want to know the name of the assassin, if we are to revenge Bolton and get back my mummy. Oh, what a loss! – what

a loss! I have lost nine hundred pounds, or say one thousand, considering the cost of bringing Inca Caxas to England.”

Archie forebore to remind the Professor as to who had really lost the money, as the scientist was not in a fit state to be talked to reasonably, and seemed much more concerned because his Peruvian relic of humanity had been lost than for the terrible death of Sidney Bolton. But by this time Painter – a fair-haired young constable of small intelligence – was examining the packing case and surveying the dead. Dr. Robinson also looked with a professional eye, and Braddock, wiping his purple face and gasping with exhaustion, sat down on a stone sarcophagus. Archie, folding his arms, leaned against the wall and waited quietly to hear what the experts in crime and medicine would say.

The packing case was deep and wide and long, made of tough teak and banded at intervals with iron bands. Within this was a case of tin, which, when it held the mummy, had been soldered up; impervious to air and water. But the unknown person who had extracted the mummy, to replace it by a murdered man’s body, had cut open the tin casing with some sharp instrument. There was straw round the tin casing and straw within, amongst which the body of the unfortunate young man was placed. Rigor mortis had set in, and the corpse, with straight legs and hands placed stiffly by its side, lay against the back of the tin casing surrounded more or less by the straw packing, or at least by so much as the Professor had not torn away. The face looked dark, and the eyes were wide open and staring. Robinson stepped forward and ran his hand round the neck. Uttering an ejaculation, he removed the woollen scarf which the dead man had probably worn to keep himself from catching cold, and those who looked on saw that a red-colored window cord was tightly bound about the throat of the dead.

“The poor devil has been strangled,” said the doctor quietly. “See: the assassin has left the bow-string on, and had the courage to place over it this scarf, which belonged to Bolton.”

“How do you know that, sir?” asked Painter heavily.

“Because Widow Anne knitted that scarf for Bolton before he went to Malta. He showed it to me, laughingly, remarking that his mother evidently thought that he was going to Lapland.”

“When did he show it to you, sir?”

“Before he went to Malta, of course,” said Robinson in mild surprise. “You don’t suppose he showed it to me when he returned. When did he return to England?” he asked the Professor, with an afterthought.

“Yesterday afternoon, about four o’clock,” replied Braddock.

“Then, from the condition of the body” – the doctor felt the dead flesh – “he must have been murdered last night. H’m! With your permission, Painter, I’ll examine the corpse.”

The constable shook his head. “Better wait, sir, until the inspector comes,” he said in his unintelligent way. “Poor Sid! Why, I knew him. He was at school with me, and now he’s dead. Who killed him?”

None of his listeners could answer this question.

CHAPTER VI. THE INQUEST

Like a geographical Lord Byron, the isolated village of Gartley awoke one morning to find itself famous. Previously unknown, save to the inhabitants of Brefort, Jessum, and the surrounding country, and to the soldiers stationed in the Fort, it became a nine days' centre of interest. Inspector Date of Pierside arrived with his constables to inquire into the reported crime, and the local journalists, scenting sensation, came flying to Gartley on bicycles and in traps. Next morning London was duly advised that a valuable mummy was missing, and that the assistant of Professor Braddock, who had been sent to fetch it from Malta, was murdered by strangulation. In a couple of days the three kingdoms were ringing with the news of the mystery.

And a mystery it proved, to be, for, in spite of Inspector Date's efforts and the enterprise of Scotland Yard detectives summoned by the Professor, no clue could be found to the identity of the assassin. Briefly, the story told by the newspapers ran as follows:

The tramp steamer *Diver* – Captain George Hervey in command – had berthed alongside the Pierside jetty at four o'clock on a Wednesday afternoon in mid-September, and some two hours later Sidney Bolton removed the case, containing the green mummy, ashore.

As it was impossible to carry the case to the Pyramids on that night, Bolton had placed it in his bedroom at the *Sailor's Rest*, a mean little public-house of no very savory reputation near the water's edge. He was last seen alive by the landlord and the barmaid, when, after a drink of harmless ginger-beer, he retired to bed at eight, leaving instructions to the landlord – overheard by the barmaid – that the case was to be sent on next day to Professor Braddock of Gartley. Bolton hinted that he might leave the hotel early and would probably precede the case to its destination, so as to advise Professor Braddock – necessarily anxious – of its safe arrival. Before retiring he paid his bill, and deposited in the landlord's hand a small sum of money, so that the case might be sent across stream to Brefort, thence to be taken in a lorry to the Pyramids. There was no sign, said the barmaid and the landlord, that Bolton contemplated suicide, or that he feared sudden death. His whole demeanor was cheerful, and he expressed himself exceedingly glad to be in England once more.

At eleven on the ensuing morning, a persistent knocking and a subsequent opening of the door of Bolton's bedroom proved that he was not in the room, although the tumbled condition of the bed-clothes proved that he had taken some rest. No one in the hotel thought anything of Bolton's absence, since he had hinted at an early departure, although the chamber-maid considered it strange that no one had seen him leave the hotel. The landlord obeyed Bolton's instructions and sent the case, in charge of a trustworthy man, to Brefort across the river. There a lorry was procured, and the case was taken to Gartley, where it arrived at three in the afternoon. It was then that Professor Braddock, in opening the case, discovered the body of his ill-fated assistant, rigid in death, and with a red window cord tightly bound round the throat of the corpse. At once, said the newspapers, the Professor sent for the police, and later insisted that the smartest Scotland Yard detectives should come down to elucidate the mystery. At present both police and detectives were engaged in searching for a needle in a haystack, and so far had met with no success.

Such was the tale set forth in the local and London and provincial journals. Widely as it was discussed, and many as were the theories offered, no one could fathom the mystery. But all agreed that the failure of the police to find a clue was inexplicable. It was difficult enough to understand how the assassin could have murdered Bolton and opened the packing case, and removed the mummy to replace it by the body of his victim in a house filled with at least half a dozen people; but it was yet more difficult to guess how the criminal had escaped with so noticeable an object as the mummy, bandaged with emerald-hued woollen stuff woven from the hair of Peruvian llamas. If the culprit was one who thieved and murdered for gain, he could scarcely sell the mummy without being arrested, since all England was ringing with the news of its disappearance; if a scientist, impelled to robbery

by an archaeological mania, he could not possibly keep possession of the mummy without someone learning that he possessed it. Meanwhile the thief and his plunder had vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed both. Great was the wonder at the cleverness of the criminal, and many were the solutions offered to account for the disappearance. One enterprising weekly paper, improving on the Limerick craze, offered a furnished house and three pounds a week for life to the fortunate person who could solve the mystery. As yet no one had won the prize, but it was early days yet, and at least five thousand amateur detectives tried to work out the problem.

Naturally Hope was sorry for the untimely death of Bolton, whom he had known as an amiable and clever young man. But he was also annoyed that his loan of the money to Braddock should have been, so to speak, nullified by the loss of the mummy. The Professor was perfectly furious at his double loss of assistant and embalmed corpse, and was only prevented from offering a reward for the discovery of the thief and assassin by the painful fact that he had no money. He hinted to Archie that a reward should be offered, but that young man, backed by Lucy, declined to throw away good money after bad. Braddock took this refusal so ill, that Hope felt perfectly convinced he would try and wriggle out of his promise to permit the marriage and persuade Lucy to engage herself to Sir Frank Random, should the baronet be willing to offer a reward. And Hope was also certain that Braddock, a singularly obstinate man, would never rest until he once more had the mummy in his possession. That the murderer of Sidney Bolton should be hanged was quite a minor consideration with the Professor.

Meanwhile Widow Anne had insisted on the dead body being taken to her cottage, and Braddock, with the consent of Inspector Date, willingly agreed, as he did not wish a newly dead corpse to remain under his roof. Therefore, the remains of the unfortunate young man were taken to his humble home, and here the body was inspected by the jury when the inquest took place in the coffee-room of the Warrior Inn, immediately opposite Mrs. Bolton's abode. There was a large crowd round the inn, as people had come from far and wide to hear the verdict of the jury, and Gartley, for the first and only time in its existence, presented the aspect of an August Bank Holiday.

The Coroner – an elderly doctor with a short temper; caused by the unrealized ambition of a country practitioner – opened the proceedings by a snappy speech, in which he set forth the details of the crime in the same bold fashion in which they had been published by the newspapers. A plan of the Sailor's Rest was then placed before the jury, and the Coroner drew the attention of the twelve good and lawful men to the fact that the bedroom occupied by deceased was on the ground floor, with a window looking out on to the river, merely a stone-throw away.

"So you will see, gentlemen," said the Coroner, "that the difficulty of the assassin in leaving the hotel with his plunder was not so great as has been imagined. He had merely to open the window in the quiet hours of the night, when no one was about, and pass the mummy through to his accomplice, who probably waited without. It is also probable that a boat was waiting by the bank of the river, and the mummy having been placed in this, the assassin and his friend could row away into the unknown without the slightest chance of discovery."

Inspector Date – a tall, thin, upright man with an iron jaw and a severe expression – drew the Coroner's attention to the fact that there was no evidence to show that the assassin had an accomplice.

"What you have stated, sir, may have occurred," rasped Date in a military voice, "but we cannot prove the truth of your assumption, since the evidence at our disposal is merely circumstantial."

"I never suggested that it was anything else," snapped the Coroner. "You waste time in traversing my statements. Say what you have to say, Mr. Inspector, and produce your witnesses – if you have any."

"There are no witnesses who can swear to the identity of the murderer," said Inspector Date coldly, and determined not to be ruffled by the apparent antagonism of the Coroner. "The criminal has vanished, and no one can guess his name or occupation, or even the reason which led him to slay the deceased."

Coroner: "The reason is plain. He wanted the mummy."

Inspector: "Why should he want the mummy?"

Coroner: "That is what we wish to find out."

Inspector: "Exactly, sir. We wish to learn the reason why the murderer strangled the deceased."

Coroner: "We know that reason. What we wish to know is why the murderer stole the mummy. And I would point out to you, Mr. Inspector, that, as yet, we do not even know the sex of the assassin. It might be a woman who murdered the deceased."

Professor Braddock, who was seated near the door of the coffee-room, being even more irascible than usual, rose to contradict.

"There isn't a scrap of evidence to show that the murderer was a woman."

Coroner: "You are out of order, sir. And I would point out that, as yet, Inspector Date has produced no witnesses."

Date glared. He and the Coroner were old enemies, and always sparred when they met. It seemed likely, that the peppery little Professor would join in the quarrel and that there would be a duel of three; but Date, not wishing for an adverse report in the newspapers as to his conduct of the case, contented himself with the glare aforesaid, and, after a short speech, called Braddock. The Professor, looking more like a cross cherub than ever, gave his evidence tartly. It seemed ridiculous to his prejudiced mind that all this fuss should be made over Bolton's body, when the mummy; was still missing. However, as the discovery of the criminal would assuredly lead to the regaining of that precious Peruvian relic, he curbed his wrath and answered the Coroner's questions in a fairly amiable fashion.

And, after all, Braddock had very little to tell. He had, so he stated, seen an advertisement in a newspaper that a mummy, swathed in green bandages, was to be sold in Malta; and had sent his assistant to buy it and bring it home. This was done, and what happened after the mummy left the tramp steamer was known to everyone, through the medium of the press.

"With which," grumbled the Professor, "I do not agree."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the Coroner sharply.

"I mean, sir," snapped Braddock, equally sharply, "that the publicity given by the newspapers to these details will probably place the assassin on his guard."

"Why not on her guard?" persisted the Coroner wilfully.

"Rubbish! rubbish! rubbish! My mummy wasn't stolen by a woman. What the devil would a woman want with my mummy?"

"Be more respectful, Professor."

"Then talk sense, doctor," and the two glared at one another.

After a moment or two the situation was adjusted in silence, and the Coroner asked a few questions, pertinent to the matter in hand.

"Had the deceased any enemies?"

"No, sir, he hadn't, not being famous enough, or rich enough, or clever enough to excite the hatred of mankind. He was simply an intelligent young man, who worked excellently when supervised by me. His mother is a washerwoman in this village, and the lad brought washing to my house. Noting that he was intelligent and was anxious to rise above his station, I engaged him as my assistant and trained him to do my work."

"Archaeological work?"

"Yes. I don't wash, whatever Bolton's mother may, do. Don't ask silly questions."

"Be more respectful," said the Coroner again, and grew red. "Have you any idea as to the name of anyone who desired to obtain possession of this mummy?"

"I daresay dozens of scientists in my line of business would have liked to get the corpse of Inca Caxas. Such as – " and he reeled out a list of celebrated men.

"Nonsense," growled the Coroner. "Famous men like those you mention would not murder even for the sake of obtaining this mummy."

"I never said that they would," retorted Braddock, "but you wanted to hear who would like to have the mummy; and I have told you."

The Coroner waived the question.

"Was there any jewelry on the mummy likely to attract a thief?" he asked.

"How the devil should I know?" fumed the Professor. "I never unpacked the mummy; I never even saw it. Any jewelry buried with Inca Caxas would be bound up in the bandages. So far as I know those bandages were never unwound."

"You can throw no light on the subject?"

"No, I can't. Bolton went to get the mummy and brought it home. I understood that he would personally bring his precious charge to my house; but he didn't. Why, I don't know."

When the Professor stepped down, still fuming at what he considered were the unnecessary questions of the Coroner, the young doctor who had examined the corpse was called. Robinson deposed that deceased had been strangled by means of a red window cord, and that, from the condition of the body, he would judge death had taken place some twelve hours more or less before the opening of the packing case by Braddock. That was at three o'clock on Thursday afternoon, so in witness's opinion the crime was committed between two and three on the previous morning.

"But I can't be absolutely certain as to the precise hour," added witness; "at any rate poor Bolton was strangled after midnight and before three o'clock."

"That is a wide margin," grumbled the Coroner, jealous of his brother-practitioner. "Were there any, other wounds on the body?"

"No. You can see for yourself, if you have inspected the corpse."

The Coroner, thus reproved, glared, and Widow Anne appeared after Robinson retired. She stated, with many sobs, that her son had no enemies and was a good, kind young man. She also related her dream, but this was flouted by the Coroner, who did not believe in the occult. However, the narration of her premonition was listened to with deep interest by those in the court. Widow Anne concluded her evidence by asking how she was to live now that her boy Sid was dead. The Coroner professed himself unable to answer this question, and dismissed her.

Samuel Quass, the landlord of the Sailor's Rest, was next called. He proved to be a big, burly, red-haired, red-whiskered man, who looked like a sailor. And indeed a few questions elicited the information that he was a retired sea-captain. He gave his evidence gruffly but honestly, and although he kept so shady a public-house, seemed straightforward enough. He told much the same tale as had appeared in the newspapers. In the hotel on that night there was only himself, his wife and two children, and the staff of servants. Bolton retired to bed saying that he might start early for Gartley, and paid one pound to get the case taken across to river and placed on a lorry. As Bolton had vanished next morning, Quass obeyed instructions, with the result which everyone knew. He also stated that he did not know the case contained a mummy.

"What did you think it contained?" asked the Coroner quickly.

"Clothes and curios from foreign parts," said the witness coolly.

"Did Mr. Bolton tell you so?"

"He told me nothing about the case," growled the witness, "but he chatted a lot about Malta, which I know well, having put into that port frequent when a sailor."

"Did he hint at any rows taking place at Malta?"

"No, he didn't."

"Did he say that he had enemies?"

"No, he didn't."

"Did he strike you as a man who was in fear of death?"

"No, he didn't," said the witness for the third time. "He seemed happy enough. I never thought for one moment that he was dead until I heard how his body had been found in the packing case."

The Coroner asked all manner of questions, and so did Inspector Date; but all attempts to incriminate Quass were vain. He was bluff and straightforward, and told – so far as could be judged – everything he knew. There was nothing for it but to dismiss him, and Eliza Flight was called as the last witness.

She also proved to be the most important, as she knew several things which she had not told to her master, or to the reporters, or even to the police. On being asked why she had kept silence, she said that her desire was to obtain any reward that might be offered; but as she had heard that there would be no reward, she was willing to tell what she knew. It was an important piece of evidence.

The girl stated that Bolton had retired to bed at eight on the ground floor, and the bedroom had a window – as marked in the plan – which looked on to the river a stone-throw distant. At nine or a trifle later witness went out to have a few words with her lover. In the darkness she saw that the window was open and that Bolton was talking to an old woman muffled in a shawl. She could not see the woman's face, nor judge of her stature, as she was stooping down to listen to Bolton. Witness did not take much notice, as she was in a hurry to see her lover. When she returned past the window at ten o'clock it was closed and the light was extinguished, so she thought that Mr. Bolton was asleep.

"But, to tell the truth," said Eliza Flight, "I never thought anything of the matter at all. It was only after the murder that I saw how important it was I should remember everything."

"And you have?"

"Yes, sir," said the girl, honestly enough. "I have told you everything that happened on that night. Next morning –" She hesitated.

"Well, what about next morning?"

"Mr. Bolton had locked his door. I know that, because a few minutes after eight on the night before, not knowing he had retired. I tried to enter the room and make ready the bed for the night. He sang out through the door – which was locked, for I tried it – that he was in bed. That was a lie also, as after nine I saw him talking to the woman at the window."

"You previously said an old woman," said the Coroner, referring to his notes. "How do you know she was old?"

"I can't say if she was old or young," said the witness candidly; "it's only a manner of speaking. She had a dark shawl over her head and a dark dress. I couldn't say if she was old or young, fair or dark, stout or lean, tall or short. The night was dark."

The Coroner referred to the plan.

"There is a gas-lamp near the window of the bedroom. Did you not see her in that light?"

"Oh, yes, sir; but just for a moment. I took very little notice. Had I known that the gentleman was to be murdered, I should have taken a great deal of notice."

"Well, about this locked door?"

"It was locked over-night, sir, but when I went next morning, it was not locked. I knocked and knocked, but could get no answer. As it was eleven, I thought the gentleman was sleeping very long, so I tried to open the door. It was not locked, as I say – but," added witness with emphasis, "the window was snibbed and the blind was down."

"That is natural enough," said the Coroner. "Mr. Bolton, after his interview with the woman, would of course snib the window, and pull down the blind. When he went away next morning he would unlock the door."

"Begging your pardon, sir, but, as we know, he didn't go away next morning, being in the packing case, nailed down."

The Coroner could have kicked himself for the very natural mistake he had made, for he saw a derisive grin on the faces around him, and particularly on that of Inspector Date.

"Then the assassin must have gone out by the door," he said weakly.

"Then I don't know how he got out," cried Eliza Flight, "for I was up at six and the front and back doors of the hotel were locked. And after six I was about in passages and rooms doing my work,

and master and missus and others were all over the place. How could the murderer walk out, sir, without some of us seeing him?”

“Perhaps you did, and took no notice?”

“Oh, sir, if a stranger was around we should all have taken notice.”

This concluded the evidence, which was meagre enough. Widow Anne was indeed recalled to see if Miss Flight could identify her as the woman who, had been talking to Bolton, but witness failed to recognize her, and the widow herself proved, by means of three friends, that she had been imbibing gin at home on the night and at the hour in question. Also, there was no evidence to connect this unknown woman with the murder, and no sound – according to the unanimous testimony of the inmates of the Sailor’s Rest – had been heard in the bedroom of Bolton. Yet, as the Coroner observed, there must have been some knocking and hammering and ripping going on. But of this nothing could be proved, and although several witnesses were examined again, not one could throw light on the mystery. Under these circumstances the jury could only bring in a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown, which was done. And it may be mentioned that the cord with which Bolton had been strangled was identified by the landlord and the chamber-maid as belonging to the blind of the bedroom window.

“Well,” said Hope, when the inquest was over, “so nothing can be proved against anyone. What is to be done next?”

“I’ll tell you after I have seen Random,” said the Professor curtly.

CHAPTER VII. THE CAPTAIN OF THE DIVER

The day after the inquest, Sidney Bolton's body was buried in Gartley churchyard. Owing to the nature of the death, and the publicity given to the murder by the press, a great concourse of people assembled to witness the interment, and there was an impressive silence when the corpse was committed to the grave. Afterwards, as was natural, much discussion followed on the verdict at the inquest. It was the common opinion that the jury could have brought in no other verdict, considering the nature of the evidence supplied; but many people declared that Captain Hervey of The Diver should have been called. If the deceased had enemies, said these wiseacres, it was probable that he would have talked about them to the skipper. But they forgot that the witnesses called at the inquest, including the mother of the dead man, had insisted that Bolton had no enemies, so it is difficult to see what they expected Captain Hervey to say.

After the funeral, the journals made but few remarks about the mystery. Every now and then it was hinted that a clue had been found, and that the police would sooner or later track down the criminal. But all this loose chatter came to nothing, and as the days went by, the public – in London, at all events – lost interest in the case. The enterprising weekly paper that had offered the furnished house and the life income to the person who found the assassin received an intimation from the Government that such a lottery could not be allowed. The paper, therefore, returned to Limericks, and the amateur detectives, like so many Othellos, found their occupation gone. Then a political crisis took place in the far East, and the fickle public relegated the murder of Bolton to the list of undiscovered crimes. Even the Scotland Yard detectives, failing to find a clue, lost interest in the matter, and it seemed as though the mystery of Bolton's death would not be solved until the Day of Judgment.

In the village, however, people still continued to be keenly interested, since Bolton was one of themselves, and, moreover, Widow Anne kept up a perpetual outcry about her murdered boy. She had lost the small weekly sum which Sidney had allowed her out of his wages, so the neighbors, the gentry of the surrounding country, and the officers at the Fort sent her ample washing to do. Widow Anne in a few weeks had quite a large business, considering the size of the village, and philosophically observed to a neighbor that "It was an ill wind which blew no one any good," adding also that Sidney was more good to her dead than alive. But even in Gartley the villagers grew weary of discussing a mystery which could never be solved, and so the case became rarely talked about. In these days of bustle and worry and competition, it is wonderful how people forget even important events. If a blue sun arose to lighten the world instead of a yellow one, after nine days of wonder, man would settle down quite comfortably to a cerulean existence. Such is the wonderful adaptability of humanity.

Professor Braddock was less forgetful, as he always bore in mind the loss of his mummy, and constantly thought of schemes whereby he could trap the assassin of his late secretary. Not that he cared for the dead in any way, save from a strictly business point of view, but the capture of the criminal meant the restitution of the mummy, and – as Braddock told everyone with whom he came in contact – he was determined to regain possession of his treasure. He went himself to the Sailor's Rest, and drove the landlord and his servants wild by asking tart questions and storming when a satisfactory answer could not be supplied. Quass was glad when he saw the plump back of the cross little man, who so pertinaciously followed what everyone else had abandoned.

"Life was too short," grumbled Quass, "to be bothered in that way."

The wooing of Archie and Lucy went on smoothly, and the Professor showed no sign of wishing to break the engagement. But Hope, as he confided to Lucy, was somewhat worried, as his pauper uncle, on an insufficient borrowed capital, had begun to speculate in South African mines, and it was probable that he would lose all his money. In that case Hope fancied he would be once more called upon to make good the avuncular loss, and so the marriage would have to be postponed. But it so happened that the pauper uncle made some lucky speculative shots and acquired money, which he

promptly reinvested in new mines of the wildcat description. Still, for the moment all was well, and the lovers had a few halcyon days of peace and happiness.

Then came a bolt from the blue in the person of Captain Hervey, who called a fortnight after the funeral to see the Professor. The skipper was a tall, slim man, lean as a fasting friar, and hard as nails, with closely clipped red hair, mustache of the same aggressive hue, and an American goatee. He spoke with a Yankee accent, and in a truculent manner, sufficiently annoying to the fiery Professor. When he met Braddock in the museum, the two became enemies at the first glance, and because both were bad-tempered and obstinate, took an instant dislike to one another. Like did not draw to like in this instance.

“What do you want to see me about?” asked Braddock crossly. He had been summoned by Cockatoo from the perusal of a new papyrus to see his visitor, and consequently was not in the best of tempers.

“I’ve jes’ blew in fur a trifle of chin-music,” replied Hervey with an emphatic U.S.A. accent.

“I’m busy: get out,” was the uncomplimentary reply.

Hervey took a chair and, stretching his lengthy legs, produced a black cheroot, as long and lean as himself.

“If you were in the States, Professor, I’d draw a bead on you for that style of lingo. I’m not taking any. See!” and he lighted up.

“You’re the captain of ‘The Diver’?”

“That’s so; I was, that is. Now, I’ve shifted to a dandy wind-jammer of sorts that can run rings round the old barky. I surmise I’m off for the South Seas, pearl-fishing, in three months. I’ll take that Kanaka along with me, if y’like, Professor,” and he cast a side glance at Cockatoo, who was squatting on his hams as usual, polishing a blue enameled jar from a Theban tomb.

“I require the services of the man,” said Braddock stiffly. “As to you, sir: you’ve been paid for your business in connection with Bolton’s passage and the shipment of my mummy, so there is no more to be said.”

“Heaps more! heaps, you bet,” remarked the man of the sea placidly, and controlling a temper which in less civilized parts would have led him to wipe the floor with the plump scientist. “My owners were paid fur that racket: not me. No, sir. So I’ve paddled into this port to see if I can rake in a few dollars on my own.”

“I’ve no dollars to give you – in charity, that is.”

“Huh! An’ who asked charity, you bald-headed jelly-bag?”

Braddock grew scarlet with fury. “If you speak to me like that, you ruffian, I’ll throw you out.”

“What? – you?”

“Yes, me,” and the Professor stood on tip-toe, like the bantam he was.

“You make me smile, and likewise tired,” murmured Hervey, admiring the little man’s pluck. “See here, Professor, touching that mummy?”

“My mummy: my green mummy. What about it?” Braddock rose to the fly thrown by this skilful angler.

“That’s so. What will you shell out if I pass along that corpse?”

“Ah!” The Professor again stood on tip-toe, gasping and purple in the face. He almost squeaked in the extremity of his anger. “I knew it.”

“Knew what?” demanded the skipper, genuinely surprised.

“I knew that you had stolen my mummy. Yes, you needn’t deny it. Bolton, like the silly fool he was, told you how valuable the mummy was, and you strangled the poor devil to get my property.”

“Go slow,” said the captain, in no wise perturbed by this accusation. “I would have you remember that at the inquest it was stated that the window was locked and the door was open. How then could I waltz into that blamed hotel and arrange for a funeral? ‘Sides, I guess shooting is mor’n my line than garrotting. I leave that to the East Coast Yellow-Stomachs.”

Braddock sat down and wiped his face. He saw plainly enough that he had not a leg to stand on, as Hervey was plainly innocent.

“Sides,” went on the skipper, chewing his cheroot, “I guess if I’d wanted that old corpse of yours, I’d have yanked Bolton overside, and set down the accident to bad weather. Better fur me to loot the case aboard than to make a fool of myself ashore. No, sir, H.H. don’t run ‘is own perticler private circus in that blamed way.”

“H.H. Who the devil is H.H.?”

“Me, you bet. Hiram Hervey, citizen of the U.S.A. Nantucket neighborhood for home life. And see, don’t you get m’hair riz, or I’ll scalp.”

“You can’t scalp me,” chuckled Braddock, passing his hand over a very bald head. “See here, what do you want?”

“Name a price and I’ll float round to get back your verdant corpse.”

“I thought you were going to the South Seas?”

“In three months, pearl-fishing. Lots of time, I reckon, to run this old circus I want you to finance.”

“Have you any suspicions?”

“No, ‘sept I don’t believe in that window business.”

“What do you mean?” Braddock sat upright.

“Well,” drawled the Yankee, “y’see, I interviewed the gal as told that perticler lie in court.”

“Eliza Flight. Was it a lie she told?”

“Well, not exactly. The window was snibbed, but that was done after the chap who sent your pal to Kingdom Come had got out.”

“Do you mean to say that the window was locked from the outside?” asked Braddock, and then, when Hervey nodded, he exclaimed “Impossible!”

“Narry an impossibility, you bet. The chap who engineered the circus was all-fired smart. The snib was an old one, and he yanked a piece of string round it, and passed the string through the crack between the upper and lower sash of the window. When outside he pulled, and the snib slid into place. But he left the string on the ground outside. I picked it up nex’ day and guessed the racket he’d been on. I tried the same business and brought off the deal.”

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