

# HUME FERGUS

THE MYSTERY  
OF A HANSOM  
CAB

Fergus Hume

**The Mystery of a Hansom Cab**

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# Fergus Hume

## The Mystery of a Hansom Cab

### PREFACE

In its original form, "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab" has reached the sale of 375,000 copies in this country, and some few editions in the United States of America. Notwithstanding this, the present publishers have the best of reasons for believing, that there are thousands of persons whom the book has never reached. The causes of this have doubtless been many, but chief among them was the form of the publication itself. It is for this section of the public chiefly that the present edition is issued. In placing it before my new readers, I have been asked by the publishers thoroughly to revise the work, and, at the same time, to set at rest the many conflicting reports concerning it and myself, which have been current since its initial issue. The first of these requests I have complied with, and the many typographic, and other errors, which disfigured the first edition, have, I think I can safely say, now disappeared. The second request I am about to fulfil; but, in order to do so, I must ask my readers to go back with me to the beginning of all things, so far as this special book is concerned.

The writing of the book was due more to accident than to design. I was bent on becoming a dramatist, but, being quite unknown, I found it impossible to induce the managers of the Melbourne Theatres to accept, or even to read a play. At length it occurred to me I might further my purpose by writing a novel. I should at all events secure a certain amount of local attention. Up to that time I had written only one or two short stories, and the "Cab" was not only the first book I ever published, but the first book I ever wrote; so to youth and lack of experience must be ascribed whatever was wanting in the book. I repeat that the story was written only to attract local attention, and no one was more astonished than I when it passed beyond the narrow circle for which it had originally been intended.

My mind made up on this point, I enquired of a leading Melbourne bookseller what style of book he sold most of. He replied that the detective stories of Gaboriau had a large sale; and as, at this time, I had never even heard of this author, I bought all his works – eleven or thereabouts – and read them carefully. The style of these stories attracted me, and I determined to write a book of the same class; containing a mystery, a murder, and a description of low life in Melbourne. This was the origin of the "Cab." The central idea i.e. the murder in a cab – came to me while driving at a late hour to St. Kilda, a suburb of Melbourne; but it took some time and much thought to work it out to a logical conclusion. I was two months sketching out the skeleton of the novel, but even so, when I had written it, the result proved unsatisfactory, for I found I had not sufficiently well concealed the mystery upon which the whole interest of the book depended. In the first draft I made Frettlby the criminal, but on reading over the M.S. I found that his guilt was so obvious that I wrote out the story for a second time, introducing the character of Moreland as a scape-goat. Mother Guttersnipe I unearthed in the slums off Little Bourke Street; and I gave what I am afraid was perhaps too vivid a picture of her language and personality. These I have toned down in the present edition. Calton and the two lodging-house keepers were actual personages whom I knew very well, and I do not think I have exaggerated their idiosyncracies, although many have, I believe, doubted the existence of such oddities. All the scenes in the book, especially the slums, are described from personal observation; and I passed a great many nights in Little Bourke Street, gathering material.

Having completed the book, I tried to get it published, but every one to whom I offered it refused even to look at the manuscript on the ground that no Colonial could write anything worth reading. They gave no reason for this extraordinary opinion, but it was sufficient for them, and they laughed to scorn the idea that any good could come out of Nazareth – i.e., the Colonies. The story thus being boycotted on all hands, I determined to publish it myself, and accordingly an edition of,

I think, some five thousand copies was brought out at my own cost. Contrary to the expectations of the publishers, and I must add to my own, the whole edition went off in three weeks, and the public demanded a second. This also sold rapidly, and after some months, proposals were made to me that the book should be brought out in London. Later on I parted with the book to several speculators, who formed themselves into what they called "The Hansom Cab Publishing Company." Taking the book to London, they published it there with great success, and it had a phenomenal sale, which brought in a large sum of money. The success was, in the first instance, due, in no small degree, to a very kind and generous criticism written by Mr. Clement Scott. I may here state that I had nothing to do with the Company, nor did I receive any money for the English sale of the book beyond what I sold it for; and, as a matter of fact, I did not arrive in England until a year after the novel was published. I have heard it declared that the plot is founded on a real criminal case; but such a statement is utterly without foundation, as the story is pure fiction from beginning to end. Several people before and since my arrival in England, have assumed the authorship of the book to themselves; and one gentleman went so far as to declare that he would shoot me if I claimed to have written it. I am glad to say that up to the present he has not carried out his intention. Another individual had his cards printed, "Fergus Hume. Author of 'The Mystery of a Hansom Cab,'" and also added the price for which he was prepared to write a similar book. Many of the papers put this last piece of eccentricity down to my account.

I may state in conclusion, that I belong to New Zealand, and not to Australia, that I am a barrister, and not a retired policeman, that I am yet two decades off fifty years of age, that Fergus Hume is my real name, and not a nom-de-plume; and finally, that far from making a fortune out of the book, all I received for the English and American rights, previous to the issue of this Revised Edition by my present publishers, was the sum of fifty pounds. With this I take my leave, and I trust that the present edition may prove as successful as did the first.

## CHAPTER I. WHAT THE ARGUS SAID

The following report appeared in the Argus newspaper of Saturday, the 28th July, 18 —

"Truth is said to be stranger than fiction, and certainly the extraordinary murder which took place in Melbourne on Thursday night, or rather Friday morning, goes a long way towards verifying this saying. A crime has been committed by an unknown assassin, within a short distance of the principal streets of this great city, and is surrounded by an impenetrable mystery. Indeed, from the nature of the crime itself, the place where it was committed, and the fact that the assassin has escaped without leaving a trace behind him, it would seem as though the case itself had been taken bodily from one of Gaboreau's novels, and that his famous detective Lecoq alone would be able to unravel it. The facts of the case are simply these: —

"On the twenty-seventh day of July, at the hour of twenty minutes to two o'clock in the morning, a hansom cab drove up to the police station in Grey Street, St. Kilda, and the driver made the startling statement that his cab contained the body of a man who he had reason to believe had been murdered. Being taken into the presence of the inspector, the cabman, who gave his name as Malcolm Royston, related the following strange story: —

"At the hour of one o'clock in the morning, he was driving down Collins Street East, when, as he was passing the Burke and Wills' monument, he was hailed by a gentleman standing at the corner by the Scotch Church. He immediately drove up, and saw that the gentleman who hailed him was supporting the deceased, who appeared to be intoxicated. Both were in evening dress, but the deceased had on no overcoat, while the other wore a short covert coat of a light fawn colour, which was open. As Royston drove up, the gentleman in the light coat said, 'Look here, cabby, here's some fellow awfully tight, you'd better take him home!'

"Royston then asked him if the drunken man was his friend, but this the other denied, saying that he had just picked him up from the footpath, and did not know him from Adam. At this moment the deceased turned his face up to the light of the lamp under which both were standing, and the other seemed to recognise him, for he recoiled a pace, letting the drunken man fall in a heap on the pavement, and gasping out 'You?' he turned on his heel, and walked rapidly away down Russell Street in the direction of Bourke Street.

"Royston was staring after him, and wondering at his strange conduct, when he was recalled to himself by the voice of the deceased, who had struggled to his feet, and was holding on to the lamp-post, swaying to and fro. 'I wan' g'ome,' he said in a thick voice, 'St. Kilda.' He then tried to get into the cab, but was too drunk to do so, and finally sat down again on the pavement. Seeing this, Royston got down, and lifting him up, helped him into the cab with some considerable difficulty. The deceased fell back into the cab, and seemed to drop off to sleep; so, after closing the door, Royston turned to remount his driving-seat, when he found the gentleman in the light coat whom he had seen holding up the deceased, close to his elbow. Royston said, 'Oh, you've come back,' and the other answered, 'Yes, I've changed my mind, and will see him home.' As he said this he opened the door of the cab, stepped in beside the deceased, and told Royston to drive down to St. Kilda. Royston, who was glad that the friend of the deceased had come to look after him, drove as he had been directed, but near the Church of England Grammar School, on the St. Kilda Road, the gentleman in the light coat called out to him to stop. He did so, and the gentleman got out of the cab, closing the door after him.

"'He won't let me take him home,' he said, 'so I'll just walk back to the city, and you can drive him to St. Kilda.'

"'What street, sir?' asked Royston.

"'Grey Street, I fancy,' said the other, 'but my friend will direct you when you get to the Junction.'  
"'Ain't he too much on, sir?' said Royston, dubiously.

"'Oh, no! I think he'll be able to tell you where he lives – it's Grey Street or Ackland Street, I fancy. I don't know which.'

"He then opened the door of the cab and looked in. 'Good night, old man,' he said – the other apparently did not answer, for the gentleman in the light coat, shrugging his shoulders, and muttering 'sulky brute,' closed the door again. He then gave Royston half-a-sovereign, lit a cigarette, and after making a few remarks about the beauty of the night, walked off quickly in the direction of Melbourne. Royston drove down to the Junction, and having stopped there, according to his instructions he asked his 'fare' several times where he was to drive him to. Receiving no response and thinking that the deceased was too drunk to answer, he got down from his seat, opened the door of the cab, and found the deceased lying back in the corner with a handkerchief across his mouth. He put out his hand with the intention of rousing him, thinking that he had gone to sleep. But on touching him the deceased fell forward, and on examination, to his horror, he found that he was quite dead. Alarmed at what had taken place, and suspecting the gentleman in the light coat, he drove to the police station at St. Kilda, and there made the above report. The body of the deceased was taken out of the cab and brought into the station, a doctor being sent for at once. On his arrival, however, he found that life was quite extinct, and also discovered that the handkerchief which was tied lightly over the mouth was saturated with chloroform. He had no hesitation in stating that from the way in which the handkerchief was placed, and the presence of chloroform, that a murder had been committed, and from all appearances the deceased died easily, and without a struggle. The deceased is a slender man, of medium height, with a dark complexion, and is dressed in evening dress, which will render identification difficult, as it is a costume which has no distinctive mark to render it noticeable. There were no papers or cards found on the deceased from which his name could be discovered, and the clothing was not marked in any way. The handkerchief, however, which was tied across his mouth, was of white silk, and marked in one of the corners with the letters 'O.W.' in red silk. The assassin, of course, may have used his own handkerchief to commit the crime, so that if the initials are those of his name they may ultimately lead to his detection. There will be an inquest held on the body of the deceased this morning, when, no doubt, some evidence may be elicited which may solve the mystery."

In Monday morning's issue of the ARGUS the following article appeared with reference to the matter: —

"The following additional evidence which has been obtained may throw some light on the mysterious murder in a hansom cab of which we gave a full description in Saturday's issue: – 'Another hansom cabman called at the police office, and gave a clue which will, no doubt, prove of value to the detectives in their search for the murderer. He states that he was driving up the St. Kilda Road on Friday morning about half-past one o'clock, when he was hailed by a gentleman in a light coat, who stepped into the cab and told him to drive to Powlett Street, in East Melbourne. He did so, and, after paying him, the gentleman got out at the corner of Wellington Parade and Powlett Street and walked slowly up Powlett Street, while the cab drove back to town. Here all clue ends, but there can be no doubt in the minds of our readers as to the identity of the man in the light coat who got out of Royston's cab on the St. Kilda Road, with the one who entered the other cab and alighted therefrom at Powlett Street. There could have been no struggle, as had any taken place the cabman, Royston, surely would have heard the noise. The supposition is, therefore, that the deceased was too drunk to make any resistance, and that the other, watching his opportunity, placed the handkerchief saturated with chloroform over the mouth of his victim. Then after perhaps a few ineffectual struggles the latter would succumb to the effects of his inhalation. The man in the light coat, judging from his conduct before getting into the cab, appears to have known the deceased, though the circumstance of his walking away on recognition, and returning again, shows that his attitude towards the deceased was not altogether a friendly one.

"The difficulty is where to start from in the search after the author of what appears to be a deliberate murder, as the deceased seems to be unknown, and his presumed murderer has escaped. But it is impossible that the body can remain long without being identified by someone, as though Melbourne is a large city, yet it is neither Paris nor London, where a man can disappear in a crowd and never be heard of again. The first thing to be done is to establish the identity of the deceased, and then, no doubt, a clue will be obtained leading to the detection of the man in the light coat who appears to have been the perpetrator of the crime. It is of the utmost importance that the mystery in which the crime is shrouded should be cleared up, not only in the interests of justice, but also in those of the public – taking place as it did in a public conveyance, and in the public street. To think that the author of such a crime is at present at large, walking in our midst, and perhaps preparing for the committal of another, is enough to shake the strongest nerves. In one of Du Boisgobey's stories, entitled 'An Omnibus Mystery,' a murder closely resembling this tragedy takes place in an omnibus, but we question if even that author would have been daring enough to write about a crime being committed in such an unlikely place as a hansom cab. Here is a great chance for some of our detectives to render themselves famous, and we feel sure that they will do their utmost to trace the author of this cowardly and dastardly murder."

## CHAPTER II. THE EVIDENCE AT THE INQUEST

At the inquest held on the body found in the hansom cab the following articles taken from the deceased were placed on the table: —

1. Two pounds ten shillings in gold and silver.

2. The white silk handkerchief which was saturated with chloroform, and was found tied across the mouth of the deceased, marked with the letters O.W. in red silk.

3. A cigarette case of Russian leather, half filled with "Old Judge" cigarettes. 4. A left-hand white glove of kid – rather soiled – with black seams down the back. Samuel Gorby, of the detective office, was present in order to see if anything might be said by the witnesses likely to point to the cause or to the author of the crime.

The first witness called was Malcolm Royston, in whose cab the crime had been committed. He told the same story as had already appeared in the ARGUS, and the following facts were elicited by the Coroner: —

Q. Can you give a description of the gentleman in the light coat, who was holding the deceased when you drove up?

A. I did not observe him very closely, as my attention was taken up by the deceased; and, besides, the gentleman in the light coat was in the shadow.

Q Describe him from what you saw of him.

A. He was fair, I think, because I could see his moustache, rather tall, and in evening dress, with a light coat over it. I could not see his face very plainly, as he wore a soft felt hat, which was pulled down over his eyes.

Q. What kind of hat was it he wore – a wide-awake?

A. Yes. The brim was turned down, and I could see only his mouth and moustache.

Q. What did he say when you asked him if he knew the deceased?

A. He said he didn't; that he had just picked him up.

Q. And afterwards he seemed to recognise him?

A. Yes. When the deceased looked up he said "You!" and let him fall on to the ground; then he walked away towards Bourke Street.

Q. Did he look back?

A. Not that I saw.

Q. How long were you looking after him?

A. About a minute.

Q. And when did you see him again?

A. After I put deceased into the cab I turned round and found him at my elbow.

Q. And what did he say?

A. I said, "Oh! you've come back," and he said, "Yes, I've changed my mind, and will see him home," and then he got into the cab, and told me to drive to St. Kilda.

Q. He spoke then as if he knew the deceased?

A. Yes; I thought that he recognised him only when he looked up, and perhaps having had a row with him walked away, but thought he'd come back.

Q. Did you see him coming back?

A. No; the first I saw of him was at my elbow when I turned.

Q. And when did he get out? A. Just as I was turning down by the Grammar School on the St. Kilda Road.

Q. Did you hear any sounds of fighting or struggling in the cab during the drive?

A. No; the road was rather rough, and the noise of the wheels going over the stones would have prevented my hearing anything.

Q. When the gentleman in the light coat got out did he appear disturbed?

A. No; he was perfectly calm.

Q. How could you tell that?

A. Because the moon had risen, and I could see plainly.

Q. Did you see his face then?

A. No; his hat was pulled down over it. I only saw as much as I did when he entered the cab in Collins Street.

Q. Were his clothes torn or disarranged in any way?

A. No; the only difference I remarked in him was that his coat was buttoned.

Q. And was it open when he got in?

A. No; but it was when he was holding up the deceased.

Q. Then he buttoned it before he came back and got into the cab?

A. Yes. I suppose so.

Q. What did he say when he got out of the cab on the St. Kilda Road?

A. He said that the deceased would not let him take him home, and that he would walk back to Melbourne.

Q. And you asked him where you were to drive the deceased to?

A. Yes; and he said that the deceased lived either in Grey Street or Ackland Street, St. Kilda, but that the deceased would direct me at the Junction.

Q. Did you not think that the deceased was too drunk to direct you?

A. Yes, I did; but his friend said that the sleep and the shaking of the cab would sober him a bit by the time I got to the Junction.

Q. The gentleman in the light coat apparently did not know where the deceased lived?

A. No; he said it was either in Ackland Street or Grey Street.

Q. Did you not think that curious?

A. No; I thought he might be a club friend of the deceased.

Q. For how long did the man in the light coat talk to you?

A. About five minutes.

Q. And during that time you heard no noise in the cab?

A. No; I thought the deceased had gone to sleep.

Q. And after the man in the light coat said "good-night" to the deceased, what happened?

A. He lit a cigarette, gave me a half-sovereign, and walked off towards Melbourne.

Q. Did you observe if the gentleman in the light coat had his handkerchief with him?

A. Oh, yes; because he dusted his boots with it. The road was very dusty.

Q. Did you notice any striking peculiarity about him?

A. Well, no; except that he wore a diamond ring.

Q. What was there peculiar about that?

A. He wore it on the forefinger of the right hand, and I never saw it that way before.

Q. When did you notice this?

A. When he was lighting his cigarette.

Q. How often did you call to the deceased when you got to the Junction?

A. Three or four times. I then got down, and found he was quite dead.

Q. How was he lying?

A. He was doubled up in the far corner of the cab, very much in the same position as I left him when I put him in. His head was hanging on one side, and there was a handkerchief across his mouth. When I touched him he fell into the other corner of the cab, and then I found out he was dead. I immediately drove to the St. Kilda police station and told the police.

At the conclusion of Royston's evidence, during which Gorby had been continually taking notes, Robert Chinston was called. He deposed: —

I am a duly qualified medical practitioner, residing in Collins Street East. I made a POST-MORTEM examination of the body of the deceased on Friday.

Q. That was within a few hours of his death?

A. Yes, judging from the position of the handkerchief and the presence of chloroform that the deceased had died from the effects of ANAESTHESIA, and knowing how rapidly the poison evaporates I made the examination at once.

Coroner: Go on, sir.

Dr. Chinston: Externally, the body was healthy-looking and well nourished. There were no marks of violence. The staining apparent at the back of the legs and trunk was due to POST-MORTEM congestion. Internally, the brain was hyperaemic, and there was a considerable amount of congestion, especially apparent in the superficial vessels. There was no brain disease. The lungs were healthy, but slightly congested. On opening the thorax there was a faint spirituous odour discernible. The stomach contained about a pint of completely digested food. The heart was flaccid. The right-heart contained a considerable quantity of dark, fluid blood. There was a tendency to fatty degeneration of that organ.

I am of opinion that the deceased died from the inhalation of some such vapour as chloroform or methylene.

Q. You say there was a tendency to fatty degeneration of the heart? Would that have anything to do with the death of deceased?

A. Not of itself. But chloroform administered while the heart was in such a state would have a decided tendency to accelerate the fatal result. At the same time, I may mention that the POST-MORTEM signs of poisoning by chloroform are mostly negative.

Dr. Chinston was then permitted to retire, and Clement Rankin, another hansom cabman, was called. He deposed: I am a cabman, living in Collingwood, and usually drive a hansom cab. I remember Thursday last. I had driven a party down to St. Kilda, and was returning about half-past one o'clock. A short distance past the Grammar School I was hailed by a gentleman in a light coat; he was smoking a cigarette, and told me to drive him to Powlett Street, East Melbourne. I did so, and he got out at the corner of Wellington Parade and Powlett Street. He paid me half-a-sovereign for my fare, and then walked up Powlett Street, while I drove back to town.

Q. What time was it when you stopped at Powlett Street?

A. Two o'clock exactly.

Q. How do you know?

A. Because it was a still night, and I heard the Post Office clock strike two o'clock.

Q. Did you notice anything peculiar about the man in the light coat?

A. No! He looked just the same as anyone else. I thought he was some swell of the town out for a lark. His hat was pulled down over his eyes, and I could not see his face.

Q. Did you notice if he wore a ring?

A. Yes! I did. When he was handing me the half-sovereign, I saw he had a diamond ring on the forefinger of his right hand.

Q. He did not say why he was on the St. Kilda Road at such an hour?

A. No! He did not.

Clement Rankin was then ordered to stand down, and the Coroner then summed up in an address of half-an-hour's duration. There was, he pointed out, no doubt that the death of the deceased had resulted not from natural causes, but from the effects of poisoning. Only slight evidence had been obtained up to the present time regarding the circumstances of the case, but the only person who could be accused of committing the crime was the unknown man who entered the cab with the deceased on Friday morning at the corner of the Scotch Church, near the Burke and Wills' monument. It had been

proved that the deceased, when he entered the cab, was, to all appearances, in good health, though in a state of intoxication, and the fact that he was found by the cabman, Royston, after the man in the light coat had left the cab, with a handkerchief, saturated with chloroform, tied over his mouth, would seem to show that he had died through the inhalation of chloroform, which had been deliberately administered. All the obtainable evidence in the case was circumstantial, but, nevertheless, showed conclusively that a crime had been committed. Therefore, as the circumstances of the case pointed to one conclusion, the jury could not do otherwise than frame a verdict in accordance with that conclusion.

The jury retired at four o'clock, and, after an absence of a quarter of an hour, returned with the following verdict: —

"That the deceased, whose name there is no evidence to determine, died on the 27th day of July, from the effects of poison, namely, chloroform, feloniously administered by some person unknown; and the jury, on their oaths, say that the said unknown person feloniously, wilfully, and maliciously did murder the said deceased."

## **CHAPTER III. ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD**

V.R.

MURDER.

100 POUNDS REWARD.

"Whereas, on Friday, the 27th day of July, the body of a man, name unknown, was found in a hansom cab. AND WHEREAS, at an inquest held at St. Kilda, on the 30th day of July, a verdict of wilful murder, against some person unknown, was brought in by the jury. The deceased is of medium height, with a dark complexion, dark hair, clean shaved, has a mole on the left temple, and was dressed in evening dress. Notice is hereby given that a reward of 100 pounds will be paid by the Government for such information as will lead to the conviction of the murderer, who is presumed to be a man who entered the hansom cab with the deceased at the corner of Collins and Russell Streets, on the morning of the 27th day of July."

## CHAPTER IV. MR. GORBY MAKES A START

"Well," said Mr. Gorby, addressing his reflection in the looking-glass, "I've been finding out things these last twenty years, but this is a puzzler, and no mistake."

Mr. Gorby was shaving, and, as was his usual custom, conversed with his reflection. Being a detective, and of an extremely reticent disposition, he never talked outside about his business, or made a confidant of anyone. When he did want to unbosom himself, he retired to his bedroom and talked to his reflection in the mirror. This method of procedure he found to work capitally, for it relieved his sometimes overburdened mind with absolute security to himself. Did not the barber of Midas when he found out what was under the royal crown of his master, fret and chafe over his secret, until one morning he stole to the reeds by the river, and whispered, "Midas, has ass's ears?" In the like manner Mr. Gorby felt a longing at times to give speech to his innermost secrets; and having no fancy for chattering to the air, he made his mirror his confidant. So far it had never betrayed him, while for the rest it joyed him to see his own jolly red face nodding gravely at him from out the shining surface, like a mandarin. This morning the detective was unusually animated in his confidences to his mirror. At times, too, a puzzled expression would pass over his face. The hansom cab murder had been placed in his hands for solution, and he was trying to think how he should make a beginning.

"Hang it," he said, thoughtfully stropping his razor, "a thing with an end must have a start, and if I don't get the start how am I to get the end?"

As the mirror did not answer this question, Mr. Gorby lathered his face, and started shaving in a somewhat mechanical fashion, for his thoughts were with the case, and ran on in this manner: —

"Here's a man — well, say a gentleman — who gets drunk, and, therefore, don't know what he's up to. Another gent who is on the square comes up and sings out for a cab for him — first he says he don't know him, and then he shows plainly he does — he walks away in a temper, changes his mind, comes back and gets into the cab, after telling the cabby to drive down to St. Kilda. Then he polishes the drunk one off with chloroform, gets out of the cab, jumps into another, and after getting out at Powlett Street, vanishes — that's the riddle I've got to find out, and I don't think the Sphinx ever had a harder one. There are three things to be discovered — First, who is the dead man? Second, what was he killed for? And third, who did it?"

"Once I get hold of the first the other two won't be very hard to find out, for one can tell pretty well from a man's life whether it's to anyone's interest that he should be got off the books. The man that murdered that chap must have had some strong motive, and I must find out what that motive was. Love? No, it wasn't that — men in love don't go to such lengths in real life — they do in novels and plays, but I've never seen it occurring in my experience. Robbery? No, there was plenty of money in his pocket. Revenge? Now, really it might be that — it's a kind of thing that carries most people further than they want to go. There was no violence used, for his clothes weren't torn, so he must have been taken sudden, and before he knew what the other chap was up to. By the way, I don't think I examined his clothes sufficiently, there might be something about them to give a clue; at any rate it's worth looking after, so I'll start with his clothes."

So Mr. Gorby, having dressed and breakfasted, walked quickly to the police station, where he asked for the clothes of the deceased to be shown to him. When he received them he retired into a corner, and commenced an exhaustive examination of them.

There was nothing remarkable about the coat. It was merely a well-cut and well-made dress coat; so with a grunt of dissatisfaction Mr. Gorby threw it aside, and picked up the waistcoat. Here he found something to interest him, in the shape of a pocket made on the left-hand side and on the inside, of the garment.

"Now, what the deuce is this for?" said Mr. Gorby, scratching his head; "it ain't usual for a dress waistcoat to have a pocket on its inside as I'm aware of; and," continued the detective, greatly excited, "this ain't tailor's work, he did it himself, and jolly badly he did it too. Now he must have taken the trouble to make this pocket himself, so that no one else would know anything about it, and it was made to carry something valuable – so valuable that he had to carry it with him even when he wore evening clothes. Ah! here's a tear on the side nearest the outside of the waistcoat; something has been pulled out roughly. I begin to see now. The dead man possessed something which the other man wanted, and which he knew the dead one carried about with him. He sees him drunk, gets into the cab with him, and tries to get what he wants. The dead man resists, upon which the other kills him by means of the chloroform which he had with him, and being afraid that the cab will stop, and he will be found out, snatches what he wants out of the pocket so quickly that he tears the waistcoat and then makes off. That's clear enough, but the question is, What was it he wanted? A case with jewels? No! It could not have been anything so bulky, or the dead man would never have carried it about inside his waistcoat. It was something flat, which could easily lie in the pocket – a paper – some valuable paper which the assassin wanted, and for which he killed the other."

"This is all very well," said Mr. Gorby, throwing down the waistcoat, and rising. "I have found number two before number one. The first question is: Who is the murdered man. He's a stranger in Melbourne, that's pretty clear, or else some one would have been sure to recognise him before now by the description given in the reward. Now, I wonder if he has any relations here? No, he can't, or else they would have made enquiries, before this. Well, there's one thing certain, he must have had a landlady or landlord, unless he slept in the open air. He can't have lived in an hotel, as the landlord of any hotel in Melbourne would have recognised him from the description, especially when the whole place is ringing with the murder. Private lodgings more like, and a landlady who doesn't read the papers and doesn't gossip, or she'd have known all about it by this time. Now, if he did live, as I think, in private lodgings, and suddenly disappeared, his landlady wouldn't keep quiet. It's a whole week since the murder, and as the lodger has not been seen or heard of, the landlady will naturally make enquiries. If, however, as I surmise, the lodger is a stranger, she will not know where to enquire; therefore, under these circumstances, the most natural thing for her to do would be to advertise for him, so I'll have a look at the newspapers."

Mr. Gorby got a file of the different newspapers, and looked carefully through those columns in which missing friends and people who will hear "something to their advantage" are generally advertised for.

"He was murdered," said Mr. Gorby to himself, "on a Friday morning, between one and two o'clock, so he might stay away till Monday without exciting any suspicion. On Monday, however, the landlady would begin to feel uneasy, and on Tuesday she would advertise for him. Therefore," said Mr. Gorby, running his fat finger down the column, "Wednesday it is."

It did not appear in Wednesday's paper, neither did it in Thursday's, but in Friday's issue, exactly one week after the murder, Mr. Gorby suddenly came upon the following advertisement: —

"If Mr. Oliver Whyte does not return to Possum Villa, Grey Street, St. Kilda, before the end of the week, his rooms will be let again. – Rubina Hableton."

"Oliver Whyte," repeated Mr. Gorby slowly, "and the initials on the pocket-handkerchief which was proved to have belonged to the deceased were 'O.W.' So his name is Oliver Whyte, is it? Now, I wonder if Rubina Hableton knows anything about this matter. At any rate," said Mr. Gorby, putting on his hat, "as I'm fond of sea breezes, I think I'll go down, and call at Possum Villa, Grey Street, St. Kilda."

## CHAPTER V. MRS. HAMILTON UNBOSOMS HERSELF

Mrs. Hableton was a lady with a grievance, as anybody who happened to become acquainted with her, soon found out. It is Beaconsfield who says, in one of his novels, that no one is so interesting as when he is talking about himself; and, judging Mrs. Hableton by this statement, she was an extremely fascinating individual, as she never by any chance talked upon any other subject. What was the threat of a Russian invasion to her so long as she had her special grievance – once let that be removed, and she would have time to attend to such minor details as affected the colony.

Mrs. Hableton's particular grievance was want of money. Not by any means an uncommon one, you might remind her; but she snappishly would tell you that "she knowd that, but some people weren't like other people." In time one came to learn what she meant by this. She had come to the Colonies in the early days – days when the making of money in appreciable quantity was an easier matter than it is now. Owing to a bad husband, she had failed to save any. The late Mr. Hableton – for he had long since departed this life – had been addicted to alcohol, and at those times when he should have been earning, he was usually to be found in a drinking shanty spending his wife's earnings in "shouting" for himself and his friends. The constant drinking, and the hot Victorian climate, soon carried him off, and when Mrs. Hableton had seen him safely under the ground in the Melbourne Cemetery, she returned home to survey her position, and see how it could be bettered. She gathered together a little money from the wreck of her fortune, and land being cheap, purchased a small "section" at St. Kilda, and built a house on it. She supported herself by going out charing, taking in sewing, and acting as a sick nurse. So, among this multiplicity of occupations, she managed to exist fairly well.

And in truth it was somewhat hard upon Mrs. Hableton. For at the time when she should have been resting and reaping the fruit of her early industry, she was obliged to toil more assiduously than ever. It was little consolation to her that she was but a type of many women, who, hardworking and thrifty themselves, are married to men who are nothing but an incubus to their wives and to their families. Small wonder, then, that Mrs. Hableton should condense all her knowledge of the male sex into the one bitter aphorism, "Men is brutes."

Possum Villa was an unpretentious-looking place, with one bow-window and a narrow verandah in front. It was surrounded by a small garden in which were a few sparse flowers – the especial delight of Mrs. Hableton. It was her way to tie an old handkerchief round her head and to go out into the garden and dig and water her beloved flowers until, from sheer desperation at the overwhelming odds, they gave up all attempt to grow. She was engaged in this favourite occupation about a week after her lodger had gone. She wondered where he was.

"Lyin' drunk in a public-'ouse, I'll be bound," she said, viciously pulling up a weed, "a-spendin' 'is, rent and a-spilin' 'is inside with beer – ah, men is brutes, drat 'em!"

Just as she said this, a shadow fell across the garden, and on looking up, she saw a man leaning over the fence, staring at her.

"Git out," she said, sharply, rising from her knees and shaking her trowel at the intruder. "I don't want no apples to-day, an' I don't care how cheap you sells 'em."

Mrs. Hableton evidently laboured under the delusion that the man was a hawker, but seeing no hand-cart with him, she changed her mind.

"You're takin' a plan of the 'ouse to rob it, are you?" she said. "Well, you needn't, 'cause there ain't nothin' to rob, the silver spoons as belonged to my father's mother 'avin' gone down my 'usband's, throat long ago, an' I ain't 'ad money to buy more. I'm a lone pusson as is put on by brutes like you, an' I'll thank you to leave the fence I bought with my own 'ard earned money alone, and git out."

Mrs. Hableton stopped short for want of breath, and stood shaking her trowel, and gasping like a fish out of water.

"My dear lady," said the man at the fence, mildly, "are you – "

"No, I ain't," retorted Mrs. Hableton, fiercely, "I ain't neither a member of the 'Ouse, nor a school teacher, to answer your questions. I'm a woman as pays my rates an' taxes, and don't gossip nor read yer rubbishin' newspapers, nor care for the Russings, no how, so git out."

"Don't read the papers?" repeated the man, in a satisfied tone, "ah! that accounts for it."

Mrs. Hableton stared suspiciously at the intruder. He was a burly-looking man, with a jovial red face, clean shaven, and his sharp, shrewd-looking grey eyes twinkled like two stars. He was well-dressed in a suit of light clothes, and wore a stiffly-starched white waistcoat, with a massive gold chain stretched across it. Altogether he gave Mrs. Hableton finally the impression of being a well-to-do tradesman, and she mentally wondered what he wanted.

"What d'y want?" she asked, abruptly.

"Does Mr. Oliver Whyte live here?" asked the stranger.

"He do, an' he don't," answered Mrs. Hableton, epigrammatically. "I ain't seen 'im for over a week, so I s'pose 'e's gone on the drink, like the rest of 'em, but I've put sumthin' in the paper as 'ill pull him up pretty sharp, and let 'im know I ain't a carpet to be trod on, an' if you're a friend of 'im, you can tell 'im from me 'e's a brute, an' it's no more but what I expected of 'im, 'e bein' a male."

The stranger waited placidly during the outburst, and Mrs. Hableton, having stopped for want of breath, he interposed, quietly —

"Can I speak to you for a few moments?"

"An' who's a-stoppin' of you?" said Mrs. Hableton, defiantly. "Go on with you, not as I expects the truth from a male, but go on."

"Well, really," said the other, looking up at the cloudless blue sky, and wiping his face with a gaudy red silk pocket-handkerchief, "it is rather hot, you know, and – "

Mrs. Hableton did not give him time to finish, but walking to the gate, opened it with a jerk.

"Use your legs and walk in," she said, and the stranger having done so, she led the way into the house, and into a small neat sitting-room, which seemed to overflow with antimacassars, wool mats, and wax flowers. There were also a row of emu eggs on the mantelpiece, a cutlass on the wall, and a grimy line of hard-looking little books, set in a stiff row on a shelf, presumably for ornament, for their appearance in no way tempted one to read them.

The furniture was of horsehair, and everything was hard and shiny, so when the stranger sat down in the slippery-looking arm-chair that Mrs. Hableton pushed towards him; he could not help thinking it had been stuffed with stones, it felt so cold and hard. The lady herself sat opposite to him in another hard chair, and having taken the handkerchief off her head, folded it carefully, laid it on her lap, and then looked straight at her unexpected visitor.

"Now then," she said, letting her mouth fly open so rapidly that it gave one the impression that it was moved by strings like a marionette, "Who are you? what are you? and what do you want?"

The stranger put his red silk handkerchief into his hat, placed it on the table, and answered deliberately —

"My name is Gorby. I am a detective. I want Mr. Oliver Whyte."

"He ain't here," said Mrs. Hableton, thinking that Whyte had got into trouble, and was in danger of arrest.

"I know that," answered Mr. Gorby.

"Then where is 'e?"

Mr. Gorby answered abruptly, and watched the effect of his words.

"He is dead."

Mrs. Hableton grew pale, and pushed back her chair. "No," she cried, "he never killed 'im, did 'e?"

"Who never killed him?" queried Mr. Gorby, sharply.

Mrs. Hableton evidently knew more than she intended to say, for, recovering herself with a violent effort, she answered evasively —

"He never killed himself."

Mr. Gorby looked at her keenly, and she returned his gaze with a defiant stare.

"Clever," muttered the detective to himself; "knows something more than she chooses to tell, but I'll get it out of her." He paused a moment, and then went on smoothly:

"Oh, no! he did not commit suicide; what makes you think so?" Mrs. Hableton did not answer, but, rising from her seat, went over to a hard and shiny-looking sideboard, from whence she took a bottle of brandy and a small wine-glass. Half filling the glass, she drank it off, and returned to her seat.

"I don't take much of that stuff," she said, seeing the detective's eyes fixed curiously on her, "but you 'ave given me such a turn that I must take something to steady my nerves; what do you want me to do?"

"Tell me all you know," said Mr. Gorby, keeping his eyes fixed on her face.

"Where was Mr. Whyte killed?" she asked.

"He was murdered in a hansom cab on the St. Kilda Road."

"In the open street?" she asked in a startled tone.

"Yes, in the open street."

"Ah!" she drew a long breath, and closed her lips, firmly. Mr. Gorby said nothing. He saw that she was deliberating whether or not to speak, and a word from him might seal her lips, so, like a wise man, he kept silent. He obtained his reward sooner than he expected.

"Mr. Gorby," she said at length, "I 'ave 'ad a 'ard struggle all my life, which it came along of a bad husband, who was a brute and a drunkard, so, God knows, I ain't got much inducement to think well of the lot of you, but – murder," she shivered slightly, though the room was quite warm, "I didn't think of that."

"In connection with whom?"

"Mr. Whyte, of course," she answered, hurriedly.

"And who else?"

"I don't know."

"Then there is nobody else?"

"Well, I don't know – I'm not sure."

The detective was puzzled.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I will tell you all I know," said Mrs. Hableton, "an' if 'e's innocent, God will 'elp 'im."

"If who is innocent?"

"I'll tell you everythin' from the start," said Mrs. Hableton, "an' you can judge for yourself."

Mr. Gorby assented, and she began:

"It's only two months ago since I decided to take in lodgers; but charin's 'ard work, and sewin's tryin' for the eyes, So, bein' a lone woman, 'avin' bin badly treated by a brute, who is now dead, which I was allays a good wife to 'im, I thought lodgers 'ud 'elp me a little, so I put a notice in the paper, an' Mr. Oliver Whyte took the rooms two months ago."

"What was he like?"

"Not very tall, dark face, no whiskers nor moustache, an' quite the gentleman."

"Anything peculiar about him?"

Mrs. Hableton thought for a moment.

"Well," she said at length, "he 'ad a mole on his left temple, but it was covered with 'is 'air, an' few people 'ud 'ave seen it."

"The very man," said Gorby to himself, "I'm on the right path."

"Mr. Whyte said 'e 'ad just come from England," went on the woman.

"Which," thought Mr. Gorby, "accounts for the corpse not being recognised by friends."

"He took the rooms, an' said 'e'd stay with me for six months, an' paid a week's rent in advance, an' 'e allays paid up reg'lar like a respectable man, tho' I don't believe in 'em myself. He said 'e'd lots of friends, an' used to go out every night."

"Who were his friends?"

"That I can't tell you, for 'e were very close, an' when 'e went out of doors I never knowd where 'e went, which is jest like 'em; for they ses they're goin' to work, an' you finds 'em in the beershop. Mr. Whyte told me 'e was a-goin' to marry a heiress, 'e was."

"Ah!" interjected Mr. Gorby, sapiently.

"He 'ad only one friend as I ever saw – a Mr. Moreland – who comed 'ere with 'm, an' was allays with 'im – brother-like."

"What is this Mr. Moreland like?"

"Good-lookin' enough," said Mrs. Hableton sourly, "but 'is 'abits weren't as good as 'is face – 'andsom is as 'andsom does, is what I ses."

"I wonder if he knows anything about this affair," thought Gorby to himself "Where is Mr. Moreland to be found?" he asked.

"Not knowin', can't tell," retorted the landlady, "'e used to be 'ere reg'lar, but I ain't seen 'im for over a week."

"Strange! very!" said Gorby, shaking his head. "I should like to see this Mr. Moreland. I suppose it's probable he'll call again?"

"'Abit bein' second nature I s'pose he will," answered the woman, "'e might call at any time, mostly 'avin' called at night."

"Ah! then I'll come down this evening on chance of seeing him," replied the detective. "Coincidences happen in real life as well as in novels, and the gentleman in question may turn up in the nick of time. Now, what else about Mr. Whyte?"

"About two weeks ago, or three, I'm not cert'in which, a gentleman called to see Mr. Whyte; 'e was very tall, and wore a light coat."

"Ah! a morning coat?"

"No! 'e was in evenin' dress, and wore a light coat over it, an' a soft 'at."

"The very man," said the detective below his breath; "go on."

"He went into Mr. Whyte's room, an' shut the door. I don't know how long they were talkin' together; but I was sittin' in this very room and heard their voices git angry, and they were a-swearin' at one another, which is the way with men, the brutes. I got up and went into the passage in order to ask 'em not to make such a noise, when Mr. Whyte's door opens, an' the gentleman in the light coat comes out, and bangs along to the door. Mr. Whyte 'e comes to the door of 'is room, an' 'e 'ollers out. 'She is mine; you can't do anything; an' the other turns with 'is 'and on the door an' says, 'I can kill you, an' if you marry 'er I'll do it, even in the open street.'"

"Ah!" said Mr. Gorby, drawing a long breath, "and then?"

"Then he bangs the door to, which it's never shut easy since, an' I ain't got no money to get it put right, an' Mr. Whyte walks back to his room, laughing."

"Did he make any remark to you?"

"No; except he'd been worried by a loonatic."

"And what was the stranger's name?"

"That I can't tell you, as Mr. Whyte never told me. He was very tall, with a fair moustache, an' dressed as I told you."

Mr. Gorby was satisfied.

"That is the man," he said to himself, "who got into the hansom cab, and murdered Whyte; there's no doubt of it! Whyte and he were rivals for the heiress."

"What d'y think of it?" said Mrs. Hableton curiously.

"I think," said Mr. Gorby slowly, with his eyes fixed on her, "I think that there is a woman at the bottom of this crime."

## CHAPTER VI.

### MR. GORBY MAKES FURTHER DISCOVERIES

When Mr. Gorby left Possum Villa no doubt remained in his mind as to who had committed the murder. The gentleman in the light coat had threatened to murder Whyte, even in the open street – these last words being especially significant – and there was no doubt that he had carried out his threat. The committal of the crime was merely the fulfilment of the words uttered in anger. What the detective had now to do was to find who the gentleman in the light coat was, where he lived, and, that done, to ascertain his doings on the night of the murder. Mrs. Hableton had described him, but was ignorant of his name, and her very vague description might apply to dozens of young men in Melbourne. There was only one person who, in Mr. Gorby's opinion, could tell the name of the gentleman in the light coat, and that was Moreland, the intimate friend of the dead man. They appeared, from the landlady's description, to have been so friendly that it was more than likely Whyte would have told Moreland all about his angry visitor. Besides, Moreland's knowledge of his dead friend's life and habits might be able to supply information on two points, namely, who was most likely to gain by Whyte's death, and who the heiress was that the deceased boasted he would marry. But the fact that Moreland should be ignorant of his friend's tragic death, notwithstanding that the papers were full of it, and that the reward gave an excellent description of his personal appearance, greatly puzzled Gorby.

The only way in which to account for Moreland's extraordinary silence was that he was out of town, and had neither seen the papers nor heard anyone talking about the murder. If this were the case he might either stay away for an indefinite time or return after a few days. At all events it was worth while going down to St. Kilda in the evening on the chance that Moreland might have returned to town, and would call to see his friend. So, after his tea, Mr. Gorby put on his hat, and went down to Possum Villa, on what he could not help acknowledging to himself was a very slender possibility.

Mrs. Hableton opened the door for him, and in silence led the way, not into her own sitting-room, but into a much more luxuriously furnished apartment, which Gorby guessed at once was that of Whyte's. He looked keenly round the room, and his estimate of the dead man's character was formed at once.

"Fast," he said to himself, "and a spendthrift. A man who would have his friends, and possibly his enemies, among a very shady lot of people."

What led Mr. Gorby to this belief was the evidence which surrounded him of Whyte's mode of life. The room was well furnished, the furniture being covered with dark-red velvet, while the curtains on the windows and the carpet were all of the same somewhat sombre hue.

"I did the thing properly," observed Mrs. Hableton, with a satisfactory smile on her hard face. "When you wants young men to stop with you, the rooms must be well furnished, an' Mr. Whyte paid well, tho' 'e was rather pertickler about 'is food, which I'm only a plain cook, an' can't make them French things which spile the stomach."

The globes of the gas lamps were of a pale pink colour, and Mrs. Hableton having lit the gas in expectation of Mr. Gorby's arrival, there was a soft roseate hue through the room. Mr. Gorby put his hands in his capacious pockets, and strolled leisurely through the room, examining everything with a curious eye. The walls were covered with pictures of celebrated horses and famous jockeys. Alternating with these were photographs of ladies of the stage, mostly London actresses, Nellie Farren, Kate Vaughan, and other burlesque stars, evidently being the objects of the late Mr. Whyte's adoration. Over the mantelpiece hung a rack of pipes, above which were two crossed foils, and under these a number of plush frames of all colours, with pretty faces smiling out of them; a remarkable

fact being, that all the photographs were of ladies, and not a single male face was to be seen, either on the walls or in the plush frames.

"Fond of the ladies, I see," said Mr. Gorby, nodding his head towards the mantelpiece.

"A set of hussies," said Mrs. Hableton grimly, closing her lips tightly. "I feel that ashamed when I dusts 'em as never was – I don't believe in gals gettin' their picters taken with 'ardly any clothes on, as if they just got out of bed, but Mr. Whyte seems to like 'em."

"Most young men do," answered Mr. Gorby dryly, going over to the bookcase.

"Brutes," said the lady of the house. "I'd drown 'em in the Yarrer, I would, a settin' 'emselves and a callin' 'emselves lords of creation, as if women were made for nothin' but to earn money 'an see 'em drink it, as my 'usband did, which 'is inside never seemed to 'ave enough beer, an' me a poor lone woman with no family, thank God, or they'd 'ave taken arter their father in 'is drinkin' 'abits."

Mr. Gorby took no notice of this tirade against men, but stood looking at Mr. Whyte's library, which seemed to consist mostly of French novels and sporting newspapers.

"Zola," said Mr. Gorby, thoughtfully, taking down a flimsy yellow book rather tattered. "I've heard of him; if his novels are as bad as his reputation I shouldn't care to read them."

Here a knock came at the front door, loud and decisive. On hearing it Mrs. Hableton sprang hastily to her feet. "That may be Mr. Moreland," she said, as the detective quickly replaced "Zola" in the bookcase. "I never 'ave visitors in the evenin', bein' a lone widder, and if it is 'im I'll bring 'im in 'ere."

She went out, and presently Gorby, who was listening intently, heard a man's voice ask if Mr. Whyte was at home.

"No, sir, he ain't," answered the landlady; "but there's a gentleman in his room askin' after 'im. Won't you come in, sir?"

"For a rest, yes," returned the visitor, and immediately afterwards Mrs. Hableton appeared, ushering in the late Oliver Whyte's most intimate friend. He was a tall, slender man, with a pink and white complexion, curly fair hair, and a drooping straw-coloured moustache – altogether a strikingly aristocratic individual. He was well-dressed in a suit of check, and had a cool, nonchalant air about him.

"And where is Mr. Whyte to-night?" he asked, sinking into a chair, and taking no more notice of the detective than if he had been an article of furniture.

"Haven't you seen him lately?" asked the detective quickly. Mr. Moreland stared in an insolent manner at his questioner for a few moments, as if he were debating the advisability of answering or not. At last he apparently decided that he would, for slowly pulling off one glove he leaned back in his chair.

"No, I have not," he said with a yawn. "I have been up the country for a few days, and arrived back only this evening, so I have not seen him for over a week. Why do you ask?"

The detective did not answer, but stood looking at the young man before him in a thoughtful manner.

"I hope," said Mr. Moreland, nonchalantly, "I hope you will know me again, my friend, but I didn't know Whyte had started a lunatic asylum during my absence. Who are you?"

Mr. Gorby came forward and stood under the gas light.

"My name is Gorby, sir, and I am a detective," he said quietly.

"Ah! indeed," said Moreland, coolly looking him up and down. "What has Whyte been doing; running away with someone's wife, eh? I know he has little weaknesses of that sort."

Gorby shook his head.

"Do you know where Mr. Whyte is to be found?" he asked, cautiously.

Moreland laughed.

"Not I, my friend," said he, lightly. "I presume he is somewhere about here, as these are his head-quarters. What has he been doing? Nothing that can surprise me, I assure you – he was always an erratic individual, and –"

"He paid reg'ler," interrupted Mrs. Hableton, pursing up her lips.

"A most enviable reputation to possess," answered the other with a sneer, "and one I'm afraid I'll never enjoy. But why all this questioning about Whyte? What's the matter with him?"

"He's dead!" said Gorby, abruptly.

All Moreland's nonchalance vanished on hearing this, and he started up from his chair.

"Dead," he repeated mechanically. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that Mr. Oliver Whyte was murdered in a hansom cab." Moreland stared at the detective in a puzzled sort of way, and passed his hand across his forehead.

"Excuse me, my head is in a whirl," he said, as he sat down again. "Whyte murdered! He was all right when I left him nearly two weeks ago."

"Haven't you seen the papers?" asked Gorby.

"Not for the last two weeks," replied Moreland. "I have been up country, and it was only on arriving back in town to-night that I heard about the murder at all, as my landlady gave me a garbled account of it, but I never for a moment connected it with Whyte, and I came down here to see him, as I had agreed to do when I left. Poor fellow! poor fellow! poor fellow!" and much overcome, he buried his face in his hands.

Mr. Gorby was touched by his evident distress, and even Mrs. Hableton permitted a small tear to roll down one hard cheek as a tribute of sorrow and sympathy. Presently Moreland raised his head, and spoke to Gorby in a husky tone.

"Tell me all about it," he said, leaning his cheek on his hand. "Everything you know."

He placed his elbows on the table, and buried his face in his hands again, while the detective sat down and related all that he knew about Whyte's murder. When it was done he lifted up his head, and looked sadly at the detective.

"If I had been in town," he said, "this would not have happened, for I was always beside Whyte."

"You knew him very well, sir?" said the detective, in a sympathetic tone.

"We were like brothers," replied Moreland, mournfully.

"I came out from England in the same steamer with him, and used to visit him constantly here."

Mrs. Hableton nodded her head to imply that such was the case.

"In fact," said Mr. Moreland, after a moment's thought, "I believe I was with him on the night he was murdered."

Mrs. Hableton gave a slight scream, and threw her apron over her face, but the detective sat unmoved, though Moreland's last remark had startled him considerably.

"What's the matter?" said Moreland, turning to Mrs. Hableton.

"Don't be afraid; I didn't kill him – no – but I met him last Thursday week, and I left for the country on Friday morning at half-past six."

"And what time did you meet Whyte on Thursday night?" asked Gorby.

"Let me see," said Moreland, crossing his legs and looking thoughtfully up to the ceiling, "it was about half-past nine o'clock. I was in the Orient Hotel, in Bourke Street. We had a drink together, and then went up the street to an hotel in Russell Street, where we had another. In fact," said Moreland, coolly, "we had several other drinks."

"Brutes!" muttered Mrs. Hableton, below her breath.

"Yes," said Gorby, placidly. "Go on."

"Well of – it's hardly the thing to confess it," said Moreland, looking from one to the other with a pleasant smile, "but in a case like this, I feel it my duty to throw all social scruples aside. We both became very drunk."

"Ah! Whyte was, as we know, drunk when he got into the cab – and you – ?"

"I was not quite so bad as Whyte," answered the other. "I had my senses about me. I fancy he left the hotel some minutes before one o'clock on Friday morning."

"And what did you do?"

"I remained in the hotel. He left his overcoat behind him, and I picked it up and followed him shortly afterwards, to return it. I was too drunk to see in which direction he had gone, and stood leaning against the hotel door in Bourke Street with the coat in my hand. Then some one came up, and, snatching the coat from me, made off with it, and the last thing I remember was shouting out: 'Stop, thief!' Then I must have fallen down, for next morning I was in bed with all my clothes on, and they were very muddy. I got up and left town for the country by the six-thirty train, so I knew nothing about the matter until I came back to Melbourne to-night. That's all I know."

"And you had no impression that Whyte was watched that night?"

"No, I had not," answered Moreland, frankly. "He was in pretty good spirits, though he was put out at first."

"What was the cause of his being put out?"

Moreland arose, and going to a side table, brought Whyte's album, which he laid on the table and opened in silence. The contents were very much the same as the photographs in the room, burlesque actresses and ladies of the ballet predominating; but Mr. Moreland turned over the pages till nearly the end, when he stopped at a large cabinet photograph, and pushed the album towards Mr. Gorby.

"That was the cause," he said.

It was the portrait of a charmingly pretty girl, dressed in white, with a sailor hat on her fair hair, and holding a lawn-tennis racquet. She was bending half forward, with a winning smile, and in the background bloomed a mass of tropical plants. Mrs. Hableton uttered a cry of surprise at seeing this.

"Why, it's Miss Frettlby," she said. "How did he know her?"

"Knew her father – letter of introduction, and all that sort of thing," said Mr. Moreland, glibly.

"Ah! indeed," said Mr. Gorby, slowly. "So Mr. Whyte knew Mark Frettlby, the millionaire; but how did he obtain a photograph of the daughter?"

"She gave it to him," said Moreland. "The fact is, Whyte was very much in love with Miss Frettlby."

"And she –"

"Was in love with someone else," finished Moreland. "Exactly! Yes, she loved a Mr. Brian Fitzgerald, to whom she is now engaged. He was mad on her; and Whyte and he used to quarrel desperately over the young lady."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Gorby. "And do you know this Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"Oh, dear, no!" answered the other, coolly. "Whyte's friends were not mine. He was a rich young man who had good introductions. I am only a poor devil on the outskirts of society, trying to push my way in the world."

"You are acquainted with his personal appearance, of course?" observed Mr. Gorby.

"Oh, yes, I can describe that," said Moreland. "In fact, he's not at all unlike me, which I take to be rather a compliment, as he is said to be good-looking. He is tall, rather fair, talks in a bored sort of manner, and is altogether what one would call a heavy swell; but you must have seen him," he went on, turning to Mrs. Hableton, "he was here three or four weeks ago, Whyte told me."

"Oh, that was Mr. Fitzgerald, was it?" said Mrs. Hableton, in surprise. "Yes, he is rather like you; the lady they quarrelled over must have been Miss Frettlby."

"Very likely," said Moreland, rising. "Well, I'm off; here's my address," putting a card in Gorby's hand. "I'm glad to be of any use to you in this matter, as Whyte was my dearest friend, and I'll do all in my power to help you to find out the murderer."

"I don't think that is a very difficult matter," said Mr. Gorby, slowly.

"Oh, you have your suspicions?" asked Moreland, looking at him.

"I have."

"Then who do you think murdered Whyte?"

Mr. Gorby paused a moment, and then said deliberately: "I have an idea – but I am not certain – when I am certain, I'll speak."

"You think Fitzgerald killed my friend," said Moreland. "I see it in your face."

Mr. Gorby smiled. "Perhaps," he said, ambiguously. "Wait till I'm certain."

## CHAPTER VII. THE WOOL KING

The old Greek legend of Midas turning everything he touched into gold, is truer than most people imagine. Mediaeval superstition changed the human being who possessed such a power into the philosopher's stone – the stone which so many alchemists sought in the dark ages. But we of the nineteenth century have given back into human hands this power of transformation.

But we do not ascribe it either to Greek deity, or to superstition; we call it luck. And he who possesses luck should be happy notwithstanding the proverb which hints the contrary. Luck means more than riches – it means happiness in most of those things, which the fortunate possessor of it may choose to touch. Should he speculate, he is successful; if he marry, his wife will surely prove everything to be desired; should he aspire to a position, social or political, he not only attains it, but does so with comparative ease. Worldly wealth, domestic happiness, high position, and complete success – all these things belong to the man who has luck.

Mark Frettlby was one of these fortunate individuals, and his luck was proverbial throughout Australia. If there was any speculation for which Mark Frettlby went in, other men would surely follow, and in every case the result turned out as well, and in many cases even better than they expected. He had come out in the early days of the colony with comparatively little money, but his great perseverance and never-failing luck had soon changed his hundreds into thousands, and now at the age of fifty-five he did not himself know the extent of his income. He had large stations scattered all over the Colony of Victoria, which brought him in a splendid income; a charming country house, where at certain seasons of the year he dispensed hospitality to his friends; and a magnificent town house down in St. Kilda, which would have been not unworthy of Park Lane.

Nor were his domestic relations less happy – he had a charming wife, who was one of the best known and most popular ladies of Melbourne, and an equally charming daughter, who, being both pretty and an heiress, naturally attracted crowds of suitors. But Madge Frettlby was capricious, and refused innumerable offers. Being an extremely independent young person, with a mind of her own, she decided to remain single, as she had not yet seen anyone she could love, and with her mother continued to dispense the hospitality of the mansion at St. Kilda.

But the fairy prince comes at length to every woman, and in this instance he came at his appointed time, in the person of one Brian Fitzgerald, a tall, handsome, fair-haired young man hailing from Ireland.

He had left behind him in the old country a ruined castle and a few acres of barren land, inhabited by discontented tenants, who refused to pay the rent, and talked darkly about the Land League and other agreeable things. Under these circumstances, with no rent coming in, and no prospect of doing anything in the future, Brian had left the castle of his forefathers to the rats and the family Banshee, and had come out to Australia to make his fortune.

He brought letters of introduction to Mark Frettlby, and that gentleman, taking a fancy to him, assisted him by every means in his power. Under Frettlby's advice Brian bought a station, and, to his astonishment, in a few years he found himself growing rich. The Fitzgeralds had always been more famous for spending than for saving, and it was an agreeable surprise to their latest representative to find the money rolling in instead of out. He began to indulge in castles in the air concerning that other castle in Ireland, with the barren acres and discontented tenants. In his mind's-eye he saw the old place rise up in all its pristine splendour from out its ruins; he saw the barren acres well cultivated, and the tenants happy and content – he was rather doubtful on this latter point, but, with the rash confidence of eight and twenty, determined to do his best to perform even the impossible.

Having built and furnished his castle in the air, Brian naturally thought of giving it a mistress, and this time actual appearance took the place of vision. He fell in love with Madge Frettlby, and having decided in his own mind that she and none other was fitted to grace the visionary halls of his renovated castle, he watched his opportunity, and declared himself. She, woman-like, coquetted with him for some time, but at last, unable to withstand the impetuosity of her Irish lover, confessed in a low voice, with a pretty smile on her face, that she could not live without him. Whereupon – well – lovers being of a conservative turn of mind, and accustomed to observe the traditional forms of wooing, the result can easily be guessed. Brian hunted all over the jewellers' shops in Melbourne with lover-like assiduity, and having obtained a ring wherein were set turquoise stones as blue as his own eyes, he placed it on her slender finger, and at last felt that his engagement was an accomplished fact.

He next proceeded to interview the father, and had just screwed up his courage to the awful ordeal, when something occurred which postponed the interview indefinitely. Mrs. Frettlby was out driving, and the horses took fright and bolted. The coachman and groom both escaped unhurt, but Mrs. Frettlby was thrown out and killed instantly.

This was the first really great trouble which had fallen on Mark Frettlby, and he seemed stunned by it. Shutting himself up in his room he refused to see anyone, even his daughter, and appeared at the funeral with a white and haggard face, which shocked everyone. When everything was over, and the body of the late Mrs. Frettlby was consigned to the earth, with all the pomp and ceremony which money could give, the bereaved husband rode home, and resumed his old life. But he was never the same again. His face, which had always been so genial and so bright, became stern and sad. He seldom smiled, and when he did, it was a faint wintry smile, which seemed mechanical. His whole interest in life was centred in his daughter. She became the sole mistress of the St. Kilda mansion, and her father idolised her. She was apparently the one thing left to him which gave him a pleasure in existence. In truth, had it not been for her bright presence, Mark Frettlby would fain have been lying beside his dead wife in the quiet graveyard.

After a time Brian again resolved to ask Mr. Frettlby for the hand of his daughter. But for the second time fate interposed. A rival suitor made his appearance, and Brian's hot Irish temper rose in anger at him.

Mr. Oliver Whyte had come out from England a few months previously, bringing with him a letter of introduction to Mr. Frettlby, who received him hospitably, as was his custom. Taking advantage of this, Whyte lost no time in making himself perfectly at home in the St. Kilda mansion.

From the outset Brian took a dislike to the new-comer. He was a student of Lavater, and prided himself on his perspicuity in reading character. His opinion of Whyte was anything but flattering to that gentleman; while Madge shared his repulsion towards the new-comer.

On his part Mr. Whyte was nothing if not diplomatic. He affected not to notice the coldness of Madge's reception of him. On the contrary he began to pay her the most marked attentions, much to Brian's disgust. At length he asked her to be his wife, and notwithstanding her prompt refusal, spoke to her father on the subject. Much to the astonishment of his daughter, Mr. Frettlby not only consented to Whyte paying his addresses to Madge, but gave that young lady to understand that he wished her to consider his proposals favourably.

In spite of all Madge could say, he refused to alter his decision, and Whyte, feeling himself safe, began to treat Brian with an insolence which was highly galling to Fitzgerald's proud nature. He had called on Whyte at his lodgings, and after a violent quarrel he had left the house vowing to kill him, should he marry Madge Frettlby.

The same night Fitzgerald had an interview with Mr. Frettlby. He confessed that he loved Madge, and that his love was returned. So, when Madge added her entreaties to Brian's, Mr. Frettlby found himself unable to withstand the combined forces, and gave his consent to their engagement.

Whyte was absent in the country for the next few days after his stormy interview with Brian, and it was only on his return that he learnt that Madge was engaged to his rival. He saw Mr. Frettlby,

and having learnt from his own lips that such was the case, he left the house at once, and swore that he would never enter it again. He little knew how prophetic were his words, for on that same night he met his death in the hansom cab. He had passed out of the life of both the lovers, and they, glad that he troubled them no more, never suspected for a moment that the body of the unknown man found in Royston's cab was that of Oliver Whyte.

About two weeks after Whyte's disappearance Mr. Frettlby gave a dinner party in honour of his daughter's birthday. It was a delightful evening, and the wide French windows which led on to the verandah were open, letting in a gentle breeze from the ocean. Outside there was a kind of screen of tropical plants, and through the tangle of the boughs the guests, seated at the table, could just see the waters of the bay glittering in the pale moonlight. Brian was seated opposite to Madge, and every now and then he caught a glimpse of her bright face from behind the fruit and flowers, which stood in the centre of the table. Mark Frettlby was at the head of the table, and appeared in very good spirits. His stern features were somewhat relaxed, and he drank more wine than usual.

The soup had just been removed when some one, who was late, entered with apologies and took his seat. Some one in this case was Mr. Felix Rolleston, one of the best known young men in Melbourne. He had an income of his own, scribbled a little for the papers, was to be seen at every house of any pretensions in Melbourne, and was always bright, happy, and full of news. For details of any scandal you were safe in applying to Felix Rolleston. He knew all that was going on, both at home and abroad. And his knowledge, if not very accurate, was at least extensive, while his conversation was piquant, and at times witty. Calton, one of the leading lawyers of the city, remarked that "Rolleston put him in mind of what Beaconsfield said of one of the personages in *Lothair*, 'He wasn't an intellectual Croesus, but his pockets were always full of sixpences.'" Be it said in his favour that Felix was free with his sixpences.

The conversation, which had shown signs of languishing before his arrival, now brightened up.

"So awfully sorry, don't you know," said Felix, as he slipped into a seat by Madge; "but a fellow like me has got to be careful of his time – so many calls on it."

"So many calls in it, you mean," retorted Madge, with a disbelieving smile. "Confess, now, you have been paying a round of visits."

"Well, yes," assented Mr. Rolleston; "that's the disadvantage of having a large circle of acquaintances. They give you weak tea and thin bread and butter, whereas –"

"You would rather have something else," finished Brian.

There was a laugh at this, but Mr. Rolleston disdained to notice the interruption.

"The only advantage of five o'clock tea," he went on, "is, that it brings people together, and one hears what's going on."

"Ah, yes, Rolleston," said Mr. Frettlby, who was looking at him with an amused smile. "What news have you?"

"Good news, bad news, and such news as you have never heard of," quoted Rolleston gravely. "Yes, I have a bit of news – haven't you heard it?"

Rolleston felt he held sensation in his hands. There was nothing he liked better.

"Well, do you know," he said, gravely fixing in his eye-glass, "they have found out the name of the fellow who was murdered in the hansom cab."

"Never!" cried every one eagerly.

"Yes," went on Rolleston, "and what's more, you all know him."

"It's never Whyte?" said Brian, in a horrified tone.

"Hang it, how did you know?" said Rolleston, rather annoyed at being forestalled. "Why, I just heard it at the St. Kilda station."

"Oh, easily enough," said Brian, rather confused. "I used to meet Whyte constantly, and as I have not seen him for the last two weeks, I thought he might be the victim."

"How did they find out?" asked Mr. Frettlby, idly toying with his wine-glass.

"Oh, one of those detective fellows, you know," answered Felix. "They know everything."

"I'm sorry to hear it," said Frettlby, referring to the fact that Whyte was murdered. "He had a letter of introduction to me, and seemed a clever, pushing young fellow."

"A confounded cad," muttered Felix, under his breath; and Brian, who overheard him, seemed inclined to assent. For the rest of the meal nothing was talked about but the murder, and the mystery in which it was shrouded. When the ladies retired they chatted about it in the drawingroom, but finally dropped it for more agreeable subjects. The men, however, when the cloth was removed, filled their glasses, and continued the discussion with unabated vigour. Brian alone did not take part in the conversation. He sat moodily staring at his untasted wine, wrapped in a brown study.

"What I can't make out," observed Rolleston, who was amusing himself with cracking nuts, "is why they did not find out who he was before."

"That is not hard to answer," said Frettlby, filling his – glass. "He was comparatively little known here, as he had been out from England such a short time, and I fancy that this was the only house at which he visited."

"And look here, Rolleston," said Calton, who was sitting near him, "if you were to find a man dead in a hansom cab, dressed in evening clothes – which nine men out of ten are in the habit of wearing in the evening – no cards in his pockets, and no name on his linen, I rather think you would find it hard to discover who he was. I consider it reflects great credit on the police for finding out so quickly."

"Puts one in mind of 'The Leavenworth Case,' and all that sort of thing," said Felix, whose reading was of the lightest description. "Awfully exciting, like putting a Chinese puzzle together. Gad, I wouldn't mind being a detective myself."

"I'm afraid if that were the case," said Mr. Frettlby, with an amused smile, "criminals would be pretty safe."

"Oh, I don't know so much about that," answered Felix, shrewdly; "some fellows are like trifle at a party, froth on top, but something better underneath."

"What a greedy simile," said Calton, sipping his wine; "but I'm afraid the police will have a more difficult task in discovering the man who committed the crime. In my opinion he's a deuced clever fellow."

"Then you don't think he will be discovered?" asked Brian, rousing himself out of his brown study.

"Well, I don't go as far as that," rejoined Calton; "but he has certainly left no trace behind him, and even the Red Indian, in whom instinct for tracking is so highly developed, needs some sort of a trail to enable him to find out his enemies. Depend upon it," went on Calton, warming to his subject, "the man who murdered Whyte is no ordinary criminal; the place he chose for the committal of the crime was such a safe one."

"Do you think so?" said Rolleston. "Why, I should think that a hansom cab in a public street would be very unsafe."

"It is that very fact that makes it safer," replied Mr. Calton, epigrammatically. "You read De Quincey's account of the Marr murders in London, and you will see that the more public the place the less risk there is of detection. There was nothing about the gentleman in the light coat who murdered Whyte to excite Royston's suspicions. He entered the cab with Whyte; no noise or anything likely to attract attention was heard, and then he alighted. Naturally enough, Royston drove to St. Kilda, and never suspected Whyte was dead till he looked inside and touched him. As to the man in the light coat, he doesn't live in Powlett Street – no – nor in East Melbourne either."

"Why not?" asked Frettlby.

"Because he wouldn't have been such a fool as to leave a trail to his own door; he did what the fox often does – he doubled. My opinion is that he went either right through East Melbourne to Fitzroy, or he walked back through the Fitzroy Gardens into town. There was no one about at

that time of the morning, and he could return to his lodgings, hotel, or wherever he is staying, with impunity. Of course, this is a theory that may be wrong; but from what insight into human nature my profession has given me, I think that my idea is a correct one."

All present agreed with Mr. Calton's idea, as it really did seem the most natural thing that would be done by a man desirous of escaping detection.

"Tell you what," said Felix to Brian, as they were on their way to the drawing-room, "if the fellow that committed the crime, is found out, by gad, he ought to get Calton to defend him."

## CHAPTER VIII. BRIAN TAKES A WALK AND A DRIVE

When the gentlemen entered the drawing-room a young lady was engaged in playing one of those detestable pieces of the MORCEAU DE SALON order, in which an unoffending air is taken, and variations embroidered on it, till it becomes a perfect agony to distinguish the tune, amid the perpetual rattle of quavers and demi-semi-quavers. The melody in this case was "Over the Garden Wall," with variations by Signor Thumpanini, and the young lady who played it was a pupil of that celebrated Italian musician. When the male portion of the guests entered, the air was being played in the bass with a great deal of power (that is, the loud pedal was down), and with a perpetual rattle of treble notes, trying with all their shrill might to drown the tune.

"Gad! it's getting over the garden wall in a hailstorm," said Felix, as he strolled over to the piano, for he saw that the musician was Dora Featherweight, an heiress to whom he was then paying attention, in the hope that she might be induced to take the name of Rolleston. So, when the fair Dora had paralysed her audience with one final bang and rattle, as if the gentleman going over the garden wall had tumbled into the cucumber-frame, Felix was loud in his expressions of delight.

"Such power, you know, Miss Featherweight," he said, sinking into a chair, and mentally wondering if any of the piano strings had given way at that last crash. "You put your heart into it – and all your muscle, too, by gad," he added mentally.

"It's nothing but practice," answered Miss Featherweight, with a modest blush. "I am at the piano four hours every day."

"Good heavens!" thought Felix, "what a time the family must have of it." But he kept this remark to himself, and, screwing his eye-glass into his left organ of vision, merely ejaculated, "Lucky piano."

Miss Featherweight, not being able to think of any answer to this, looked down and blushed, while the ingenuous Felix looked up and sighed.

Madge and Brian were in a corner of the room talking over Whyte's death.

"I never liked him," she said, "but it is horrible to think of him dying like that."

"I don't know," answered Brian, gloomily; "from all I can hear dying by chloroform is a very easy death."

"Death can never be easy," replied Madge, "especially to a young man so full of health and spirits as Mr. Whyte was."

"I believe you are sorry he's dead," said Brian, jealously.

"Aren't you?" she asked in some surprise.

"De mortuis nil nisi bonum," quoted Fitzgerald. "But as I detested him when alive, you can't expect me to regret his end."

Madge did not answer him, but glanced quickly at his face, and for the first time it struck her that he looked ill.

"What is the matter with you, dear?" she asked, placing her hand on his arm. "You are not looking well."

"Nothing – nothing," he answered hurriedly. "I've been a little worried about business lately – but come," he said, rising, "let us go outside, for I see your father has got that girl with the steam-whistle voice to sing."

The girl with the steam-whistle voice was Julia Featherweight, the sister of Rolleston's innamorata, and Madge stifled a laugh as she went on to the verandah with Fitzgerald.

"What a shame of you," she said, bursting into a laugh when they were safely outside; "she's been taught by the best masters."

"How I pity them," retorted Brian, grimly, as Julia wailed out, "Meet me once again," with an ear-piercing shrillness.

"I'd much rather listen to our ancestral Banshee, and as to meeting her again, one interview would be more than enough." Madge did not answer, but leaning lightly over the high rail of the verandah looked out into the beautiful moonlit night. There were a number of people passing along the Esplanade, some of whom stopped and listened to Julia's shrill notes. One man in particular seemed to have a taste for music, for he persistently stared over the fence at the house. Brian and Madge talked of divers subjects, but every time Madge looked up she saw the man watching the house.

"What does that man want, Brian?" she asked.

"What man?" asked Brian, starting. "Oh," he went on indifferently, as the watcher moved away from the gate and crossed the road on to the footpath, "he's taken up with the music, I suppose; that's all."

Madge said nothing, but she could not help thinking there was more in it than the music. Presently Julia ceased, and she proposed to go in.

"Why?" asked Brian, who was lying back in a comfortable seat, smoking a cigarette. "It's nice enough here."

"I must attend to my guests," she answered, rising. "You stop here and finish your cigarette," and with a gay laugh she flitted into the house.

Brian sat and smoked, staring out into the moonlight the while. Yes, the man was certainly watching the house, for he sat on one of the seats, and kept his eyes fixed on the brilliantly-lighted windows. Brian threw away his cigarette and shivered slightly.

"Could anyone have seen me?" he muttered, rising uneasily.

"Pshaw! of course not; and the cabman would never recognise me again. Curse Whyte, I wish I'd never set eyes upon him."

He gave one glance at the dark figure on the seat, and then, with a shiver, passed into the warm, well-lighted room. He did not feel easy in his mind, and he would have felt still less so had he known that the man on the seat was one of the cleverest of the Melbourne detectives.

Mr. Gorby had been watching the Frettlby mansion the whole evening, and was getting rather annoyed. Moreland did not know where Fitzgerald lived, and as that was one of the primary facts the detective wished to ascertain, he determined to watch Brian's movements, and to trace him home.

"If he's the lover of that pretty girl, I'll wait till he leaves the house," argued Mr. Gorby to himself, as he took his seat on the Esplanade. "He won't long remain away from her, and once he leaves the house it will be no difficult matter to find out where he lives."

When Brian made his appearance early in the evening, on his way to Mark Frettlby's mansion, he wore evening dress, a light overcoat, and a soft hat.

"Well, I'm dashed!" ejaculated Mr. Gorby, when he saw Fitzgerald disappear; "if he isn't a fool I don't know who is, to go about in the very clothes he wore when he polished Whyte off, and think he won't be recognised. Melbourne ain't Paris or London, that he can afford to be so careless, and when I put the darbies on him he will be astonished. Ah, well," he went on, lighting his pipe and taking a seat on the Esplanade, "I suppose I'll have to wait here till he comes out."

Mr. Gorby's patience was pretty severely tried, for hour after hour passed, and no one appeared. He smoked several pipes, and watched the people strolling along in the soft silver moonlight. A bevy of girls passed by with their arms round one another's waists. Then a young man and woman, evidently lovers, came walking along. They sat down by Mr. Gorby and looked hard at him, to hint that he need not stay. But the detective took no heed of them, and kept his eyes steadily upon the great house opposite. Finally, the lovers took themselves off with a very bad grace.

Then Mr. Gorby saw Madge and Brian come out on to the verandah, and heard in the stillness of the night, a sound weird and unearthly. It was Miss Featherweight singing. He saw Madge go in, shortly followed by Brian. The latter turned and stared at him for a moment.

"Ah," said Gorby to himself as he re-lit his pipe; "your conscience is a-smiting you, is it? Wait a bit, my boy, till I have you in gaol."

Then the guests came out of the house, and their black figures disappeared one by one from the moonlight as they shook hands and said good-night.

Shortly after Brian came down the path with Frettlby at his side, and Madge hanging on her father's arm. Frettlby opened the gate and held out his hand.

"Good-night, Fitzgerald," he said, in a hearty voice; "come soon again."

"Good-night, Brian, dearest," said Madge, kissing him, "and don't forget to-morrow."

Then father and daughter closed the gate, leaving Brian outside, and walked back to the house.

"Ah!" said Mr. Gorby to himself, "if you only knew what I know, you wouldn't be so precious kind to him."

Brian strolled along the Esplanade, and crossing over, passed by Gorby and walked on till he was opposite the Esplanade Hotel. Then he leaned his arms on the fence, and, taking off his hat, enjoyed the calm beauty of the hour.

"What a good-looking fellow," murmured Mr. Gorby, in a regretful tone. "I can hardly believe it of him, but the proofs are too clear."

The night was perfectly still. Not a breath of wind stirred, for what breeze there had been had long since died away. But Brian could see the white wavelets breaking lightly on the sands. The long narrow pier ran out like a black thread into the sheet of gleaming silver, and away in the distance the line of the Williamstown lights sparkled like some fairy illumination.

Over all this placid scene of land and water was a sky such as Doré loved – a great heavy mass of rain-clouds heaped one on top of the other, as the rocks the Titans piled to reach Olympus. Then a break in the woof, and a bit of dark blue sky could be seen glittering with stars, in the midst of which sailed the serene moon, shedding down her light on the cloudland beneath, giving to it all, one silver lining.

Somewhat to the annoyance of Mr. Gorby, who had no eye for the picturesque, Brian gazed at the sky for several minutes, admiring the wonderful beauty of its broken masses of light and shade. At length he lit a cigarette and walked down the steps on to the pier.

"Oh, suicide, is it?" muttered Mr. Gorby. "Not if I can help it." And he lit his pipe and followed him.

He found Brian leaning over the parapet at the end of the pier, looking at the glittering waters beneath, which kept rising and falling in a dreamy rhythm, that soothed and charmed the ear. "Poor girl! poor girl!" the detective heard him mutter as he came up. "If she only knew all! If she – "

At this moment he heard the approaching step, and turned round sharply. The detective saw that his face was ghastly pale in the moonlight, and his brows wrinkled in anger.

"What the devil do you want?" he burst out, as Gorby paused.

"What do you mean by following me all over the place?"

"Saw me, watching the house," said Gorby to himself. "I'm not following you, sir," he said aloud. "I suppose the pier ain't private property. I only came down here for a breath of fresh air."

Fitzgerald did not answer, but turned sharply on his heel, and walked quickly up the pier, leaving Gorby staring after him.

"He's getting frightened," soliloquised the detective to himself, as he strolled easily along, keeping the black figure in front well in view. "I'll have to keep a sharp eye on him or he'll be clearing out of Victoria."

Brian walked rapidly up to the St. Kilda station, for on looking at his watch he found that he would just have time to catch the last train. He arrived a few minutes before it started, so, getting into the smoking carriage at the near end of the platform, he lit a cigarette, and, leaning back in his seat, watched the late comers hurrying into the station. Just as the last bell rang he saw a man rush along, to catch the train. It was the same man who had been watching him the whole evening, and Brian

felt confident that he was being followed. He comforted himself, however, with the thought that this pertinacious follower might lose the train, and, being in the last carriage himself, he kept a look out along the platform, expecting to see his friend of the Esplanade standing disappointed on it. There was no appearance of him, so Brian, sinking back into his seat, lamented his ill-luck in not shaking off this man who kept him under such strict surveillance.

"Confound him!" he muttered softly. "I expect he will follow me to East Melbourne, and find out where I live, but he shan't if I can help it."

There was no one but himself in the carriage, and he felt relieved at this because he was in no humour to hear chatter.

"Murdered in a cab," he said, lighting a fresh cigarette, and blowing a cloud of smoke. "A romance in real life, which beats Miss Braddon hollow. There is one thing certain, he won't come between Madge and me again. Poor Madge!" with an impatient sigh. "If she only knew all, there would not be much chance of our marriage; but she can never find out, and I don't suppose anyone else will."

Here a thought suddenly struck him, and rising out of his seat, he walked to the other end of the carriage, and threw himself on the cushions, as if desirous to escape from himself.

"What grounds can that man have for suspecting me?" he said aloud. "No one knows I was with Whyte on that night, and the police can't possibly bring forward any evidence to show that I was. Pshaw!" he went on, impatiently buttoning up his coat. "I am like a child, afraid of my shadow – the fellow on the pier is only some one out for a breath of fresh air, as he said himself – I am quite safe."

At the same time, he felt by no means easy in his mind, and as he stepped out on to the platform at the Melbourne station he looked round apprehensively, as if he half expected to feel the detective's hand upon his shoulder. But he saw no one at all like the man he had met on the St. Kilda pier, and with a sigh of relief he left the station. Mr. Gorby, however, was not far away. He was following at a safe distance. Brian walked slowly along Flinders Street apparently deep in thought. He turned up Russell Street and did not stop until he found himself close to the Burke and Wills' monument – the exact spot where the cab had stopped on the night of Whyte's murder.

"Ah!" said the detective to himself, as he stood in the shadow on the opposite side of the street. "You're going to have a look at it, are you? – I wouldn't, if I were you – it's dangerous."

Fitzgerald stood for a few minutes at the corner, and then walked up Collins Street. When he got to the cab-stand, opposite the Melbourne Club, still suspecting he was followed, he hailed a hansom, and drove away in the direction of Spring Street. Gorby was rather perplexed at this sudden move, but without delay, he hailed another cab, and told the driver to follow the first till it stopped.

"Two can play at that game," he said, settling himself back in the cab, "and I'll get the better of you, clever as you are – and you are clever," he went on in a tone of admiration, as he looked round the luxurious hansom, "to choose such a convenient place for a murder; no disturbance and plenty of time for escape after you had finished; it's a pleasure going after a chap like you, instead of after men who tumble down like ripe fruit, and ain't got any brains to keep their crime quiet."

While the detective thus soliloquised, his cab, following on the trail of the other, had turned down Spring Street, and was being driven rapidly along the Wellington Parade, in the direction of East Melbourne. It then turned up Powlett Street, at which Mr. Gorby was glad.

"Ain't so clever as I thought," he said to himself. "Shows his nest right off, without any attempt to hide it."

The detective, however, had reckoned without his host, for the cab in front kept driving on, through an interminable maze of streets, until it seemed as though Brian were determined to drive the whole night.

"Look 'ere, sir!" cried Gorby's cabman, looking through his trap-door in the roof of the hansom, "'ow long's this 'ere game agoin' to larst? My 'oss is knocked up, 'e is, and 'is blessed old legs is agivin' way under 'im!"

"Go on! go on!" answered the detective, impatiently; "I'll pay you well."

The cabman's spirits were raised by this, and by dint of coaxing and a liberal use of the whip, he managed to get his jaded horse up to a pretty good pace. They were in Fitzroy by this time, and both cabs turned out of Gertrude Street into Nicholson Street; thence passed on to Evelyn Street and along Spring Street, until Brian's cab stopped at the corner of Collins Street, and Gorby saw him alight and dismiss his cab-man. He then walked down the street and disappeared into the Treasury Gardens.

"Confound it," said the detective, as he got out and paid his fare, which was by no means a light one, but over which he had no time to argue, "we've come in a circle, and I do believe he lives in Powlett Street after all."

He went into the gardens, and saw Brian some distance ahead of him, walking rapidly. It was bright moonlight, and he could easily distinguish Fitzgerald by his light coat.

As he went along that noble avenue with its elms in their winter dress, the moon shining through their branches wrought a fantastic tracery, on the smooth asphalt. And on either side Gorby could see the dim white forms of the old Greek gods and goddesses – Venus Victrix, with the apple in her hand (which Mr. Gorby, in his happy ignorance of heathen mythology, took for Eve offering Adam the forbidden fruit); Diana, with the hound at her feet, and Bacchus and Ariadne (which the detective imagined were the Babes in the Wood). He knew that each of the statues had queer names, but thought they were merely allegorical. Passing over the bridge, with the water rippling quietly underneath, Brian went up the smooth yellow path to where the statue of Hebe, holding the cup, seems instinct with life; and turning down the path to the right, he left the gardens by the end gate, near which stands the statue of the Dancing Faun, with the great bush of scarlet geranium burning like an altar before it. Then he went along the Wellington Parade, and turned up Powlett Street, where he stopped at a house near Cairns' Memorial Church, much to Mr. Gorby's relief, who, being like Hamlet, "fat and scant of breath," found himself rather exhausted. He kept well in the shadow, however, and saw Fitzgerald give one final look round before he disappeared into the house. Then Mr. Gorby, like the Robber Captain in *Ali Baba*, took careful stock of the house, and fixed its locality and appearance well in his mind, as he intended to call at it on the morrow.

"What I'm going to do," he said, as he walked slowly back to Melbourne, "is to see his landlady when he's out, and find out what time he came in on the night of the murder. If it fits into the time he got out of Rankin's cab, I'll get out a warrant, and arrest him straight off."

## CHAPTER IX.

### MR. GORBY IS SATISFIED AT LAST

In spite of his long walk, and still longer drive, Brian did not sleep well that night. He kept tossing and turning, or lying on his back, wide awake, looking into the darkness and thinking of Whyte. Towards dawn, when the first faint glimmer of morning came through the venetian blinds, he fell into a sort of uneasy doze, haunted by horrible dreams. He thought he was driving in a hansom, when suddenly he found Whyte by his side, clad in white cerements, grinning and gibbering at him with ghastly merriment. Then the cab went over a precipice, and he fell from a great height, down, down, with the mocking laughter still sounding in his ears, until he woke with a loud cry, and found it was broad daylight, and that drops of perspiration were standing on his brow. It was no use trying to sleep any longer, so, with a weary sigh, he arose and went to his tub, feeling jaded and worn out by worry and want of sleep. His bath did him some good. The cold water brightened him up and pulled him together. Still he could not help giving a start of surprise when he saw his face reflected in the mirror, old and haggard-looking, with dark circles round the eyes.

"A pleasant life I'll have of it if this sort of thing goes on," he said, bitterly, "I wish I had never seen, or heard of Whyte."

He dressed himself carefully. He was not a man to neglect his toilet, however worried and out of sorts he might happen to feel. Yet, notwithstanding all his efforts the change in his appearance did not escape the eye of his landlady. She was a small, dried-up little woman, with a wrinkled yellowish face. She seemed parched up and brittle. Whenever she moved she crackled, and one went in constant dread of seeing a wizen-looking limb break off short like the branch of some dead tree. When she spoke it was in a voice hard and shrill, not unlike the chirp of a cricket. When – as was frequently the case – she clothed her attenuated form in a faded brown silk gown, her resemblance to that lively insect was remarkable.

And, as on this morning she crackled into Brian's sitting-room with the ARGUS and his coffee, a look of dismay at his altered appearance, came over her stony little countenance.

"Dear me, sir," she chirped out in her shrill voice, as she placed her burden on the table, "are you took bad?"

Brian shook his head.

"Want of sleep, that's all, Mrs. Sampson," he answered, unfolding the ARGUS.

"Ah! that's because ye ain't got enough blood in yer 'ead," said Mrs. Sampson, wisely, for she had her own ideas on the subject of health. "If you ain't got blood you ain't got sleep."

Brian looked at her as she said this, for there seemed such an obvious want of blood in her veins that he wondered if she had ever slept in all her life.

"There was my father's brother, which, of course, makes 'im my uncle," went on the landlady, pouring out a cup of coffee for Brian, "an' the blood 'e 'ad was somethin' astoundin', which it made 'im sleep that long as they 'ad to draw pints from 'im afore 'e'd wake in the mornin'."

Brian had the ARGUS before his face, and under its friendly cover he laughed quietly to himself.

"His blood poured out like a river," went on the landlady, still drawing from the rich stores of her imagination, "and the doctor was struck dumb with astonishment at seein' the Nigagerer which burst from 'im – but I'm not so full-blooded myself."

Fitzgerald again stifled a laugh, and wondered that Mrs. Sampson was not afraid of being treated as were Ananias and Sapphira. However, he said nothing, but merely intimated that if she would leave the room he would take his breakfast.

"An' if you wants anythin' else, Mr. Fitzgerald," she said, going to the door, "you knows your way to the bell as easily as I do to the kitching," and, with a final chirrup, she crackled out of the room.

As soon as the door was closed, Brian put down his paper and roared, in spite of his worries. He had that extraordinary vivacious Irish temperament, which enables a man to put all trouble behind his back, and thoroughly enjoy the present. His landlady, with her Arabian Nightlike romances, was a source of great amusement to him, and he felt considerably cheered by the odd turn her humour had taken this morning. After a time, however, his laughter ceased, and his troubles came crowding on him again. He drank his coffee, but pushed away the food which was before him; and looked through the ARGUS, for the latest report about the murder case. What he read made his cheek turn a shade paler than before. He could feel his heart thumping wildly.

"They've found a clue, have they?" he muttered, rising and pacing restlessly up and down. "I wonder what it can be? I threw that man off the scent last night, but if he suspects me, there will be no difficulty in his finding out where I live. Bah! What nonsense I am talking. I am the victim of my own morbid imagination. There is nothing to connect me with the crime, so I need not be afraid of my shadow. I've a good mind to leave town for a time, but if I am suspected that would excite suspicion. Oh, Madge! my darling," he cried passionately, "if you only knew what I suffer, I know that you would pity me – but you must never know the truth – Never! Never!" and sinking into a chair by the window, he covered his face with his hands. After remaining in this position for some minutes, occupied with his own gloomy thoughts, he arose and rang the bell. A faint crackle in the distance announced that Mrs. Sampson had heard it, and she soon came into the room, looking more like a cricket than ever. Brian had gone into his bedroom, and called out to her from there —

"I am going down to St. Kilda, Mrs. Sampson," he said, "and probably I shall not be back all day."

"Which I 'opes it 'ull do you good," she answered, "for you've eaten nothin', an' the sea breezes is miraculous for makin' you take to your victuals. My mother's brother, bein' a sailor, an' wonderful for 'is stomach, which, when 'e 'ad done a meal, the table looked as if a low-cuss had gone over it."

"A what?" asked Fitzgerald, buttoning his gloves.

"A low-cuss!" replied the landlady, in surprise at his ignorance, "as I've read in 'Oly Writ, as 'ow John the Baptist was partial to 'em, not that I think they'd be very fillin', tho', to be sure, 'e 'ad a sweet tooth, and ate 'oney with 'em."

"Oh! you mean locusts," said Brian now enlightened.

"An' what else?" asked Mrs. Sampson, indignantly; "which, tho' not bein' a scholar'd, I speaks English, I 'opes, my mother's second cousin 'avin' 'ad first prize at a spellin' bee, tho' 'e died early through brain fever, 'avin' crowded 'is 'ead over much with the dictionary."

"Dear me!" answered Brian, mechanically. "How unfortunate!" He was not listening to Mrs. Sampson's remarks. He suddenly remembered an arrangement which Madge had made, and which up till now had slipped his memory.

"Mrs. Sampson," he said, turning round at the door, "I am going to bring Mr. Frettlby and his daughter to have a cup of afternoon tea here, so you might have some ready."

"You 'ave only to ask and to 'ave," answered Mrs. Sampson, hospitably, with a gratified crackle of all her joints. "I'll make the tea, sir, an' also some of my own perticler cakes, bein' a special kind I 'ave, which my mother showed me 'ow to make, 'avin' been taught by a lady as she nussed thro' the scarlet fever, tho' bein' of a weak constitootion, she died soon arter, bein' in the 'abit of contractin' any disease she might chance on."

Brian hurried off lest in her Poe-like appreciation of them, Mrs. Sampson should give vent to more charnel-house horrors.

At one period of her life, the little woman had been a nurse, and it was told of her that she had frightened one of her patients into convulsions during the night by narrating to her the history of all the corpses she had laid out. This ghoulish tendency in the end proved fatal to her professional advancement.

As soon as Fitzgerald had gone, she went over to the window and watched him as he walked slowly down the street – a tall, handsome man, of whom any woman would be proud.

"What an awful thing it are to think 'e'll be a corpse some day," she chirped cheerily to herself, "tho' of course bein' a great swell in 'is own place, 'e'll 'ave a nice airy vault, which 'ud be far more comfortable than a close, stuffy grave, even tho' it 'as a tombstone an' vi'lets over it. Ah, now! Who are you, impertinence?" she broke off, as a stout man in a light suit of clothes crossed the road and rang the bell, "a-pullin' at the bell as if it were a pump 'andle."

As the gentleman at the door, who was none other than Mr. Gorby, did not hear her, he of course did not reply, so she hurried down the stairs, crackling with anger at the rough usage her bell had received.

Mr. Gorby had seen Brian go out, and deeming it a good opportunity for enquiry had lost no time in making a start.

"You nearly tored the bell down," said Mrs. Sampson, as she presented her thin body and wrinkled face to the view of the detective.

"I'm very sorry," answered Gorby, meekly. "I'll knock next time."

"Oh, no you won't," said the landlady, tossing her head, "me not 'avin' a knocker, an' your 'and a-scratchin' the paint off the door, which it ain't been done over six months by my sister-in-law's cousin, which 'e is a painter, with a shop in Fitzroy, an' a wonderful heye to colour."

"Does Mr. Fitzgerald live here?" asked Mr. Gorby, quietly.

"He do," replied Mrs. Sampson, "but 'e's gone out, an' won't be back till the arternoon, which any messige 'ull be delivered to 'im punctual on 'is arrival."

"I'm glad he's not in," said Mr. Gorby. "Would you allow me to have a few moments' conversation?"

"What is it?" asked the landlady, her curiosity being roused.

"I'll tell you when we get inside," answered Mr. Gorby.

She looked at him with her sharp little eyes, and seeing nothing disreputable about him, led the way upstairs, crackling loudly the whole time. This so astonished Mr. Gorby that he cast about in his own mind for an explanation of the phenomenon.

"Wants oiling about the jints," was his conclusion, "but I never heard anything like it, and she looks as if she'd snap in two, she's that brittle."

Mrs. Sampson took Gorby into Brian's sitting-room, and having closed the door, sat down and prepared to hear what he had to say for himself.

"I 'ope it ain't bills," she said. "Mr. Fitzgerald 'avin' money in the bank, and everythin' respectable like a gentleman as 'e is, tho', to be sure, your bill might come down on him unbeknown, 'e not 'avin' kept it in mind, which it ain't everybody as 'ave sich a good memory as my aunt on my mother's side, she 'avin' been famous for 'er dates like a 'istory, not to speak of 'er multiplication tables, and the numbers of people's 'ouses."

"It's not bills," answered Mr. Gorby, who, having vainly attempted to stem the shrill torrent of words, had given in, and waited mildly until she had finished; "I only want to know a few things about Mr. Fitzgerald's habits."

"And what for?" asked Mrs. Sampson, indignantly. "Are you a noospaper a-putin' in articles about people who don't want to see 'emselves in print, which I knows your 'abits, my late 'usband 'avin' bin a printer on a paper which bust up, not 'avin' the money to pay wages, thro' which, there was doo to him the sum of one pound seven and sixpence halfpenny, which I, bein' 'is widdler, ought to 'ave, not that I expects to see it on this side of the grave – oh, dear, no!" and she gave a shrill, elfish laugh.

Mr. Gorby, seeing that unless he took the bull by the horns, he would never be able to get what he wanted, grew desperate, and plunged in *MEDIAS RES*.

"I am an insurance agent," he said, rapidly, so as to prevent any interruption, "and Mr. Fitzgerald desires to insure his life in our company. I, therefore, want to find out if he is a good life to insure; does he live temperately? keep early hours? and, in fact, all about him?"

"I shall be 'appy to answer any enquiries which may be of use to you, sir," replied Mrs. Sampson; "knowin' as I do, 'ow good a insurance is to a family, should the 'ead of it be taken off unexpected, leavin' a widder, which, as I know, Mr. Fitzgerald is a-goin' to be married soon, an' I 'opes 'e'll be 'appy, tho' thro' it I loses a lodger as 'as allays paid regler, an' be'aved like a gentleman."

"So he is a temperate man?" said Mr. Gorby, feeling his way cautiously.

"Not bein' a blue ribbing all the same," answered Mrs. Sampson; "and I never saw him the wuss for drink, 'e being allays able to use his latch-key, and take 'is boots off afore going to bed, which is no more than a woman ought to expect from a lodger, she 'avin' to do 'er own washin'."

"And he keeps good hours?"

"Allays in afore the clock strikes twelve," answered the landlady; "tho', to be sure, I uses it as a figger of speech, none of the clocks in the 'ouse strikin' but one, which is bein' mended, 'avin' broke through overwindin'."

"Is he always in before twelve?" asked Mr. Gorby, keenly disappointed at this answer.

Mrs. Sampson eyed him waggishly, and a smile crept over her wrinkled little face.

"Young men, not bein' old men," she replied, cautiously, "and sinners not bein' saints, it's not natral as latch-keys should be made for ornament instead of use, and Mr. Fitzgerald bein' one of the 'andsomest men in Melbourne, it ain't to be expected as 'e should let 'is latch-key git rusty, tho' 'avin' a good moral character, 'e uses it with moderation."

"But I suppose you are seldom awake when he comes in really late," said the detective.

"Not as a rule," assented Mrs. Sampson; "bein' a 'eavy sleeper, and much disposed for bed, but I 'ave 'eard 'im come in arter twelve, the last time bein' Thursday week."

"Ah!" Mr. Gorby drew a long breath, for Thursday week was the night upon which the murder was committed.

"Bein' troubled with my 'ead," said Mrs. Sampson, "thro' 'avin' been out in the sun all day a-washin', I did not feel so partial to my bed that night as in general, so went down to the kitching with the intent of getting a linseed poultice to put at the back of my 'ead, it being calculated to remove pain, as was told to me, when a nuss, by a doctor in the horspital, 'e now bein' in business for hisself, at Geelong, with a large family, 'avin' married early. Just as I was leavin' the kitching I 'eard Mr. Fitzgerald a-comin' in, and, turnin' round, looked at the clock, that 'avin' been my custom when my late 'usband came in, in the early mornin', I bein' a-preparin' 'is meal."

"And the time was?" asked Mr. Gorby, breathlessly.

"Five minutes to two o'clock," replied Mrs. Sampson. Mr. Gorby thought for a moment.

"Cab was hailed at one o'clock – started for St. Kilda at about ten minutes past – reached Grammar School, say, at twenty-five minutes past – Fitzgerald talks five minutes to cabman, making it half-past – say, he waited ten minutes for other cab to turn up, makes it twenty minutes to two – it would take another twenty minutes to get to East Melbourne – and five minutes to walk up here – that makes it five minutes past two instead of before – confound it. 'Was your clock in the kitchen right?'" he asked, aloud.

"Well, I think so," answered Mrs. Sampson. "It does get a little slow sometimes, not 'avin' been cleaned for some time, which my nevy bein' a watchmaker I allays 'ands it over to 'im."

"Of course it was slow on that night," said Gorby, triumphantly.

"He must have come in at five minutes past two – which makes it right."

"Makes what right?" asked the landlady, sharply. "And 'ow do you know my clock was ten minutes wrong?"

"Oh, it was, was it?" asked Gorby, eagerly.

"I'm not denyin' of it," replied Mrs. Sampson; "clocks ain't allays to be relied on more than men an' women – but it won't be anythin' agin 'is insurance, will it, as in general 'e's in afore twelve?"

"Oh, all that will be quite safe," answered the detective, delighted with the information he had obtained. "Is this Mr. Fitzgerald's room?"

"Yes, it is," replied the landlady; "but 'e furnished it 'imself, bein' of a luxurus turn of mind, not but what 'is taste is good, tho' far be it from me to deny I 'elped 'im to select; but 'avin' another room of the same to let, any friends as you might 'ave in search of a 'ome 'ud be well looked arter, my references bein' very 'igh, an' my cookin' tasty – an' if – "

Here a ring at the front door bell called Mrs. Sampson away, so with a hurried word to Gorby she crackled downstairs. Left to himself, Mr. Gorby arose and looked round the room. It was excellently furnished, and the pictures were good. At one end of the room, by the window, there was a writing-table covered with papers.

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