

Morrison Arthur

The Red Triangle



Arthur Morrison

The Red Triangle

«Public Domain»

Morrison A.

The Red Triangle / A. Morrison — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

THE AFFAIR OF SAMUEL'S DIAMONDS	5
I	5
II	10
III	14
THE CASE OF MR. JACOB MASON	20
I	20
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	26

Morrison Arthur

The Red Triangle / Being Some Further Chronicles of Martin Hewitt, Investigator

THE AFFAIR OF SAMUEL'S DIAMONDS

I

I have already recorded many of the adventures of my friend Martin Hewitt, but among them there have been more of a certain few which were discovered to be related together in a very extraordinary manner; and it is to these that I am now at liberty to address myself. There may have been others – cases which gave no indication of their connection with these; some of them indeed I may have told without a suspicion of their connection with the Red Triangle; but the first in which that singular accompaniment became apparent was the matter of Samuel's diamonds. The case exhibited many interesting features, and I was very anxious to report it, with perhaps even less delay than I had thought judicious in other cases; but Hewitt restrained me.

"No, Brett," he said, "there is more to come of this. This particular case is over, it is true, but there is much behind. I've an idea that I shall see that Red Triangle again. I may, or, of course, I may not; but there is deep work going on – very deep work, and whether we see more of it or not, I must keep prepared. I can't afford to throw a single card upon the table. So, as many notes as you please, Brett, for future reference; but no publication yet – none of your journalism!"

Hewitt was right. It was not so long before we heard more of the Red Triangle, and after that more, though the true connection of some of the cases with the mysterious symbol and the meaning of the symbol itself remained for a time undiscovered. But at last Hewitt was able to unmask the hideous secret, and for ever put an end to the evil influence that gathered about the sign; and now there remains no reason why the full story should not be told.

I have told elsewhere of my first acquaintance with Martin Hewitt, of his pleasant and companionable nature, his ordinary height, his stoutness, his round, smiling face – those characteristics that aided him so well in his business of investigator, so unlike was his appearance and manner to that of the private detective of the ordinary person's imagination. Therefore I need only remind my readers that my bachelor chambers were, during most of my acquaintance with Hewitt, in the old building near the Strand, in which Hewitt's office stood at the top of the first flight of stairs; where the plain ground-glass of the door bore as inscription the single word "Hewitt," and the sharp lad, Kerrett, first received visitors in the outer office.

Next door to this old house, at the time I am to speak of, a much newer building stood, especially built for letting out in offices. It happened that one day as Hewitt left his office for a late lunch, he became aware of a pallid and agitated Jew who was pervading the front door of this adjoining building. The man exhibited every sign of nervous expectancy, staring this way and that up and down the busy street, and once or twice rushing aimlessly half-way up the inner stairs, and as often returning to the door. Apprehension was plain on his pale face, and he was clearly in a state that blinded his attention to the ordinary matters about him, just as happens when a man is in momentary and nervous expectation of some serious event.

Noting these things as he passed, with no more than the observation that was his professional habit, Hewitt proceeded to his lunch. This done with, he returned to his office, perceiving, as he passed the next-door building, that the distracted Jew was no longer visible. It seemed plain that the

person or the event he had awaited with such obvious nervousness had arrived and passed; one more of the problems, anxieties or crises that join and unravel moment by moment in the human ant-hill of London, had perhaps closed for good or ill within the past half-hour; perhaps it had only begun.

A message awaited Hewitt at his office – an urgent message. The housekeeper had come in from next door, Kerrett reported, with an urgent request that Mr. Martin Hewitt would go immediately to the offices of Mr. Denson, on the third floor. The housekeeper seemed to know little or nothing of the business, except that a Mr. Samuel was alone in Mr. Denson's office, and had sent the message.

With no delay Hewitt transferred himself to the next-door offices. There the housekeeper, who inhabited a uniform and a glass box opposite the foot of the first flight of stairs, directed Hewitt, with the remark that the gentleman was very impatient and very much upset. "Third floor, sir, second door on the right; name Denson on the door. There's no lift."

"W.F. Denson" was the complete name, followed by the line "Foreign and Commission Agent." This Hewitt read with some little difficulty, for the door was open, and on the threshold stood that same agitated Jew whom Hewitt had seen at the front door.

A little less actively perturbed now, he was nevertheless still nervously pale. "Mr. Martin Hewitt?" he cried, while Hewitt was still only at the head of the stairs. "Is it Mr. Martin Hewitt?"

Hewitt came quietly along the corridor, using eyes and ears as he came. The Jew was a man of middle height, very obviously Jewish, and with a slight accent that hinted a Continental origin.

"I have just received your message," Hewitt said, "and, as you see, I am here with no delay. Is Mr. Denson in?"

"No – good heafens no – I would gif anything if he was, Mr. Hewitt. Come in, do! I haf been robbed – robbed by Denson himself, wit'out a wort of doubt. It is terrible – terrible! Fifteen t'ousant pounds! It ruins me, Mr. Hewitt, ruins me! Unless you can recover it! If you recover it, I will pay – pay – oh, I will pay fery well indeed!"

There was a characteristically sudden moderation of the client's emphasis when he came to the engagement to pay. Hewitt had observed it in other clients, but it did not disturb him.

"First," he said, "you must tell me your difficulty. You say you have been robbed of fifteen thousand pounds –"

"Tiamonts, Mr. Hewitt – tiamonts! All from the case – here is the case, empty –"

"Let us be methodical. We will shut the door and sit down." Hewitt pressed his client into a chair and produced his note-book. "It will be better to begin at the beginning. First, I should like to know your name, and a few such particulars as that."

"Lewis Samuel, Hatton Garden – 150, Hatton Garden – tiamont merchant."

"Yes. And what is your connection with Mr. Denson?"

"Business – just business," Samuel responded. He pronounced it "pishness," and it seemed his favourite word. "Like this; I will tell you. I haf known him some time, and did at first small pishness. He bought a little tiamont and haf it set in pracelet, and he pay – straightforward pishness. Then he bought some very good paste stones, all set in gold, and he pay – quite straightforward pishness. At the same time he says, 'I am pishness man myself, Mr. Samuel,' he says, 'and I like to make a little moneys as well as pay out sometimes. Don't you want any little agencies done? I do all foreign commissions, and I can forwart and receive and clear at dock and custom house. If you send any tiamonts I can consign and insure – very cheapest rates to you, special. If you want brokerage or buy and sell for you, confidential, I can do it with lowest commission. Especially I haf good connection with America. I haf many rich Americans, principals and customers,' he says, 'and often I could do pishness for you when they come over.'"

"By which he meant he might sell them diamonds?" Hewitt queried.

"Just so, Mr. Hewitt – reg'lar pishness. And after that two or three little parcels of tiamonts he bought – for American customers, he says. But he says he can do bigger pishness soon. Ay, so he has – goot heavens, he has! But I tell you. I do also one or two small pishnesses with him, and that is all

right – he treat me very well and I pay when it suits. Then he says, 'Samuel,' he says, very friendly now intee, 'Samuel, could you get a nice large lot of tiamonts for an American customer I expect here soon?' And I say, 'Of course I can.' 'Enough,' he says, 'to fit out a rich man's wife – that is, to pegin. He is not long rich, and he will want more soon – ah, she will make him pay! But to pegin – a good fit-out of tiamonts, eh?'

"I tell him yes, and I offer usual commission. But no, says Denson, he wants no commission; he will make his own profit. That I don't mind so long as I get mine; so I agree to put the tiamonts in at a price. The American, he says, is to come over about a big company deal, and when it is through he will pay well. So last week I pring a peautiful collection all cut but unset, and I wait out in that room while Denson shows them to his customer."

"You mean you let them out of your sight?"

"Yes – that is not so uncommon; reg'lar pishness. You see I was out here – this is the only way out. Denson was in the inner office with the stones and the American. Neither could get out without passing here. And I had done pishness with him alretty."

"Well?"

"You see I wait downstairs with my case – this case – till Denson sends down. He doesn't want me to show – fery natural, you see, in pishness. When I sell to make a profit, perhaps for somebody else, I don't want that somebody to know my customer, else he sells direct and I lose my profit – fery natural. See?"

"Of course, I understand. It's a point of business among you gentlemen to keep your own customers to yourselves. And often, no doubt, diamonds pass through several hands before reaching the eventual customer, leaving a profit in each."

"Always, Mr. Hewitt – always, you might say. Well, you see, Denson sends down that his customer is in, and I come up. Denson comes out from the inner office, takes my case, and I wait in there."

The case which Samuel showed Hewitt was of black leather, perhaps eighteen inches long by a foot wide. The arrangement of the office was simple. In this, the outer room, a small space was partitioned off by means of a ground glass screen, and it was in there that Samuel meant that he had waited.

"Well, he took the case in, and I could hear some sound of talking – but not much, you see, the door being shut. After a time the door opens and I hear Denson say: 'Very well, think over it; but don't be long or you'll lose the chance. Excuse me while I put them back in the safe.' Then he shuts the door and brings the case to me and goes back. But of course I stay till I haf looked very carefully through all the tiamonts, in the different compartments of the case, in case one might haf dropped on the floor, or got changed, you know. That is pishness."

"Just so. And they were all right?"

"All right and same as the list – I know well a tiamont that I haf seen once. So I go away, and afterwards Denson tells me that the American liked much the stones but wouldn't quite come up to price. That, of course, is fery usual pishness. 'But he will rise, Samuel,' Denson says. 'I know him quite well, and them tiamonts is as good as sold with a good profit for me; and a good one for you, too, I bet,' he says. I was putting the lot to him for fifteen t'ousant pounds, and it would have been a nice profit in that for me. And then Denson he chaffs me and he says, 'Ah! Samuel,' he says, 'wasn't you afraid my customer and me would hook it out o' the window with all your stones?' I don't like that sort o' joke in pishness, you see, but I say, 'All right – I wasn't afraid o' that. The window was a mile too high, and besides I could see it from where I was a-sitting.' And so I could, you see, plain enough to see if it was opened."

The ground-glass partition, in fact, cut off a part of the window of the outer office, which, being at an angle with the inner room, gave a side view of the window that lighted that apartment.

"Denson laughed at that," Samuel went on. "'Ha-ha!' says he, 'I never thought of that. Then you could see the American's hat hanging up just by the window – rum hat, ain't it?' And that was quite true, for I had noticed it – a big, grey wideawake, almost white."

Hewitt nodded approvingly. "You are quite right," he said, "to tell me everything you recollect, even of the most trivial sort; the smallest thing may be very valuable. So you took your diamonds away the first time, last week. What next?"

"Well, I came again, just the same, to-day, by appointment. Just the same I sat in that place, and just the same Denson took the case into the inner room. 'He's come to buy this time, I can see,' Denson whispers, and winks. 'But he'll fight hard over the price. We'll see!' and off he goes into the other room. Well, I waited. I waited and I waited a long time. I looked out sideways at the window, and there I see the American's big wideawake hat hanging up just inside the other window, same as last time. So I think they are a long time settling the price, and I wait some more. But it is such a very long time, and I begin to feel uneasy. Of course, I know you cannot sell fifteen t'ousant wort' of tiamonts in five minutes – that is not reasonable pishness. But I could hear nothing at all now – not a sound. And the boy – the boy that came down to call me up – he wasn't come back. But there I could see the big wideawake hat still hanging inside the window, and of course I knew there was only one door out of the inner room, right before me, so it seemed foolish to be uneasy. So I waited longer still, but now it was so late, I thought they should have come out to lunch before this, and then I was fery uneasy – fery uneasy inteet. So I thought I would pretend to be a new caller, and I opened the outer office door and banged it, and walked in very loud and knocked on the boy's table. I thought Denson would come when he heard that, but no – there was not a sound. So I got more uneasy, and I opened the window and leaned out as far as I could, to look in at the other window. There I could see nothing but the big hat and the back of a chair and a bit of the room – empty. So I went and banged the outer door again, and called out, 'Hi! Mr. Denson, you're wanted! Hi! d'y'ear?' and knocked with my umbrella on the inner door; and, Mr. Hewitt – you might have knocked me down with half a feather when I got no answer at all – not a sound! I opened the door, Mr. Hewitt, and there was nobody there – nobody! There was my leather case on the table, open – and empty! Fifteen t'ousant pounds in tiamonts, Mr. Hewitt – it ruins me!"

Hewitt rose, and flung wide the inner office door. "This is certainly the only door," he said, "and that is the only window – quite well in view from where you sat. There is the wideawake hat still hanging there – see, it is quite new; obviously brought for you to look at, it would seem. The door and the window were not used, and the chimney is impossible – register grate. But there was one other way – there."

The inner wall of each of the rooms was the wall of the corridor into which all the offices opened, and this corridor was lighted – and the offices partly ventilated – by a sort of hinged casement or fanlight close up by the ceiling, oblong, and extending the most of the length of each room. Plainly an active man, not too stout, might mount a chair-back, and climb very quietly through the opening. "That's the only way," said Hewitt, pointing.

"Yes," answered Samuel, nodding and rubbing his knuckles together nervously. "I saw it – saw it when it was too late. But who'd have thought o' such a thing beforehand? And the American – either there wasn't an American at all, or he got out the same way. But, anyway, here I am, and the tiamonts are gone, and there is nothing here but the furniture – not worth twenty pound!"

"Well," Hewitt said, "so far, I think I understand, though I may have questions to ask presently. But go on."

"Go on? But there is no more, Mr. Hewitt! Quite enough, don't you think? There is no more – I am robbed!"

"But when you found the empty room, and the case, what did you do? Send for the police?"

The Jew's face clouded slightly. "No, Mr. Hewitt," he said, "not for the police, but for you. Reason plain enough. The police make a great fuss, and they want to arrest the criminal. Quite right

– I want to arrest him, and punish him too, plenty. But most I want the tiamonts back, because if not it ruins me. If it was to make choice between two things for me, whether to punish Denson or get my tiamonts, then of course I take the tiamonts, and let Denson go – I cannot be ruined. But with the police, if it is their choice, they catch the thief first, and hold him tight, whether it loses the property or not; the property is only second with them – with me it is first and second, and all. So I take no more risks than I can help, Mr. Hewitt. I have sent for you to get first the stones – afterwards the thief if you can. But first my property; you can perhaps find Denson and make him give it up rather than go to prison. That would be better than having him taken and imprisoned, and perhaps the stones put away safe all the time ready for him when he came out."

"Still, the police can do things that I can't," Hewitt interposed; "stop people leaving or landing at ports, and the like. I think we should see them."

Samuel was anxiously emphatic. "No, Mr. Hewitt," he said, "certainly not the police. There are reasons – no, *not* the police, Mr. Hewitt, at any rate, not till you have tried. I cannot haf the police – just yet."

Martin Hewitt shrugged his shoulders. "Very well," he said, "if those are your instructions, I'll do my best. And so you sent for me at once, as soon as you discovered the loss?"

"Yes, at once."

"Without telling anybody else?"

"I haf tolt nobody."

"Did you look about anywhere for Denson – in the street, or what not?"

"No – what was the good? He was gone; there was time for him to go miles."

"Very good. And speaking of time, let me judge how far he may have gone. How long were you kept waiting?"

"Two hours and a quarter, very near – within five minutes."

"By your watch?"

"Yes – I looked often, to see if it was so long waiting as it seemed."

"Very good. Do you happen to have a piece of Denson's writing about you?"

Samuel looked round him. "There's nothing about here," he said, "but perhaps we can find – oh here – here's a post-card." He took the card from his pocket, and gave it to Hewitt.

"There is nothing else to tell me, then?" queried Hewitt. "Are you sure that you have forgotten nothing that has happened since you first arrived —*nothing at all*?" There was meaning in the emphasis, and a sharp look in Hewitt's eyes.

"No, Mr. Hewitt," Samuel answered, hastily; "there is nothing else I can tell you."

"Then I will think it over at once. You had better go back quietly to your office, and think it over yourself, *in case* you have forgotten something; and I need hardly warn you to keep quiet as to what has passed between us – unless you tell the police. I think I shall take the liberty of a glance over Mr. Denson's office, and since his office boy still stays away, I will lend him my clerk for a little. He will keep his eyes open if any callers come, and his ears too. Wait while I fetch him."

II

It was at this point that my humble part in the case began, for Hewitt hurried first to my rooms.

"Brett," he exclaimed, "are you engaged this afternoon?"

"No – nothing important."

"Will you do me a small favour? I have a rather interesting case. I want a man watched for an hour or so, and I haven't a soul to do it. Kerrett *may* be known, and I *am* known. Besides, there is another job for Kerrett."

Of course, I expressed myself willing to do what I could.

"Capital," replied Hewitt. "Come along – you like these adventures, I know, or I wouldn't have asked you; and you know the dodges in this sort of observation. The man is one Samuel, a Jew, of 150 Hatton Garden, diamond dealer. I'll tell you more afterwards. Kerrett and I are going into the offices next door, and I want you to wait thereabout. Presently I will come downstairs with him and he will go away. An hour or so will be enough, probably."

I followed Hewitt downstairs. He took Kerrett with him and locked his office door. I saw them both disappear within the large new building, and I waited near a convenient postal pillar-box, prepared to seem very busy with a few old letters from my pocket until my man's back was turned.

In a very few minutes Hewitt reappeared, this time with a man – a Jew, obviously – whom I remembered having seen already at the door of that office more than an hour before, as I had passed on the way from the bookseller's at the corner. The man walked briskly up the street, and I, on the opposite side, did the same, a little in the rear.

He turned the corner, and at once slackened his pace and looked about him. He took a peep back along the street he had left, and then hailed a cab.

For a hundred yards or more I was obliged to trot, till I saw another cab drop its fare just ahead, and managed to secure it and give the cabman instructions to follow the cab in front, before it turned a corner. The chase was difficult, for the horse that drew me was a poor one, and half a dozen times I thought I had lost sight of the other cab altogether; but my cabman was better than his animal, and from his high perch he kept the chase in view, turning corners and picking out the cab ahead among a dozen others with surprising certainty. We went across Charing Cross Road by way of Cranborne Street, past Leicester Square, through Coventry Street and up the Quadrant and Regent Street. At Oxford Circus the Jew's cab led us to the left, and along Oxford Street we chased it past Bond Street end. Suddenly my cab pulled up with a jerk, and the driver spoke through the trapdoor. "That fare's getting down, sir," he said, "at the corner o' Duke Street."

I thrust a half-crown up through the hole and sprang out. "E's crossing the road, sir," the cabman finally reported, and I hurried across the street accordingly.

The man I was watching was strikingly Jewish enough, and easy to distinguish in a crowd. I had almost overtaken him before he had gone a dozen yards up the northern end of Duke Street. He walked on into Manchester Square. There a small, neat brougham, with blinds drawn, was being driven slowly round the central garden. I saw Samuel walk hurriedly up to this brougham, which stopped as he approached. He stepped quickly into the carriage and shut the door behind him. The brougham resumed its slow progress, and I loitered, keeping it in view, though the blinds were drawn so close that it was impossible to guess who might be Samuel's companion, if he had one. I think I have said that when the Jew came to the office door with Hewitt I perceived that he was a man I had seen before that day. I was now convinced that I had also seen that same brougham, at the same time; but of this presently.

The carriage made one slow circuit, and then Samuel got out and shut the door quickly again. I took the precaution of turning my back and letting him overtake and pass me on his way back through Duke Street. At the end of the street he mounted an omnibus going east, and I took another seat in

the same vehicle. The rest was uninteresting. He went direct to No. 150 Hatton Garden, and there remained. I read his name on the door-post among a score of others, and after a twenty-minutes' wait I returned to my rooms. I had no doubt that it was the meeting in the brougham that Hewitt wished reported, and I remembered his rule was never to watch a man a moment after the main object was secured.

Hewitt was out, and he did not return till after dusk. Then he came straightway to my rooms.

"Well, Brett," he said, "what's the report? As a matter of fact, Samuel is my client, as I shall explain presently. I don't like spying on a client, as a rule, but I was convinced that he was keeping something back from me, and there was something odd about his whole story. But what did you see?"

I told Hewitt the tale of my pursuit as I have told it here. "I came away," I concluded, "after it seemed that he was settled in his office for a bit. But there is another thing you should know. When he first came out with you I recognised him at once as a man I had seen at that same door a little after two o'clock – say a quarter past."

"Yes?" answered Hewitt. "I saw him there myself a little sooner – something like two, I should say. What was he doing?"

"Well," I replied, "he was doing pretty well what he did in Manchester Square. For as a matter of fact the brougham also was here then – just outside the next-door office. I think I might swear to that same brougham – though of course I didn't notice it so particularly that first time."

Hewitt whistled. "Oh!" he said. "Tell me about this. Did he get into the brougham this time?"

"Yes. He came out of the office door with a black leather case in his hand and a very scared look on his face. And he popped into the brougham, leather case, scared look and all."

"Ho – ho!" said Hewitt, thoughtfully, and whistled again. "A black leather case, eh! Come, come, the plot thickens. And what happened? Did the carriage go off?"

"No; I saw nothing more – shouldn't have noticed so much, in fact, if the whole thing hadn't looked a trifle curious. Nervous, pallid Jew with a black case – as though he thought it was dynamite and might go off at any moment – closed brougham, blinds drawn, Jew skipped in and banged the door, but brougham didn't move; and I fancied – perhaps only fancied – that I saw a woman's black veil inside. But then I turned in here and saw no more."

Hewitt sat thoughtfully silent for a few moments. Then he rose and said, "Come next door, and I'll tell you how we stand. The housekeeper will let us in, and we'll see if you can identify that black case anywhere."

It seemed that Hewitt had by this established a good understanding with the housekeeper next door. "Nobody's been, sir," the man said, as he admitted us and closed the heavy doors. "Office boy not come back, nor nothing."

We went up to Denson's office on the third floor, the door of which the housekeeper opened; and having turned on the electric light, he left us.

"Now, is that anything like the case?" Hewitt asked, when the housekeeper was gone; and he lifted from under the table the very black case I had seen Samuel take into the brougham.

I said that I felt as sure of the case as of the brougham. And then Hewitt told me the whole tale of Samuel and his loss of fifteen thousand pounds' worth of diamonds, just as it appears earlier in this narrative.

"Now, see here," said Hewitt, when he had made me acquainted with his client's tale, "there is something odd about all this. See this post-card which Samuel gave me. It is from Denson, and it makes this morning's appointment. See! 'Be down below at eleven sharp' is the message. He came and he waited just two hours and a quarter, as he tells me, being certain to the time within five minutes. That brings, us to a quarter-past one – the time when he finds he is robbed; and he came downstairs in a very agitated state at a quarter-past one, as I have since ascertained. At two I pass and see him still dancing distractedly on the front steps – certainly very much like a man who has had a serious misfortune, or expects one. At a quarter-past two – that was about it, I think?" (I nodded) "At a

quarter-past two you see him, still agitated, diving into the brougham with this black case in his hand; and a little afterward – after all this, mind – he tells me this story of a robbery of diamonds from that very case, and assures me that he sent for me the moment he discovered the loss – that is to say, at a quarter-past one, a positive lie – and has told nobody else. He further assures me that he has told me everything that has happened up to the moment he meets me. Then he goes away – to his office, as he tells me. But you find him posting to Manchester Square in a cab, and there once more plunging into that same mysterious closed brougham. Now why should he do that? He has seen the person in that brougham, presumably, an hour before, and there can be nothing more to communicate, except the result of his interview with me – a thing I warned him to keep to himself. It's odd, isn't it?"

"It is. What can be his motive?"

"I want to know his motive. I object to working for a client who deceives me – indeed, it's unsafe. I may be making myself an accomplice in some criminal scheme. You observe that he never called for the police – a natural impulse in a robbed man. Indeed, he expressly vetoes all communication with the police."

"Of course he gave reasons."

"But the reasons are not good enough. I can't stop a man leaving this country anywhere round the coast except by going to the police."

"Can it be," I suggested, "that Samuel and Denson are working in collusion, and have perhaps insured the stones, and now want your help to make out a case of loss?"

"Scarcely that, I think, for more than one reason. First, it isn't a risk any insurer would take, in the circumstances. Next, the insurer would certainly want to know why the police were not informed at once. But there is more. I have not been idle this while, as you would know. I will tell you some of the things I have ascertained. To begin with, Samuel is known in Hatton Garden only as a dealer on a very small and peddling scale. A dabbler in commissions, in fact, rather than a buyer and seller of diamonds in quantities on his own account. His office is nothing but a desk in a small room he shares with two others – small dealers like himself. When I spoke to the people most likely to know, of his offering fifteen thousand pounds' worth of diamonds on his own account, they laughed. An investment of two or three hundred pounds in stones was about his limit, they said. Now that fact offers fresh suggestions, doesn't it?" Hewitt looked at me significantly.

"You mean," I said after a little consideration, "that Samuel may have been entrusted with the diamonds to sell by the real owner, and has made all these arrangements with Denson to get the gems for themselves and represent them as stolen?"

Hewitt nodded thoughtfully. "There's that possibility," he said. "Though even in that case the owner would certainly want to know why the police had not been told, and I don't know what satisfactory answer Samuel could make. And more, I find that no such robbery has been reported to any of the principal dealers in Hatton Garden to-day; and, so far as I can ascertain, none of them has entrusted Samuel with anything like so large a quantity of diamonds as he talks of – lately, at any rate."

"Isn't it possible that the diamonds are purely imaginary?" I suggested. "Mightn't there be some trick played on that basis? Perhaps a trick on the American customer – if there was one."

Hewitt was thoughtful. "There are many possibilities," he said, "which I must consider. The diamonds may even be stolen property to begin with; that would account for a great deal, though perhaps not all. But the whole thing is so oddly suspicious, that unless my client is willing to let me a great deal further into his confidence to-morrow morning I shall throw up the case."

"Did you direct any inquiries after Denson?"

"Of course; which brings me to the other things I have ascertained. He has not been here long – a few months. I cannot find that he has been doing any particular business all the time with anybody except Samuel. With him, however, he seems to have been very friendly. The housekeeper speaks of them as being 'very thick together.' The rooms are cheaply furnished, as you see. And here is another thing to consider. The housekeeper vows that he never left his glass box at the foot of the

stairs from the time Samuel went upstairs first to the time when he came down again, vastly agitated, at a quarter-past one, and sent a message; and during all that time *Denson never passed the box!* And the main door is the only way out."

"But wasn't he there at all?"

"Yes, he was there, certainly, when Samuel came. But note, now. Observe the sequence of things as we know them now. First, there is Denson in his office; I can find nothing of any American visitor, and I am convinced that he is a total fiction, either of Denson's or Samuel and Denson together. Denson is in his office. To him comes Samuel. Neither leaves the place till Samuel comes down at a quarter-past one o'clock. I told you he sent some sort of message. The housekeeper tells me that he called a passing commissioner and gave him something, though whether it was a telegram or a note he did not see; nor does he know the commissioner, nor his number – though he could easily be found if it became necessary, no doubt. Samuel sends the message, and waits on the steps, watching, in an agitated manner (as would be natural, perhaps, in a man engaged in an anxious and ticklish piece of illegality) for an hour, when this mysterious brougham appears. He takes this black case into the brougham, and he obviously brings it out again, for here it is. Whatever has happened, he brings it out empty. Then he sends the housekeeper for me. When at length I arrive, Denson has certainly gone, but there was an opportunity for that while the housekeeper was absent on the message to my office —*after* all Samuel's agitation, and after he had carried his case to and from the brougham."

"The whole thing is odd enough, certainly, and suspicious enough. Have you found anything else?"

"Yes. Denson lives, or lived, in a boarding house in Bloomsbury. He has only been there two months, however, and they know practically nothing of him. To-day he came home at an unusual time, letting himself in with his latchkey, and went away at once with a bag, but the accounts of the exact time are contradictory. One servant thought it was before twelve, and another insisted that it was after one. He has not been back."

"And the office boy – can't you get some information out of him?"

"He hasn't been seen since the morning. I expect Denson told him to take a whole holiday. I can't find where he lives, at the moment, but no doubt he will turn up to-morrow. Not that I expect to get much from him. But I shan't bother. Unless Mr. Samuel will answer satisfactorily some very plain questions I shall ask – and I don't expect he will – I shall throw up the commission. He called, by the way, not long ago, but I was out. We shall see him in the morning, I expect."

A look round Denson's office taught me no more than it had taught Hewitt already. There were two small rooms, one inside the other, with ordinary and cheap office furniture. It was quite plain that any man of ordinary activity and size could have got out of the inner room into the corridor by the means which Samuel suggested – through the hinged wall-light, near the ceiling. Hewitt had meddled with nothing – he would do no more till he was satisfied of the *bonâ fides* of his client; certainly he would not commit himself to breaking open desks or cupboards. And so, the time for my attendance at the office approaching – I was working on the *Morning Phoenix* then, and ten at night saw my work begin – we shut Denson's office, and went away.

III

In the morning I was awakened by an impatient knocking at my bedroom door. Going to bed at two or three I was naturally a late riser, and this was about nine. I scrambled sleepily out of bed, and turned the key. Hewitt was standing in my sitting-room, with a newspaper in his hand.

"Sorry to break your morning sleep, Brett," he said, "but something interesting has happened in regard to that business you helped me with yesterday, and you may like to know. Crawl back into bed if you like."

But I was already in my dressing-gown, and groping for my clothes. "No, no, come in and tell me," I said. "What is it?"

Hewitt sat on the bed. "I'll tell you in due order," he said. "First, I saw Samuel again last night – after you had gone away. You remember I went back to my office; I had a letter or two to write which I had set aside in the afternoon. Well, I wrote the letters, shut up, and went downstairs. I opened the outer door, and there was Samuel, in the act of ringing the housekeeper's bell. He said he was very anxious, and couldn't sleep without coming to hear if I had made any progress; he had called before, but I was out. I half thought of taking him back to my office, but decided that it wasn't worth while. So I walked along to the corner of the Strand, till I got him well under the lights. Then I stopped and talked to him. 'You ask about the progress in your case, Mr. Samuel,' I said. 'Now, I have sometimes met people who seem to consider me a sort of prophet, seer, or diviner. As a matter of fact, I am nothing but a professional investigator, and even if I were possessed of such an amazing genius as I lay no claim to, I could never succeed in a case, nor even make progress in it, if my client started me with false information, or only told me half the truth. More, when I find that such is the state of affairs, and that if I am to succeed I must begin by investigating my client before I proceed with his case, I throw that case up on the instant – invariably. Do you understand that? Now I must tell you that I have made no progress with your case, none; for that very reason.'"

"He protested, of course – vowed he had told me the simple truth, and so forth. I replied by asking him certain definite questions. First, I asked him whose the diamonds were. He repeated that they were his own. To that I simply replied, 'Good evening, Mr. Samuel,' and turned away. He came after me beseechingly, and prevaricated. He said something about another party having an interest, but the matter being confidential. To that I responded by asking him with whom he had communicated before sending for me, and who was the person in the brougham which he had twice entered. That flabbergasted him. He said that he couldn't answer those questions without bringing other parties into the matter, to which I answered that it was just those other parties that I meant to know about, if I were to move a step in the matter. At this he got into a sad state – imploring, actually imploring, me not to desert him. He said he should do something desperate – something terrible – that night if I didn't relieve his mind, and undertake the case. What he meant he'd do I didn't know, of course, but it didn't move me. I said finally that I would deal only with principals, and that until I had the personal instructions of the actual owner of the diamonds, in addition to a complete explanation of the brougham incident, I should do nothing, and I recommended him to go to the police; and with that I left him."

"And you got nothing more from him than that?"

"Nothing more; but it was something, you see. He admitted, to all intents, that the diamonds were not his own. And now see here. I suppose I left him about ten o'clock. Here is a paragraph in one of this morning's newspapers. It is only in the one paper; the matter seems to have occurred rather late for press."

Hewitt gave me the paper in his hand, pointing to the following paragraph:

"Horrible Discovery. – A shocking discovery was made just before midnight last night, near the York column, where a police-constable found the dead body of

a man lying on the stone steps. The body, which was fully clothed in the ordinary dress of a labouring man, bore plain marks of strangulation, and it was evident that a brutal murder had been committed. A singular circumstance was the presence of a curious reddish mark upon the forehead, at first taken for a wound, but soon discovered to be a mark apparently drawn or impressed on the skin. At the time of going to press, no arrest had been made, and so far the affair appears a mystery."

"Well," I said, "this certainly seems curious, especially in the matter of the mark on the forehead. But what has it all to do – "

"To do with Samuel and his diamonds, you mean? I'll tell you. *That dead man is Denson!*"

"Denson?" I exclaimed. "Denson? How?"

"I get it from the housekeeper next door. It seems that when the police came to examine the body they found, among other things – money and a watch, and the like – a piece of an addressed envelope, used to hold a few pins – the pins stuck in and the paper rolled up, you know. There was just enough of it to guess the address by – that of the office next door; and it was the only clue they had. So they came along here at once and knocked up the housekeeper. He went with them and instantly recognised Denson, disguised in labourer's clothes, but Denson, he says, unmistakably."

"And the mark on the forehead?"

"That is very odd. It is an outlined triangle, rather less than an inch along each side. It is quite red, he says, and seems to be done in a greasy, sticky sort of ink or colour."

"Was anything found – the diamonds?"

"No. He says there was money – two or three five-pound notes, I believe, some small change, a watch, keys and so forth; but there's not a word of diamonds."

I paused in my dressing. "Does that mean that the murderer has got them?" I asked. Hewitt pursed his lips and shook his head. "It *may* mean that," he said, "but does it look altogether like it when five-pound notes are left? On the other hand, there is the disguise; the only reason that we know of for that would be that he was bolting with the diamonds. But the really puzzling thing is the mark on the forehead. Why that? Of course, the picturesque and romantic thing to suppose is that it is the mark of some criminal club or society. But criminal associations, such as exist, don't do silly things like that. When criminals rob and murder, they don't go leaving their tracks behind them purposely – they leave nothing that could possibly draw attention to them if they can help it; also, they don't leave five-pound notes. But I'm off to have a look at that mark. Inspector Plummer is in charge of the case – you remember Plummer, don't you, in the Stanway Cameo case, and two or three others? Well, Plummer is an old friend of mine, and not only am I interested in this matter myself, but now that it becomes a case of murder, I must tell the police all I know, merely as a loyal citizen. I've an idea they will want to ask our friend Mr. Samuel some very serious questions."

"Will you go now?"

"Yes, I must waste no more time. You get your breakfast and look out for me, or for a message."

Hewitt was off to Vine Street, and I devoted myself to my toilet and my breakfast, vastly mystified by this tragic turn in a matter already puzzling enough.

It was not a messenger, but Hewitt himself, who came back in less than an hour. "Come," he said, "Plummer is below, and we are going next door, to Denson's office. I've an idea that we may get at something at last. The police are after Samuel hot-foot. They think he should be made sure of in any case without delay; and I must say they have some reason, on the face of it."

We joined Plummer at once – I have already spoken of Plummer in my accounts of several of Hewitt's cases in which I met him – and we all turned into the office next door. There we found a very frightened and bewildered office boy, whom Denson had given a holiday yesterday, after sending him down to Samuel. He had come to his work as usual, only to meet the housekeeper's tale of the murder of his master and the end of his business prospects. He had little or no information to

impart. He had only been employed for a month or six weeks, and during that time his work had been practically nothing.

Plummer nodded at this information, and sniffed comprehensively at the office furniture. "I know this sort o' stuff," he said. "This is the way they fit up long firm offices and such. This place was taken for the job, that's plain, by one or both of 'em."

The boy's address was taken, and he was given a final holiday, and asked to send up the housekeeper as he went out. Plummer passed Hewitt a bunch of keys.

The housekeeper entered. "Now, Hutt," said Martin Hewitt, "you were saying yesterday, I think, that the main front door was the only entrance and exit for this building?"

"That's so, sir – the only one as anybody can use, except me."

"Oh! then there *is* another, then?"

"Well, not exactly to say an entrance, sir. There's a small private door at the back into the court behind, but that's only opened to take in coals and such, and I always have the key. This house isn't like yours, sir; you have no back way into the court as we have. It's a convenience, sometimes."

"Ah, I've no doubt. Do you happen to have the key with you?"

"It's on the bunch hanging up in my box, sir. Shall I fetch it?"

"I should like to see it, if you will."

The housekeeper disappeared, and presently returned with a large bunch of keys.

"This is the one, Mr. Hewitt," he explained, lifting it from among the rest.

Hewitt examined it closely, and then placed beside it one from the bunch Plummer had given him. "It seems you're not the only person who ever had a key exactly like that, Hutt," he said. "See here – this was found in Mr. Denson's pocket."

Plummer nodded sagaciously. "All in the plant," he said. "See – it's brand new; clean as a new pin, and file marks still on it."

"Take us to this back door, Hutt," Hewitt pursued. "We'll try this key. Is there a back staircase?"

There *was* a small back staircase, leading to the coal-cellars, and only used by servants. Down this we all went, and on a lower landing we stopped before a small door. Hewitt slipped the key in the lock and turned it. The door opened easily, and there before us was the little courtyard which I think I have mentioned in one of my other narratives – the courtyard with a narrow passage leading into the next street.

Martin Hewitt seemed singularly excited. "See there," he said, "that is how Denson left the building without passing the housekeeper's box! And now I'm going to make another shot. See here. This key on Denson's bunch attracted my attention because of its noticeable newness compared with most of the others. *Most* of the others, I say, because there is one other just as bright – see! This small one. Now, Hutt, do you happen to have a key like that also?"

Hutt turned the key over in his hand and glanced from it to his own bunch. "Why, yes, sir!" he said presently. "Yes, sir! It's the same as the key of the fire-hose cupboards!"

"Does that key fit them all? How many fire-hose cupboards are there?"

"Two on each floor, sir, one at each end, just against the mains. And one key fits the lot."

"Show us the nearest to this door."

A short, narrow passage led to the main ground-floor corridor, where a cupboard lettered "Fire Hose" stood next the main and its fittings. "We have to keep the hose-cupboards locked," the housekeeper explained apologetically, "'cause o' mischievous boys in the offices."

This key fitted as well as the other. A long coil of brown leather hose hung within, and in a corner lay a piece of chamois leather evidently used for polishing the brass fittings. This Hewitt pulled aside, and there beneath it lay another and cleaner piece of chamois leather, neatly folded and tied round with cord. Hewitt snatched it up. He unfastened the cord; he unrolled the leather, which was sewn into a sort of bag or satchel; and when at last he spread wide the mouth of this satchel, light seemed to spring from out of it, for there lay a glittering heap of brilliants!

"What!" cried Plummer, who first got his speech. "Diamonds! Samuel's diamonds!"

"Diamonds, at any rate," replied Hewitt, "whether Samuel's or somebody else's. But they can't have been there long. How often is this cupboard opened?"

"Every Saturday reg'lar, sir," replied the housekeeper; "just to dust it out and see things is right."

"Now, see here!" said Martin Hewitt, "I've had luck in my conjectures as yet, and I'll try again. Here is what I believe has happened. Every word that Samuel told me about the theft of those diamonds was true, except as to their ownership. Denson has planned all along to rob him of as big a collection of diamonds as he could prompt him to get together, and he has played up to this for months. His smaller dealings one way and another were ground-bait. Very artfully he let Samuel take the diamonds safely away once, in order that he should be less watchful and less suspicious the second time. This second time he does the trick exactly as we see. He hangs up the imaginary American's hat, he escapes by the fanlight, and he goes out by the back way to avoid the housekeeper's observation. He has arranged beforehand for this, too. He has seized an opportunity when the housekeeper has been out of his box to get wax impressions of these two keys, and he has made copies of them. And here we come on a curious thing. It is easy enough to understand why he should foresee and get himself a key for the back door, in order to make his escape. But why the key of the hose-cupboard? Why, indeed, should he leave the diamonds behind him at all? It is plain that he meant to come back for them – probably at night. He would have been wholly free from observation in that quiet courtyard, and he could let himself in, get the diamonds, and leave again without exciting the smallest alarm or suspicion. But why take all the trouble? Why not stick to the plunder from the beginning? The plain inference is that he feared somebody or something. He feared being stopped and searched, or he feared being waylaid *sometime during yesterday*. By whom? There's the puzzle, and I can't see the bottom of it, I confess. If I could, perhaps I might know something of last night's murder.

"As to Samuel's prevarications, there is only one explanation that will fit, now that the rest is made clear. He must have been entrusted with these diamonds by a private owner, for sale – secretly. Some lady of conspicuous position in difficulties, probably – perhaps unknown to her husband. Such things occur every day. A common expedient is to sell the stones and have good paste substituted, in the same settings. Samuel would be just the man to carry through a transaction of that sort. That would account for everything. The jewels are *en suite*, cut, but unset – taken from a set of jewellery, and paste substituted. Samuel arranges it all for the lady, finds a customer – Denson – who treats him exactly as he has told us. When he realises the loss Samuel doesn't know what to do. He mustn't call the police, being bound to secrecy on the lady's behalf. He sends her a hasty message, and remains keeping watch by Denson's office. She hurries to him with all possible secrecy, keeping her carriage blinds down; he dashes into the brougham to describe the disaster, taking his case with him in his frantic desire to explain things fully. The lady fears publicity, and won't hear of the police – she instructs him to consult me: and consequently, of course, when I recommend communicating with the police he won't listen to the suggestion. Samuel has arranged with the lady to hurry off and report progress as soon as he has consulted me, and this he does, the lady having appointed Manchester Square for the interview. Perhaps she hints some suspicion of Samuel's honesty – rather natural, perhaps, in the circumstances. That terrifies him more than ever, and leads to his frantic appeals to me when I throw the case up. Come, there's my guess at the facts of the case, and I'll back it with twopence and a bit more. Eh, Plummer?"

"I don't take your bet," answered Plummer. "The thing's plain enough; except the murder. There's something deeper there."

Hewitt became grave. "That's true," he said, "and something I can see no way into, as yet. But come – you take this parcel of diamonds, as representing the law. And here comes one of your men, I think."

We had been approaching the front door during this talk, and now a police constable appeared, and saluted Plummer. "Samuel's just been brought in, sir," he reported. "He's half dead with fright,

and he's sent a message to Lady H – in P – Square; and he says he wants Mr. Martin Hewitt to come and speak for him."

"Poor Samuel!" Hewitt commented. "Come, we'll go and make him happy. Here are the diamonds, and, those safely accounted for, there's no evidence to connect him with the murder. We'll get him out of the mess as soon as possible."

And so they did. Hewitt's reading of the case was correct to a tittle, as it turned out, and with very little delay Samuel was released. But with the message from the police station, the fat was in the fire as regarded Lady H – . Her husband necessarily became acquainted with everything, and there was serious domestic trouble.

Samuel was glad enough to get quit of the business with no worse than a bad fright, as may well be supposed. He showed himself most grateful to Hewitt in after times, giving him excellent confidential advice and information more than once in matters connected with the diamond trade. He is still in business, I believe, in a much larger way, and I have no doubt he is the wiser for his experience, and for the lesson which Hewitt did not forget to rub well in: that it is useless and worse to place a confidential matter in the hands of a man of Hewitt's profession, and at the same time withhold particulars of the case, however unessential they may appear to be.

But meantime, on the way to Vine Street I asked Hewitt what led him to suppose that the new key on Denson's bunch fitted a lock in that particular office building.

"Call it a lucky guess, if you like," Hewitt answered; "but as a matter of fact it was prompted by pure common sense. Plummer showed me the things found on the body, and I saw at once that the keys offered the only chance of immediate information. I went through them one by one. There was his latchkey – the key with which he had gone into his lodgings to fetch away the disguise. There was another largish key, equally old – probably the key of his office door. There were other smaller keys, also old – plainly belonging to bags and trunks and drawers and so forth. And then there was the large, perfectly new key. What was that? It was not the key of any bag or drawer, clearly – it was the key of a door – a door with a lever lock. What door? Had Denson some other office? Perhaps he had, but first it was best to begin by trying it on places we were already acquainted with. At once I thought of Denson's disappearance unobserved by the housekeeper. Could this be the key of some private exit from the office building? I resolved to test that conjecture first, and it turned out to be the right one. Being successful so far, of course I turned to the other new key and tried that, as you saw."

"But what of that triangular mark on the man's forehead?"

Martin Hewitt became deeply thoughtful. "That," he said, "is a matter wholly beyond me at present, as indeed is the whole business of the murder. Whether we shall ever know more I can't guess, but the matter is deep – deep and difficult and dark. As to the mark itself, that seems to have been impressed from an engraved stamp of some sort. It is a plain equilateral triangle in red outline, measuring about an inch on each side. It is in a greasy, sticky sort of red ink, which may be smeared, but is very difficult, if not impossible, to rub away. What it means I can't at present conjecture. I have told you my reasons for not thinking it the sign of any gang of criminals. But whose sign is it? Surely not that of some self-constituted punisher of crime? For such a person, with no risk to himself, could have handed Denson over to the police, if he knew of his offence. Can he have been murdered by an accomplice? But he used no accomplice; if one thing is plain in all that story of the stolen diamonds it is that Denson did the thing wholly by himself. Besides, an accomplice would have taken the keys and have gone and secured the diamonds for himself; else why the murder at all? But no keys were taken – nothing was taken, as far as we can tell. And why was the body placed in that conspicuous position? It is pretty certain that the crime cannot have happened where the body was found – somebody must have heard or seen a struggle in such a place as that. As it is, I should say, the body was probably brought quietly to the spot in a cab, or some such conveyance.

"But mystery envelops this crime everywhere. So far as I can see, there is no clue whatever beyond the Red Triangle, which, as yet, I cannot understand. The strangling points to the murder being

committed by a powerful man, certainly, and it is a form of crime that may have been perpetrated silently. But beyond that I can see nothing. The apparent motivelessness of the thing makes the mystery all the darker, and the circumstances we are acquainted with, instead of helping us, seem to complicate the puzzle.

"What was it that Denson feared when he left those diamonds behind him, when he might have carried them away? And why should he fear it in daytime and not at night, since it would seem plain that he meant to have returned for the stones at night? Where did he go to disguise himself yesterday – we know it was not in his lodgings – and where has he left the clothes he discarded?"

All these doubts and mysteries were destined to be cleared up, in more or less degree; but it was not till Hewitt and I had witnessed other singular adventures that the answer came to the problem, the real meaning of the Red Triangle was made apparent, and its connection with the theft of Samuel's diamonds grew clear. For indeed the connection proved in the end to be very intimate indeed. Once, a little later, we were allowed to see a shade farther into the mystery, as I shall tell in the proper place; but even then the real secret remained hidden from us till the appointed end.

So ended the case of Samuel's diamonds, so far as concerned Samuel himself and the owner; but the case of the Red Triangle had only begun.

THE CASE OF MR. JACOB MASON

I

The mystery of Denson's death remained a mystery, despite all the police could do. The coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Murder by some person or persons unknown" – which, indeed, was all that could be expected of them; for they had no more before them than the bare fact that the body, disguised in the clothes of a labourer, had been found on the steps near the Duke of York's column, just before midnight, by a police constable. But for the housekeeper's identification, even the name of the victim would have been unknown. The jury certainly wasted some time in idle speculation as to the strange triangular mark found on the forehead, without a speck of evidence to help them; but in the end they returned their verdict, and went home.

But the police knew a little more than the jury, though that little rather confused than helped them. They exercised their judgment at the inquest in withholding all evidence of the theft of diamonds on which the victim had been engaged, the curious particulars of which I have already related. In this they followed their usual course in cases where the evidence withheld could give the jury no help in arriving at their verdict, and at the same time might easily hamper further investigations if revealed. For the theft had been frustrated by Martin Hewitt's exertions, as we have seen, and in any case the thief was now dead and beyond the reach of human punishment. The one matter now remaining for the police was inquiry into the murder of this same thief, and the one object of their exertions the apprehension of the murderer or murderers.

The case, as I have already said, was in the hands of Inspector Plummer, an intelligent officer and an old friend of Hewitt's. A few days' work after the inquest yielded Plummer so little result that he called at Hewitt's office to talk matters over.

"I suppose," Plummer began, "it's no use asking if you've heard anything more of that matter of Denson's murder?"

Hewitt shook his head. "I haven't heard a word," he said. "If I had, it would have come on to you at once. But I hope you've had some luck yourself?"

"Not a scrap; time wasted; and the few off-chance clues I tried have led nowhere, so that I'm where I was at the start. The thing is quite the oddest in all my experience. See how we stand. Here's a man, Denson, who has just pulled off one of the cleverest jewel robberies ever attempted. He so arranges it that he walks safely off with fifteen thousand pounds' worth of diamonds, leaving the victim, Samuel, stuck patiently in an office for an hour or two before he even begins to suspect anything is wrong, and *then* unable to set the police after him, for the reasons you discovered. But this Denson doesn't carry the plunder off straightway, as he so easily might have done – he conceals it in the very house where the robbery was committed, taking with him a key by aid of which he may return and get it. Why? As you explained, it was probably because he feared somebody – feared being stopped and searched *on the day of the robbery* – not after, since it was plain he meant to return for his booty at night. Who could this have been, and why did Denson fear him? Mystery number one. Then this Denson is found dead that same night disguised in the clothes of a labourer, in a most conspicuous spot in London – the last place in the world one would expect a murderer to select for depositing his victim's body, for it is evidently *not* the place where the murder was committed. More, on the forehead there is this extraordinary impressed mark of a Red Triangle. Now, what can all that mean? Robbery, perhaps one thinks. But the body isn't robbed! There are three five-pound notes on it, besides a sovereign or two and some small change, a watch and chain, keys and all the rest of it. Then one guesses at the diamonds. Perhaps it was an accomplice in the robbery, who finds that Denson is about to bolt with the whole lot. But if there's one thing plain in this amazing business it

is that Denson *had* no accomplice; he did the whole thing alone, as you discovered, and he needed no help. More than that, if this were the work of an accomplice why didn't he get the jewels? There were the keys to his hand and he left them! And would such a person actually go out of his way to put the body where it must be discovered at once, instead of concealing it till he could himself get away with the diamonds? Of course not. But there was no accomplice, and it's useless to labour that farther. All these arguments apply equally against the theory that it was the work of some criminal gang. They would have taken all they could get, notes, keys, diamonds and all, and they wouldn't have been so foolish as to exhibit the body with that extraordinary mark; criminal gangs are not such fools as to take unnecessary chances and gratuitously leave tracks behind them, as you know well enough. Well then, there we stand. So far, do you see any more in it than I do?"

Hewitt shook his head. "No," he said, "I can't say I do. All the considerations you have mentioned have already occurred to me. I talked them over, in fact, with my friend Brett. My connection with the case ceased, of course, with the discovery of the jewels, and about the murder I know no more than has been told me. I never saw the body, and so had no opportunity of picking up any overlooked clue; though doubtless you have seen to that. I know not a tittle more than you have just summarised, and on that alone the thing seems mystery pure and unadulterated."

"All there is beyond that was ascertained by the divisional surgeon on examination of the body. The man died from strangulation, as you know, and the natural presumption from that was that the murderer must have been a powerful man. But the surgeon is of the positive opinion – he is certain, in fact – that Denson was strangled with an instrument – a tourniquet."

"A tourniquet?"

"Yes, a surgeon's tourniquet, such as is used to compress a leg or arm and so stop a flow of blood. He considers the marks unmistakable. Now that might point to the murderer being a medical man."

"Conjecturally, yes; though, of course, it justifies nothing more than conjecture."

"Precisely. Well, that was something, but precious little. A tourniquet is a common thing enough – no more than a band with screw fittings, and there was nothing to show that the tourniquet used was any different from a thousand others; and I can see no particular reason why a doctor should commit a murder like this any more than any other man; in which the divisional surgeon agreed with me. And doctor or none, that Red Triangle was altogether unaccounted for. About that, too, by the way, the divisional surgeon told me a little, but a very useless little. The mark was not properly dried, owing to its slightly greasy nature, and although it was almost impossible to remove it wholly, it *was* possible to scrape off a little of the ink, or colour. Here is a little of it on a paper – quite dried now, of course."

Plummer carefully took from his pocket a small folded paper, unfolded it, and revealed a smaller paper within. On this were two little smears of a bright red colour. "There – that's the stuff," he said. "The surgeon examined it, and he reports it to be rather oddly constituted – so as to bear some affinity of meaning, possibly, to the triangle. For the stuff is a compound of three substances – animal, vegetable and mineral; there is a fine vegetable oil, he says, some waxy preparation, certainly of animal origin, and a mineral – cinnabar: vermilion, in fact. But though there *may* be some connection between the triangle and the substances representing the three natural kingdoms, it gives nothing practical – nothing to go on."

Martin Hewitt had been closely examining the marks on the paper, and now he answered, "I'm not so sure of that, though, Plummer. I think at least that it gives us another conjecture. I should guess that the man you want, as well as being acquainted with the use of the tourniquet, has at some time travelled in, or to, China."

"Why?"

"Unless I am wider of the mark than usual, this is the pigment used on Chinese seals. A Chinaman's seal acts for his signature on all sorts of documents; it is impressed or printed by hand

pressure from a little engraved stone die, precisely as this triangle seems to have been, and the ink or colour is almost always red, compounded of vermilion, wax, and oil of sesamum."

Plummer sat up with a whistle. "Phew! Then it may have been done by a Chinaman!"

Hewitt shrugged his shoulders. "It's possible," he said; "of course, though, the sign, the triangle, is not a Chinese character. As a character, of course it is the Greek *Delta*. But it may be no character at all. In the signs of the ancient Cabala, the triangle, apex upward as it was in this case, was the symbol of fire; apex downward, it signified water."

Plummer patted the side of his head distractedly. "Heavens!" he said, "don't tell me I'm to search all China, and Greece, and – wherever the cabalistic pundits come from!"

"Well, no," Hewitt answered with a smile. "I think I should, at any rate, begin in this country. I rather think you might make a beginning at Denson. That is what I should do if the case were mine. See if anything can be ascertained of his previous life – probably under another name or names. *He* may have been in China. Yes, certainly, as we stand at present, I should begin at Denson."

"I think I will," the inspector replied, "though there's precious little to begin on there. I'd like to have you with me on this job, but, of course, that's impossible, since it's purely a police matter. But something, some information, may come your way, and in that case you'll let me know at once, of course."

"Of course I shall – it's a serious matter, as well as a strange one. I wish you all luck!"

Plummer departed to grapple with his difficulties, but in fact it was Hewitt who first heard fresh news of the Red Triangle, and that from a wholly unexpected quarter.

It was, indeed, only two days after Plummer's visit that Kerrett brought into Hewitt's private room the card of the Rev. James Potswood, with a request for a consultation. Mr. Potswood's name was known to Hewitt, as, indeed, it was to many people, as that of a most devoted clergyman, rector of a large parish in north-west London, who devoted not only all his time and personal strength to his work, but also spent every penny of his private income on his parish. It was not a small income that Mr. Potswood spent in this unselfish way, for he came of a wealthy family, and though a good part of his parish was inhabited by well-to-do people, there was quite enough poverty and distress in the poorer quarters to cause this excellent man often to regret that his resources were not even larger. He was a spare active grey-whiskered man of nearly sixty, with prominent and not very handsome features, though his face was full of frank and simple kindliness.

"My errand, Mr. Hewitt," he said, "is of a rather vague, not to say visionary, character, and I doubt if you can help me. But at any rate I will explain the trouble as well as I can. In the first place, am I right in supposing that you were in some way professionally engaged in connection with that extraordinary case of murder a week or so ago – the case in which a man named Denson was found dead on the steps by the Duke of York's column?"

"Yes – and no," Hewitt answered. "I was professionally engaged on a certain matter about which you will not wish me to particularise – since it is the business of a client – and in course of it I came upon the other affair."

"Then before I ask what you know of that mysterious event, Mr. Hewitt, I will tell you my story, so that you may judge whether you are able to reveal anything, or to do anything. Of course, what I say is in the strictest confidence."

"Of course."

"I have a parishioner, a Mr. Jacob Mason, of whom I have seen very little of late years – scarcely anything at all, in fact, till a few days ago. He is fairly well to do, I believe, living a somewhat retired life in a house not far from my rectory. For many years he has laboured at natural science – chemistry in particular – and he has a very excellently fitted laboratory attached to his house. He is a widower, with no children of his own, but his orphan niece, a Miss Creswick, lives under his guardianship. Mr. Mason was never a very regular church-goer, but years ago I saw much more of him than I have of late. I must be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Hewitt, if you are to help me, and therefore I must

tell you that we disagreed on points of religion, in such a way that I found it difficult to maintain my former regard for Mr. Mason. He had a curiously fantastic mind, and he was constantly being led to tamper with things that I think are best left alone – what is called spiritualism, for instance, and that horrible form of modern superstition which we hear whispers of at times from the Continent – the alleged devil-propitiation or worship. It was not that he did anything I thought morally wrong, you understand – except that he dabbled. And he was always running after some new thing – animal magnetism, or telepathy, or crystal-gazing, or theosophy, or some one of the score of such things that have an attraction for a mind of that sort. And it was a characteristic of each new enthusiasm with him that it prompted him to try to convert *me*; and that in such terms – terms often applied to the doctrines of that religion of which I am a humble minister – as I could in nowise permit in my presence. So that our friendly intercourse, though not interrupted by any definite breaking off, fell away to almost nothing. For which reason I was a little surprised to receive a visit from Mr. Mason on the afternoon of the day on which the newspapers printed the report of the finding of the body of Denson. You may remember that only one morning paper mentioned the matter, and that very briefly; but there were full reports in all the evening papers."

"Yes, the discovery was made very late the previous night."

"So I gathered. Well, I was told that Mr. Mason had been shown into my study, and there I found him. He was in an extremely nervous and agitated state, and he had an evening paper in his hand. With scarcely a preliminary word he burst out, 'Have you seen this in the paper? This – this murder? There – there's the report.' And he thrust the paper into my hands."

"I had not seen or heard anything of the matter, in fact, till that moment, and now he gave me little leisure to read the report. He walked up and down the room, nervously clasping his hands, sometimes together, sometimes at his sides, sometimes before him, shaking his head in a shuddering sort of way, and bursting out once or twice as though the words were uncontrollable, 'What ought I to do? What *can* I do?'"

"I looked up from the paper, and he went on, 'Have you read it? It's a murder – a horrid murder. The poor wretched fellow was trying to escape, but he couldn't. It's a murder!'"

"'It certainly seems so,' I said. 'But what – did you know this man, Denson?'"

"'No, of course not,' Mason replied, 'but there it is, plain enough, and here's another paper with just the same report, but a little shorter.' He pulled the second paper from his pocket. 'I got what different papers I could, but these are the two fullest. It's plain enough it's a brutal murder, isn't it? And the man was a merchant, or an agent, or something, in Portsmouth Street, but he was found in labourer's clothes – proof that he feared it and was trying to escape it; but he couldn't – he couldn't – no! nor anybody. It's awful, awful!'"

"'But I don't understand,' I said. 'Won't you sit down?' For Mason continued to pace distractedly about the room. 'What is it you think this unfortunate man was trying to escape? And what am I to do in the matter?'"

"He stopped, pressed both hands to his head, and seemed to control himself by a great effort. 'You must excuse me,' he said. 'I'm a bit run down lately, and my nerves are all wrong. I'm talking rather wildly, I'm afraid. I really hardly know why I came to you, except that I haven't a soul I can talk to about – well, about anything, scarcely.'"

"He took a chair, and sat for a little while with his head forward on his hand and his eyes directed towards the floor. Then he said, in a musing way, rather as though he was thinking aloud than talking to me, 'You were right, after all, Potswood, and I was a fool to disregard your warnings. I oughtn't to have dabbled – I should have left those things alone.'"

"I said nothing, thinking it best not to disturb him, but to leave him free to say what he wanted to say in his own way. He remained quiet for a minute or two more, and then sat up with an appearance of much greater composure. 'You mustn't mind me, Potswood,' he said. 'As I've told you, I'm in a bad state of nerves, and at best I'm an impulsive sort of person, as you know. I needn't have bothered

you like this – I came rushing round here without thinking, and if the house had been a bit farther off I should have come to my senses before I reached you. After all, there's nothing so much to disturb one's-self about, and this man – this Denson – may very well have deserved his fate. Don't you think that likely?"

"He added this last question with an involuntary eagerness that scarcely accorded with the indifferent tone with which he had begun. I answered guardedly. I said of course nobody could say what the unhappy man's sins might have been, but that whatever they were they could never justify the fearful sin of murder. 'And,' I added, 'if you know anything of the matter, Mason, or have the smallest suspicion as to who is the guilty person, I'm sure you won't hesitate in your duty.'

"My duty?" he said. 'Oh yes, of course; my duty. You mean, of course, that any law-abiding citizen who knows of evidence should bring it out. Just so. Of course *I* haven't any evidence – that paper gave me the first news of the thing.'

"I think," I rejoined, 'that anybody who was possessed of even less than evidence – of any suspicion which might lead to evidence – should go at once and place the authorities in possession of all he knows or suspects.'

"Yes," he said – very calmly now, though it seemed at cost of a great effort – 'so he should; so he should, no doubt, in any ordinary case. But sometimes there are difficulties, you know – great difficulties.' He stopped and looked at me furtively and uneasily. 'A man might fear for his own safety – he might even know that to say what he knew would be to condemn himself to sudden death; and more, perhaps, more. Suppose – it might be, you know – suppose, for instance, a man was placed between the alternatives of neglecting this duty and of breaking a – well an oath, a binding oath of a very serious – terrible – character? An oath, we will say, made previously, without any foreknowledge of the crime?'

"I said that any such oath taken without foreknowledge of the crime could not have contemplated such an event, and that however wrong the taking of such an oath might have been in itself, to assist in concealing such a crime as this murder was infinitely worse – infinitely worse than taking the oath, and infinitely worse than breaking it. Though as to the latter, I repeated that any such engagement made without contemplation or foreknowledge of such a crime would seem to be void in that respect. I went further – much further. I conjured him to make no secret of anything he might know, and not to burden his conscience with complicity – for that was what concealment would amount to – in such a terrible crime. I added some further exhortations which I need not repeat now, and presently his assumed calmness departed utterly, and he became even more agitated than when first he came. He would say nothing further, however, and in the end he went away, saying he would 'think over the matter very seriously.'

"It was quite plain to me that my poor friend was suffering acutely from the burden of some terrible secret, and that in his impulsive way he had rushed to confide in me at the first shock of the news of this murder, and that afterwards his courage had failed him. But I conceived it my duty not to allow such a matter to stand thus. Therefore, giving Mason a few hours for calm consideration, I called on him in the evening. I was told that he was not very well and had gone to bed; he had, however, left a message, in case I should call, to the effect that he would come and see me in the morning. I waited the whole of that next morning and the whole of the afternoon, and saw nothing of him. In the evening urgent parish work took me away, but next morning I called again at Mason's house and saw him. This time he avoided the subject – tried to dodge it, in fact. But I was not to be denied, and the result was another scene of alternate agitation and forced calmness. I will not weary you, Mr. Hewitt, with useless repetition, but I may say that I have seen Mason twice since then without bringing him to any definite resolve. As a matter of fact, I believe that he is restrained from saying anything further by fear – sheer terror. He has even gone so far as to deny absolutely that he knows anything of the matter – and then has contradicted himself a minute afterwards. At last, this morning, I have brought him a degree further. In the last few days I made it my business to acquaint myself, as far as possible, with

the exact circumstances of the tragedy, so far as they are known, and in course of my inquiries I saw the housekeeper of the offices next door – the man who identified the body as Denson's. He either could not, or would not, tell me very much, but he *did* say that you had been working in some way in connection with the case, and that you knew as much of it as anybody. That gave me an idea. This morning I told Mason that not only he, but I also had a duty in respect to this matter, and my duty was to see that nothing in connection with such a crime as this should be hushed up on any consideration or for anybody's fancies. I said that if he liked he need tell me no more, but might take *you*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.