THE A.L

BRIGHT STORY READERS

2228

THE MOONSTONE

1643

WILKIE COLLINS

No. 274

Grade S

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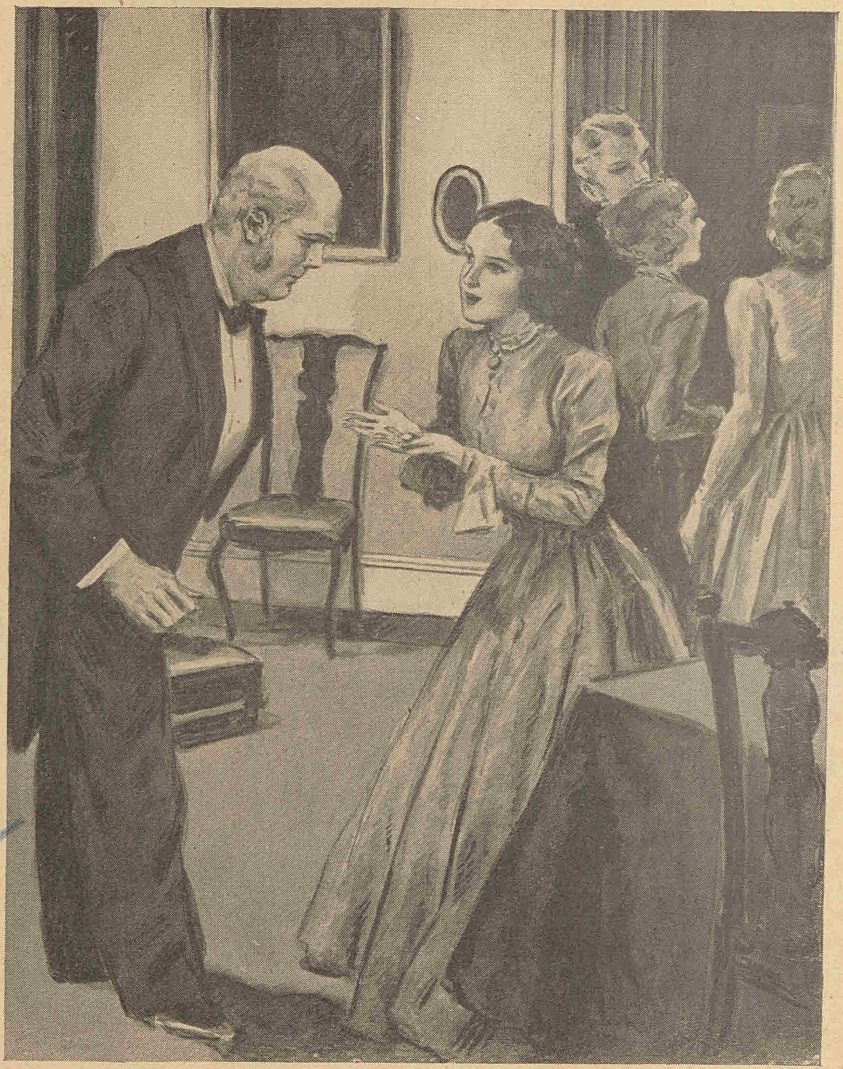
THE MOONSTONE

1643



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THE MOONSTONE



'"Look, Gabriel!" she said'—*Page* 35

THE MOONSTONE

WILKIE COLLINS



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THE MOONSTONE

THE LOSS OF THE DIAMOND (1848)

THE EVENTS RELATED BY GABRIEL BETTEREDGE
HOUSE-STEWARD IN THE SERVICE OF JULIA, LADY VERINDER.

CHAPTER I

ONLY this morning (May twenty-first, Eighteen hundred and fifty), came my lady's nephew, Mr. Franklin Blake, and held a short conversation with me, as follows :

" Betteredge," says Mr. Franklin, " I have been to the lawyer's about some family matters ; and, among other things, we have been talking of the loss of the Indian Diamond, in my aunt's house in Yorkshire, two years since. Mr. Bruff thinks as I think, that the whole story ought, in the interests of truth, to be placed on record in writing—and the sooner the better.

" We have certain events to relate," Mr. Franklin proceeded ; " and we have certain persons concerned in those events who are capable of relating them. Starting from these plain facts, the idea is that we should all write the story of the Moonstone in turn—as far as our own personal experience extends, and no farther. We must tell how the Diamond found its way into my aunt's house in Yorkshire, two years ago, and how it came to be lost in little more than twelve hours afterwards. Nobody knows as much as you do, Betteredge, about what went on in the house at that time. So you must take the pen in hand, and start the story."

Mr. Franklin left me and I went to my writing desk to start the story.

Now the Diamond could never have been in our house, where it was lost, if it had not been made a present of to

my lady's daughter. Consequently, if we begin with my lady, we are pretty sure of beginning far enough back.

If you know anything of the fashionable world, you have heard tell of the three beautiful Miss Herncastles—Miss Adelaide ; Miss Caroline ; and Miss Julia—this last being the youngest and the best of the three sisters, in my opinion, see. I went into the service of the old lord, their father, as page-boy-in-waiting on the three honourable young ladies, at the age of fifteen years. There I lived till Miss Julia married the late Sir John Verinder.

I have omitted to state that I went with the bride to the bride's husband's house and lands down here. "Sir John," she says, "I can't do without Gabriel Betteredge." "My lady," says Sir John, "I can't do without him, either." That was his way with her—and that was how I went into his service.

Well, there I was in clover, you will say. Placed in a position of trust and honour with a little cottage of my own to live in, with my rounds on the estate to occupy me in the morning, and my accounts in the afternoon, and my pipe and my *Robinson Crusoe* in the evening—what more could I possibly want to make me happy?

The woman I fixed my eye on, was the woman who kept house for me at my cottage. Her name was Selina Goby.

We were married, and five years later my wife died leaving my little girl, Penelope. Shortly afterwards Sir John died, and my lady was left with her little girl, Miss Rachel.

I have written to very poor purpose of my lady, if you require to be told that my little Penelope was taken care of, under my good mistress's own eye, and was sent to school and taught, and made a sharp girl, and promoted, when old enough, to be Miss Rachel's own maid.

As for me, I went on with my business as bailiff year

after year up to Christmas 1847, when there came a change in my life. On that day, my lady invited herself to a cup of tea alone with me in my cottage. She had discovered that I was getting old before I had discovered it myself, and she had come to my cottage to wheedle me (if I may use such an expression) into giving up my hard out-of-door work as bailiff, and taking my ease for the rest of my days as steward in the house.

I went to sleep that night in the character of Lady Verinder's farm-bailiff, and I woke up the next morning in the character of Lady Verinder's house-steward.

CHAPTER II

I beg to mention that I was specially called one Wednesday morning into my lady's own sitting-room, the date being the twenty-fourth of May, Eighteen hundred and forty-eight.

"Gabriel," says my lady, "here is news that will surprise you. Franklin Blake has come back from abroad. He has been staying with his father in London, and he is coming to us to-morrow to stop till next month, and keep Rachel's birthday."

If I had had a hat in my hand, nothing but respect would have prevented me from throwing that hat up to the ceiling. I had not seen Mr. Franklin since he was a boy, living along with us in this house. He was, out of all sight, the nicest boy that ever spun a top or broke a window.

Our nice boy didn't forget us after he went abroad. He wrote every now and then ; sometimes to my lady, sometimes to Miss Rachel, and sometimes to me.

On Thursday, the twenty-fifth of May, we were to see for the first time what our nice boy had grown to be as a man. He came of good blood ; he had a high courage ;

and he was five-and-twenty years of age by our reckoning.

The Thursday was as fine a summer's day as ever you saw : and my lady and Miss Rachel (not expecting Mr. Franklin till dinner-time) drove out to lunch with some friends in the neighbourhood.

When they were gone, I went and had a look at the bedroom which had been got ready for our guest, and saw that all was straight. Then, being butler in my lady's establishment, as well as steward—then I say, I fetched up some of our famous claret, and set it in the warm summer air to take off the chill before dinner. Concluding to set myself in the warm summer air next—I took up my beehive chair to go out into the back court, when I was stopped by hearing a sound like the soft beating of a drum, on the terrace in front of my lady's residence.

Going round to the terrace, I found three mahogany-coloured Indians, in white linen frocks and trousers, looking up at the house.

The Indians, as I saw on looking closer, had small hand-drums slung in front of them. Behind them stood a little delicate-looking light-haired English boy carrying a bag. I judged the fellows to be strolling conjurers, and the boy with the bag to be carrying the tools of their trade. One of the three, who spoke English, requested permission to show his tricks in the presence of the lady of the house.

But I thought of the family plate and accordingly informed the Indian that the lady of the house was out and I warned him and his party off the premises. He made me a beautiful bow in return ; and he and his party went off the premises. On my side, I returned to my beehive chair, and fell not exactly into a sleep, but into the next best thing to it.

I was roused up by my daughter Penelope running out at me as if the house was on fire. She wanted to have the

three Indian jugglers instantly taken up ; for this reason, namely, that they knew who was coming from London to visit us, and that they meant some mischief to Mr. Franklin Blake.

Mr. Franklin's name roused me. I opened my eyes, and made my girl explain herself.

It appeared that Penelope had just come from our lodge where she had been having a gossip with the lodge-keeper's daughter. The two girls had seen the Indians pass out, after I had warned them off, followed by their little boy. Taking it into their heads that the boy was ill-used by the foreigners—for no reason that I could discover, except that he was pretty and delicate-looking—the two girls had stolen along the inner side of the hedge between us and the road, and had watched the proceedings of the foreigners on the outer side. Those proceedings resulted in the performance of the following extraordinary tricks.

They first looked up the road, and down the road, and made sure that they were alone. Then they all three faced about, and stared hard in the direction of our house. Then they jabbered and disputed in their own language, and looked at each other like men in doubt. Then they all turned to their little English boy, as if they expected *him* to help them. And then the chief Indian, who spoke English, said to the boy, " Hold out your hand."

The boy shrank back, and shook his head, and said he didn't like it. The Indian, thereupon, asked him (not at all unkindly), whether he would like to be sent back to London, and left where they had found him, sleeping in an empty basket in a market—a hungry, ragged, and forsaken little boy. This, it seems, ended the difficulty. The little chap unwillingly held out his hand. Upon that, the Indian took a bottle from his bosom, and poured out of it some black stuff, like ink, into the palm of the boy's hand. The

Indian—first touching the boy's head, and making signs over it in the air—then said, "Look." The boy became quite stiff, and stood like a statue, looking into the ink in the hollow of his hand.

The Indians looked up the road and down the road once more—and then the chief Indian said these words to the boy: "See the English gentleman from foreign parts?"

The boy said, "I see him."

The Indian said, "Is it on the road to this house, and on no other, that the English gentleman will travel to-day?"

The boy said, "It is on the road to this house, and on no other, that the English gentleman will travel to-day."

The Indian put a second question—after waiting a little first. He said: "Has the English gentleman got It about him?"

The boy answered—also, after waiting a little first—"Yes."

The Indian put a third and last question: "Will the English gentleman come here, as he has promised to come, at the close of day?"

The boy said, "I can't tell."

The Indian asked why.

The boy said, "I am tired. The mist rises in my head, and puzzles me. I can see no more to-day."

With that, the catechism ended. The chief Indian said something in his own language to the other two, pointing to the boy, and pointing towards the town, in which (as we afterwards discovered) they were lodged. He then, after making more signs on the boy's head, blew on his forehead, and so woke him up with a start. After that, they all went on their way towards the town, and the girls saw them no more.

"Oh, father!" says Penelope, clasping her hands, "what does 'It' mean?"

"We'll ask Mr. Franklin, my dear," I said, "if you can wait till Mr. Franklin comes." I winked to show I meant that in joke. Penelope took it quite seriously. "What on earth should Mr. Franklin know about it?" I inquired. "Ask him," says Penelope. "And see whether *he* thinks it a laughing matter too."

To my great surprise, Mr. Franklin, to whom I told the story later, like Penelope, took the thing seriously. How seriously, you will understand, when I tell you that, in his opinion, "It" meant the Moonstone.

CHAPTER III

I was just stretching my legs, when out bounced another woman on me. Not my daughter again; only Nancy, the kitchen-maid, this time. I was straight in her way out: and I observed, as she asked me to let her by, that she had a sulky face—a thing which, as head of the servants, I never allow, on principle, to pass me without inquiry.

"What are you turning your back on your dinner for?" I asked. "What's wrong now, Nancy?"

"Rosanna's late again for dinner," says Nancy. "And I'm sent to fetch her in. All the hard work falls on my shoulders in this house. Let me alone, Mr. Betteredge!"

The person here mentioned as Rosanna was our second housemaid. Having a kind of pity for our second housemaid (why, you shall presently know), and seeing in Nancy's face that she would fetch her fellow-servant in with more hard words than might be needful under the circumstances, it struck me that I had nothing particular to do, and that I might as well fetch Rosanna myself.

"Where is Rosanna?" I inquired.

"At the sands, of course!" says Nancy, with a toss of her head. "She had another of her fainting fits this morning,

and she asked to go out and get a breath of fresh air. I have no patience with her ! "

" Go back to your dinner, my girl," I said. " I have patience with her, and I'll fetch her in."

Rosanna was the only new servant in our house. About four months before the time I am writing of, my lady had been in London, and had gone over a Reformatory, intended to save forlorn women from drifting back into bad ways, after they had got released from prison. The matron, seeing my lady took an interest in the place, pointed out to her a girl with a deformed shoulder named Rosanna Spearman, and told her a most miserable story, which I haven't the heart to repeat here: for I don't like to be made wretched without any use, and no more do you. The upshot of it was, that Rosanna Spearman had been a thief.

The matron's opinion of Rosanna was (in spite of what she had done) that the girl was one in a thousand, and that she only wanted a chance to prove herself worthy of any Christian woman's interest in her. My lady said to the matron, upon that, " Rosanna Spearman shall have her chance, in my service." In a week afterwards Rosanna Spearman entered this establishment as our second housemaid. Not a soul was told the girl's story excepting Miss Rachel and me.

Though far from strong, and troubled occasionally with those fainting-fits already mentioned, she went about her work modestly and uncomplainingly, doing it carefully, and doing it well. But, somehow, she failed to make friends among the other women servants, excepting my daughter Penelope, who was always kind to Rosanna, though never intimate with her.

Having now told the story of Rosanna, I have only to notice one of the many queer ways of this strange girl to get on next to the story of the sands.

Our house is high up on the Yorkshire coast, and close by the sea. We have got beautiful walks all round us, in every direction but one. That one I acknowledge to be a horrid walk. It leads, for a quarter of a mile, through a melancholy plantation of firs, and brings you out between low cliffs on the loneliest and ugliest little bay on all our coast.

The sand-hills here run down to the sea, and end in two spits of rock jutting out opposite each other, till you lose sight of them in the water. One is called the North Spit, and one the South. Between the two, shifting backwards and forwards at certain seasons of the year, lies the most horrible quicksand on the shores of Yorkshire. At the turn of the tide, something goes on in the unknown deeps below, which sets the whole face of the quicksand shivering and trembling in a manner most remarkable to see, and which has given to it, among the people in our parts, the name of the Shivering Sand. A great bank, half a mile out, nigh the mouth of the bay, breaks the force of the main ocean coming in from the offing. Winter and summer, when the tide flows over the quicksand, the sea seems to leave the waves behind it on the bank, and rolls its waters in smoothly with a heave, and covers the sand in silence. A lonesome and horrid retreat, I can tell you! That a young woman, with dozens of nice walks to choose from, and company to go with her, if she only said "Come!" should prefer this place, and should sit and work or read in it, all alone, when it's her turn out, I grant you, passes belief. It's true, nevertheless, account for it as you may, that this was Rosanna Spearman's favourite walk, except when she went once or twice to Cobb's Hole, to see the only friend she had in our neighbourhood, of whom more anon. It's also true that I was now setting out for this same place, to fetch the girl in to dinner

I saw no sign of the girl in the plantation. When I got out, through the sand-hills, on to the beach, there she was, in her little straw bonnet, and her plain grey cloak that she always wore to hide her deformed shoulder as much as might be—there she was, all alone, looking out on the quicksand and the sea.

She started when I came up with her, and turned her head away from me. Not looking me in the face being another of the proceedings which, as head of the servants, I never allow, on principle, to pass without inquiry—I turned her round my way, and saw that she was crying.

"Now, tell me, my dear," I said, "what are you crying about?"

"About the years that are gone, Mr. Betteredge," says Rosanna quietly. "My past life still comes back to me sometimes."

"Come, come, my girl," I said, "your past life is all sponged out. Why can't you forget it? You're late for dinner, Rosanna—and I have come to fetch you in."

"You're very kind, Mr. Betteredge," she said. "I don't want any dinner to-day—let me bide a little longer here."

"What makes you like to be here?" I asked. "What is it that brings you everlastingly to this miserable place?"

"Something draws me to it," says the girl, making images with her finger in the sand. "I try to keep away from it, and I can't."

My answer—a pretty sharp one, in the poor girl's own interests, I promise you!—was at my tongue's end, when it was snapped short off on a sudden by a voice among the sand-hills shouting for me by my name. "Betteredge!" cries the voice, "where are you?" "Here!" I shouted out in return, without a notion in my mind of who it was. Rosanna started to her feet, and stood looking towards the

voice. "Oh!" she said softly, more to herself than to me. I twisted round on the sand and looked behind me. There, coming out on us from among the hills, was a bright-eyed young gentleman, dressed in a beautiful fawn-coloured suit, with gloves and hat to match, with a rose in his button-hole, and a smile on his face that might have set the Shivering Sand itself smiling at him in return. Before I could get on my legs, he plumped down on the sand by the side of me, put his arm round my neck, foreign fashion, and gave me a hug that fairly squeezed the breath out of my body. "Dear old Betteredge!" says he. "I owe you seven-and-sixpence. Now do you know who I am?"

Lord bless us and save us! Here—four good hours before we expected him—was Mr. Franklin Blake!

Before I could say a word, I saw Mr. Franklin, a little surprised to all appearance, look up from me to Rosanna. Following his lead, I looked at the girl too. She was blushing a deep red, seemingly at having caught Mr. Franklin's eye; and she turned and left us suddenly, in a confusion quite unaccountable to my mind, without either making her curtsy to the gentleman or saying a word to me. Very unlike her usual self: a civiller and better-behaved servant, in general, you never met with.

"That's an odd girl," says Mr. Franklin. "I wonder what she sees in me to surprise her?"

"I suppose, sir," I answered, drolling on our young gentleman's Continental education, "it's the varnish from foreign parts."

CHAPTER IV

The first thing I did, after we were left together alone, was to make another attempt to get up from my seat on the sand. Mr. Franklin stopped me.

"There is one advantage about this horrid place," he

said ; " we have got it all to ourselves. Stay where you are, Betteredge ; I have something to say to you."

" Welcome back to the old place, Mr. Franklin," I said. " All the more welcome, sir, that you have come some hours before we expected you."

" I have a reason for coming before you expected me," answered Mr. Franklin. " I suspect, Betteredge, that I have been followed and watched in London, for the last three or four days ; and I have travelled by the morning instead of the afternoon train, because I wanted to give a certain dark-looking stranger the slip."

Those words did more than surprise me. They brought back to my mind, in a flash, the three jugglers, and Penelope's notion that they meant some mischief to Mr. Franklin Blake.

" Who's watching you, sir—and why ? " I inquired.

" Tell me about the three Indians you have had at the house to-day," says Mr. Franklin, without noticing my question. " It's just possible, Betteredge, that my stranger and your three jugglers may turn out to be pieces of the same puzzle."

" How do you come to know about the jugglers, sir ? " I asked, putting one question on the top of another, which was bad manners, I own. But you don't expect much from poor human nature—so don't expect much from me.

" I saw Penelope at the house," says Mr. Franklin ; " and Penelope told me."

I was something dissatisfied with my daughter for forcing me to tell her foolish story at second hand. However, there was no help for it now but to mention the circumstances. Mr. Franklin's merriment all died away as I told him.

" ' Is it on the road to this house, and on no other, that the English gentleman will travel to-day ? ' ' Has the

English gentleman got It about him?' I suspect," says Mr. Franklin, pulling a little sealed paper parcel out of his pocket, "that 'It' means *this*. And 'this,' Betteredge, means my Uncle Herncastle's famous Diamond."

"Good Lord, sir!" I broke out, "how do you come to be in charge of the wicked Colonel's Diamond?"

"The wicked Colonel's will has left his Diamond as a birthday present to my cousin Rachel," says Mr. Franklin. "And my father, as the wicked Colonel's executor, has given it in charge to me to bring down here."

"The Colonel's Diamond left to Miss Rachel!" says I. "And your father, sir, the Colonel's executor! Why, I would have laid any bet you like, Mr. Franklin, that your father wouldn't have touched the Colonel with a pair of tongs!"

"Strong language, Betteredge! What was there against the Colonel? He belonged to your time, not to mine. Tell me what you know about him, and I'll tell you how my father came to be his executor, and more besides."

I saw he was in earnest, and I told him.

Here follows the substance of what I said, written out entirely for your benefit.

I spoke, a little way back, of my lady's father. He had five children in all. Two sons to begin with; then, after a long time, three young ladies came briskly one after the other; my mistress, as before mentioned, being the youngest and best of the three. Of the two sons, the eldest, Arthur, inherited the title and estates. The second, the Honourable John, got a fine fortune left him by a relative, and went into the army.

He had to leave the Guards before he was two-and-twenty—never mind why. They are very strict in the army, and they were too strict for the Honourable John. He went

out to India to see whether they were equally strict there and to try a little active service. In the matter of bravery (to give him his due), he was a mixture of bull-dog and game-cock, with a dash of the savage. Soon afterwards he changed into another regiment, and, in course of time, changed into a third. In the third he got his last step as lieutenant-colonel, and, getting that, got also a sunstroke, and came home to England.

He came back with a character that closed the doors of all his family against him, my lady (then just married) taking the lead, and declaring (with Sir John's approval, of course) that her brother should never enter any house of hers. There was more than one slur on the Colonel that made people shy of him ; but the blot of the Diamond is all I need mention here.

It was said he had got possession of his Indian jewel by means which, bold as he was, he didn't dare acknowledge. He never attempted to sell it—not being in need of money and not (to give him his due again) making money an object. He never gave it away ; he never even showed it to any living soul. Some said he was afraid of its getting him into difficulty with the military authorities ; others (very ignorant indeed of the real nature of the man) said he was afraid, if he showed it, of its costing him his life.

There was perhaps a grain of truth mixed up with this last report. It was false to say that he was afraid ; but it was a fact that his life had been twice threatened in India ; and it was firmly believed that the Moonstone was at the bottom of it. When he came back to England, and found himself avoided by everybody, the Moonstone was thought to be at the bottom of it again. The mystery of the Colonel's life got in the Colonel's way, and outlawed him, as you may say, among his own people. The men wouldn't let him into their clubs ; the women—more than one—

whom he wanted to marry refused him ; friends and relations got too near-sighted to see him in the street.

Some men in this mess would have tried to set themselves right with the world. But to give in, even when he was wrong, and had all society against him, was not the way of the Honourable John. He had kept the Diamond, in flat defiance of assassination, in India. He kept the Diamond, in flat defiance of public opinion, in England.

About two years before the time of which I am now writing, and about a year and a half before the time of his death, the Colonel came unexpectedly to my lady's house in London. It was the night of Miss Rachel's birthday, the twenty-first of June ; and there was a party in honour of it, as usual. I received a message from the footman to say that a gentleman wanted to see me. Going up into the hall, there I found the Colonel, wasted, and worn, and old, and shabby, and as wild and as wicked as ever.

" Go up to my sister," says he ; " and say that I have called to wish my niece many happy returns of the day."

He had made attempts by letter, more than once already, to be reconciled with my lady, for no other purpose, I am firmly persuaded, than to annoy her. But this was the first time he had actually come to the house.

I went upstairs with his message, and left him, by his own desire, waiting in the hall. The servants stood staring at him, at a distance, as if he was a walking engine of destruction, loaded with powder, and shot, and likely to go off among them at a moment's notice.

My lady had a dash—no more—of the family temper. " Tell Colonel Herncastle," she said, when I gave her her brother's message, " that Miss Verinder is engaged, and that *I* decline to see him."

I went downstairs with the message, of which I took the liberty of presenting a new and amended edition of my own contriving, as follows: "My lady and Miss Rachel regret that they are engaged, Colonel; and beg to be excused having the honour of seeing you."

I expected him to break out, even at that polite way of putting it. To my surprise he did nothing of the sort; he alarmed me by taking the thing with an unnatural quiet.

"Thank you, Betteredge," he said. "I shall remember my niece's birthday." With that, he turned on his heel, and walked out of the house.

The next birthday came round, and we heard he was ill in bed. Six months afterwards—that is to say, six months before the time I am now writing of—there came a letter from a highly respectable clergyman to my lady. It communicated two wonderful things in the way of family news. First, that the Colonel had forgiven his sister on his death-bed. Second, that he had forgiven everybody else.

This was the sum total of what I had to tell Mr. Franklin. I remarked that he listened more and more eagerly the longer I went on. Also, that the story of the Colonel's being sent away from his sister's door, on the occasion of his niece's birthday, seemed to strike Mr. Franklin like a shot that had hit the mark. Though he didn't acknowledge it, I saw that I had made him uneasy, plainly enough, in his face.

"You have said your say, Betteredge," he remarked. "It's my turn now. Before, however, I tell you what discoveries I have made in London, and how I came to be mixed up in this matter of the Diamond, I want to know one thing. You look, my old friend, as if you didn't quite understand the object to be answered by this consultation of ours. Do your looks belie you?"

"No, sir," I said. "My looks, on this occasion at any rate, tell the truth."

"In that case," says Mr. Franklin, "suppose I put you up to my point of view, before we go any further. I see three very serious questions involved in the Colonel's birthday gift to my cousin Rachel. Follow me carefully, Betteredge.

"Question the first: Was the Colonel's Diamond the object of a conspiracy in India? Question the second: Has the conspiracy followed the Colonel's Diamond to England? Question the third: Did the Colonel know the conspiracy followed the Diamond; and has he purposely left a legacy of trouble and danger to his sister, through the innocent medium of his sister's child? *That* is what I am driving at, Betteredge. Don't let me frighten you."

It was all very well to say that, but he *had* frightened me.

CHAPTER V

Keeping my private sentiments to myself, I respectfully requested Mr. Franklin to go on. Mr. Franklin replied, "Don't fidget, Betteredge," and went on.

He informed me that his discoveries, concerning the wicked Colonel and the Diamond, had begun with a visit which he had paid (before he came to us) to the family lawyer, at Hampstead. A chance word dropped by Mr. Franklin, when the two were alone, one day, after dinner, revealed that he had been charged by his father with a birthday present to be taken to Miss Rachel. One thing led to another; and it ended in the lawyer mentioning what the present really was, and how the friendly connection between the late Colonel and Mr. Blake, senior, had taken its rise. The facts here are really so extraordinary, that I doubt if I can trust my own language to do justice to

them. I prefer trying to report Mr. Franklin's discoveries, as nearly as may be, in Mr. Franklin's own words.

"You remember the time, Betteredge," he said, "when my father was trying to prove his title to that unlucky Dukedom? Well! that was also the time when my Uncle Herncastle returned from India. My father discovered that his brother-in-law was in possession of certain papers which were likely to be of service to him in his lawsuit. He called on the Colonel, on pretence of welcoming him back to England. The Colonel was not to be deluded in that way. 'You want something,' he said, 'or you would never have compromised your reputation by calling on *me*.' My father saw that the one chance for him was to show his hand; he admitted, at once, that he wanted the papers. The Colonel asked for a day to consider his answer. His answer came in the shape of a most extraordinary letter, which my friend the lawyer showed me. The Colonel began by saying that he wanted something of my father, and that he begged to propose an exchange of friendly services between them. The fortune of war (that was the expression he used) had placed him in possession of one of the largest Diamonds in the world; and he had reason to believe that neither he nor the precious jewel was safe in any house, in any quarter of the globe, which they occupied together. Under these alarming circumstances, he had determined to place his Diamond in the keeping of another person. That person was not expected to run any risk. He might deposit the precious stone in any place especially guarded and set apart—like a banker's or jeweller's strong-room—for the safe custody of valuables of high price. His main personal responsibility in the matter was to be of the passive kind. He was to undertake—either by himself, or by a trustworthy representative—to receive at a prearranged address, on

certain prearranged days in every year, a note from the Colonel, simply stating the fact that he was a living man at that date. In the event of the date passing over without the note being received, the Colonel's silence might be taken as a sure token of the Colonel's death by murder. In that case, certain sealed instructions relating to the disposal of the Diamond, and deposited with it, were to be opened, and followed implicitly. If my father chose to accept this strange charge, the Colonel's papers were at his disposal in return. That was the letter."

"What did your father do, sir?" I asked.

"Do?" says Mr. Franklin. "I'll tell you what he did. He brought the invaluable faculty, called common sense, to bear on the Colonel's letter. The whole thing, he declared, was simply absurd. Somewhere in his Indian wanderings, the Colonel had picked up some wretched crystal which he took for a diamond. As for the danger of his being murdered, and the precautions devised to preserve his life and his piece of crystal, this was the nineteenth century, and any man in his senses had only to apply to the police. The Colonel had been a notorious opium-eater for years past; and, if the only way of getting at the valuable papers he possessed was by accepting a matter of opium as a matter of fact, my father was quite willing to take the ridiculous responsibility imposed on him—all the more readily that it involved no trouble to himself. The Diamond and the sealed instructions went into his banker's strong-room, and the Colonel's letters, periodically reporting him a living man, were received and opened by our family lawyer, Mr. Bruff, as my father's representative. No sensible person, in a similar position, could have viewed the matter in any other way."

"What is your own private opinion about the matter, sir?" I asked.

"Let's finish the story of the Colonel first," says Mr. Franklin. "My father," he said, "got the papers he wanted, and never saw his brother-in-law again from that time. Year after year, on the prearranged days, the prearranged letter name from the Colonel, and was opened by Mr. Bruff. I have seen the letters, in a heap, all of them written in the same brief, businesslike form of words: 'Sir,—This is to certify that I am still a living man. Let the Diamond be. John Herncastle.' That was all he ever wrote, and that came regularly to the day, until some six or eight months since, when the form of the letter varied for the first time. It ran now: 'Sir,—They tell me I am dying. Come to me, and help me to make my will.' Mr. Bruff went, and found him, in the little suburban villa, surrounded by its own grounds, in which he had lived alone, ever since he had left India. He had dogs, cats, and birds to keep him company; but no human being near him, except the person who came daily to do the housework, and the doctor at the bedside. The will was a very simple matter. The Colonel had dissipated the greater part of his fortune in his chemical investigations. His will began and ended in three clauses, which he dictated from his bed, in perfect possession of his faculties. The first clause provided for the safe keeping and support of his animals. The second founded a professorship of experimental chemistry at a northern university. The third bequeathed the Moonstone as a birthday present to his niece, on condition that my father would act as executor. My father at first refused to act. On second thoughts, however, he gave way, partly because he was assured that the executorship would involve him in no trouble; partly because Mr. Bruff suggested, in Rachel's interest, that the Diamond might be worth something after all."

"Did the Colonel give any reason, sir," I inquired, "why he left the Diamond to Miss Rachel?"

"He not only gave the reason—he had the reason written in his will," said Mr. Franklin. "I have got an extract, which you shall see presently. Now you must hear what happened after the Colonel's death. It was formally necessary to have the Diamond valued, before the will could be proved. All the jewellers consulted, at once confirmed the Colonel's assertion that he possessed one of the largest diamonds in the world. The question of accurately valuing it presented some serious difficulties. Its size made it a phenomenon in the diamond market; its colour placed it in a category by itself; and, to add to these elements of uncertainty, there was a defect in the shape of a flaw, in the very heart of the stone. Even with this last serious drawback, however, the lowest of the various estimates given was twenty thousand pounds. Conceive my father's astonishment! He had been within a hair's breadth of refusing to act as executor, and of allowing this magnificent jewel to be lost to the family. The interest he took in the matter now, induced him to open the sealed instructions which had been deposited with the Diamond. Mr. Bruff showed this document to me, with the other papers; and it suggests (to my mind) a clue to the nature of the conspiracy which threatened the Colonel's life."

"Then you do believe, sir," I said, "that there was a conspiracy?"

"Not possessing my father's excellent common sense," answered Mr. Franklin, "I believe the Colonel's life was threatened, exactly as the Colonel said. The sealed instructions, as I think, explain how it was that he died, after all, quietly in his bed. In the event of his death by violence (that is to say, in the absence of the regular letter from him at the appointed date), my father was then

directed to send the Moonstone secretly to Amsterdam. It was to be deposited in that city with a famous diamond-cutter, and it was to be cut up into from four to six separate stones. The stones were then to be sold for what they would fetch, and the proceeds were to be applied to the founding of that professorship of experimental chemistry, which the Colonel has since endowed by his will. Remark, that the integrity of the Diamond as a whole stone, is here artfully made dependent on the preservation from violence of the Colonel's life. He is not satisfied with saying to the enemies he dreads, 'Kill me—and you will be no nearer to the Diamond than you are now; it is where you can't get at it—in the guarded strong-room of a bank.' He says instead, 'Kill me—and the Diamond will be the Diamond no longer; its identity will be destroyed.' What does it all mean?"

Here I had (as I thought) a flash of the wonderful foreign brightness.

"I know," I said. "It means lowering the value of the stone, and cheating the rogues in that way."

"Nothing of the sort," says Mr. Franklin. "I have inquired about that. The flawed Diamond, cut up, would actually fetch more than the Diamond as it now is; for this plain reason—that from four to six perfect brilliants might be cut from it, which would be, collectively, worth more money than the large—but imperfect—single stone. If robbery for the purpose of gain was at the bottom of the conspiracy, the Colonel's instructions absolutely made the Diamond better worth stealing. More money could have been got for it, and the disposal of it in the diamond market would have been infinitely easier, if it had passed through the hands of the workmen of Amsterdam."

"Lord bless us, sir!" I burst out. "What was the plot, then?"

"A plot organized among the Indians who originally owned the jewel," says Mr. Franklin—"a plot with some old Hindoo superstition at the bottom of it. That is my opinion, confirmed by a family paper which I have about me at this moment."

I saw now why the appearance of the three Indian jugglers at our house had presented itself to Mr. Franklin in the light of a circumstance worth noting.

"I don't want to force my opinion on you," Mr. Franklin went on. "The idea of certain chosen servants of an old Hindoo superstition devoting themselves, through all difficulties and dangers, to watching the opportunity of recovering their sacred gem, appears to *me* to be perfectly consistent with everything that we know of the patience of Oriental races, and the influence of Oriental religions. Does the conspiracy against the Moonstone survive the Colonel's death? And did the Colonel know it, when he left the birthday gift to his niece?"

I began to see my lady and Miss Rachel at the end of it all, now. Not a word he said escaped me.

"I was not very willing, when I discovered the story of the Moonstone," said Mr. Franklin, "to be the means of bringing it here. But Mr. Bruff reminded me that somebody must put my cousin's legacy into my cousin's hands—and that I might as well do it as anybody else. After taking the Diamond out of the bank, I fancied I was followed in the streets by a shabby, dark-complexioned man. I went to my father's house to pick up my luggage, and found a letter there, which unexpectedly detained me in London. I went back to the bank with the Diamond, and thought I saw the shabby man again. Taking the Diamond once more out of the bank this morning, I saw the man for the third time, gave him the slip, and started (before he recovered the trace of me) by the morning

instead of the afternoon train. Here I am, with the Diamond safe and sound—and what is the first news that meets me? I find that three strolling Indians have been at the house, and that my arrival from London, and something which I am expected to have about me, are two special objects of investigation to them when they believe themselves to be alone. If you were in my place, Betteredge, what would you do?"

"What your father did with the diamond, to be sure, sir!" I answered. "Your father put it in the safe keeping of the bank in London. You put it in the safe keeping of the bank of Frizinghall." (Frizinghall was our nearest town and the Bank of England wasn't safer than the bank there.) "If I were you, sir," I added, "I would ride straight away with it to Frizinghall before the ladies get back."

"Betteredge, you are worth your weight in gold," he said. "I will."

The evening came, and the dressing-room bell for dinner rang before Mr. Franklin returned from Frizinghall. I took his hot water up to his room myself, expecting to hear, after this extraordinary delay, that something had happened. To my great disappointment (and no doubt to yours also) nothing had happened. He had deposited the Moonstone in the bank—describing it merely as a valuable of great price—and he had got the receipt for it safe in his pocket.

CHAPTER VI

Whether the jugglers heard, in the town, of Mr. Franklin's having been seen at the bank, and drew their conclusions accordingly; or whether the boy really did see the Diamond where the Diamond was now lodged (which I, for one, flatly disbelieve); or whether, after all, it was

a mere effect of chance, this at any rate is the plain truth—not the ghost of an Indian came near the house again, through the weeks that passed before Miss Rachel's birthday. The jugglers remained in and about the town plying their trade ; and Mr. Franklin and I remained waiting to see what might happen, and resolute not to put the rogues on their guard by showing our suspicions of them too soon.

Miss Rachel and Mr. Franklin passed much of their time together and on the twenty-ninth of the month hit on a new method of occupying themselves. There are reasons for taking particular notice here of the occupation that amused them. You will find it has a bearing on something that is still to come.

Mr. Franklin's universal genius, dabbling in everything, dabbled in what he called " decorative Painting." He had invented, he informed us, a new mixture to moisten paint with, which he described as a " vehicle." What it was made of, I don't know. What it did, I can tell you in two words—it stank. Miss Rachel being wild to try her hand at the new process, Mr. Franklin sent to London for the materials, mixed them up, with accompaniment of a smell which made the very dogs sneeze when they came into the room; put an apron and a bib over Miss Rachel's gown, and set her to work decorating her own little sitting-room —called, for want of English to name it in, her " boudoir." They began with the inside of the door. Mr. Franklin scraped off all the nice varnish with pumice-stone, and made what he described as a surface to work on. Miss Rachel then covered the surface, under his directions, and with his help, with patterns and devices—griffins, birds, flowers, cupids, and such-like—copied from designs made by a famous Italian painter, whose name escapes me. Viewed as work, this decoration was slow to do, and dirty to deal with. But our young lady and gentleman never seemed

to tire of it. When they were not riding, or seeing company, or taking their meals, or piping their songs, there they were with their heads together, as busy as bees, spoiling the door.

The next date worthy of notice is Sunday, the fourth of June.

On that evening we, in the servants' hall, debated a domestic question for the first time, which, like the decoration of the door, has its bearing on something that is still to come.

Seeing the pleasure which Mr. Franklin and Miss Rachel took in each other's society, and noting what a pretty match they were in all personal respects, we naturally speculated on the chance of their putting their heads together with other objects in view besides the ornamenting of a door. Some of us said there would be a wedding in the house before the summer was over. Others (led by me) admitted it was likely enough Miss Rachel might be married ; but we doubted (for reasons which will presently appear) whether her bridegroom would be Mr. Franklin Blake.

That Mr. Franklin was in love, on his side, nobody who saw and heard him would doubt. The difficulty was to fathom Miss Rachel. Let me do myself the honour of making you acquainted with her ; after which, I will leave you to fathom for yourself—if you can.

My young lady's eighteenth birthday was the birthday now coming on the twenty-first of June. She was small and slim but all in fine proportion from top to toe. Her hair was the blackest I ever saw. Her eyes matched her hair. Her nose was not quite large enough, I admit. Her mouth and chin were (to quote Mr. Franklin) morsels for the gods ; and her complexion (on the same undeniable authority) was as warm as the sun itself, with this great advantage

over the sun, that it was always in nice order to look at. Add to the foregoing that she carried her head as upright as a dart, in a dashing, spirited, thoroughbred way—that she had a clear voice, with a ring of the right metal in it, and a smile that began very prettily in her eyes before it got to her lips—and there behold the portrait of her, to the best of my painting, as large as life !

With all her secrecy, and self-will, there was not so much as the shadow of anything false in her. I never remember her breaking her word ; I never remember her saying No, and meaning Yes. I can call to mind, in her childhood, more than one occasion when the good little soul took the blame, and suffered the punishment, for some fault committed by a playfellow whom she loved. Nobody ever knew her to confess to it, when the thing was found out, and she was charged with it afterwards. But nobody ever knew her to lie about it, either. She looked you straight in the face, and shook her little saucy head, and said plainly, " I won't tell you ! " Self-willed ; but the finest creature, nevertheless, that ever walked the ways of this lower world.

I have now brought you acquainted with Miss Rachel, which you will find puts us face to face, next, with the question of that young lady's matrimonial views.

On June the twelfth, an invitation from my mistress was sent to a gentleman in London, to come and help to keep Miss Rachel's birthday. This was the fortunate individual on whom I believed her heart to be privately set ! Like Mr. Franklin, he was a cousin of hers. His name was Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite.

With all his brightness and cleverness and general good qualities, Mr. Franklin's chance of topping Mr. Godfrey in our young lady's estimation was, in my opinion, a very poor chance indeed.

In the first place, Mr. Godfrey was, in point of size, the finest man by far of the two. He stood over six feet high ; he had a beautiful red and white colour ; a smooth round face, shaved as bare as your hand ; and a head of lovely long flaxen hair, falling negligently over the poll of his neck. But why do I try to give you this personal description of him ? If you ever subscribed to a Ladies' Charity in London, you know Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite as well as I do. He was a barrister by profession : a ladies' man by temperament ; and a good Samaritan by choice. Female benevolence and female destitution could do nothing without him. Wherever there was a table with a committee of ladies sitting round it in council, there was Mr. Godfrey at the bottom of the board, keeping the temper of the committee, and leading the dear creatures along the thorny ways of business, hat in hand.

On the fourteenth, came Mr. Godfrey's answer.

He accepted my mistress's invitation from the Wednesday of the birthday to the evening of Friday—when his duties to the Ladies' Charities would oblige him to return to town.

Mr. Franklin left no chance untried of winning Miss Rachel's good graces. Though one of the most inveterate smokers I ever met with, he gave up his cigar, because she said, one day, she hated the stale smell of it in his clothes. He slept so badly, after this effort of self-denial, for want of the composing effect of the tobacco to which he was used and came down morning after morning looking so haggard and worn, that Miss Rachel herself begged him to take to his cigars again. No ! he would take to nothing again that could cause her a moment's annoyance ; he would fight it out resolutely, and get back his sleep, sooner or later, by main force of patience in waiting for it. Such devotion as this, you may say (as some of them said downstairs), could never fail of

producing the right effect on Miss Rachel—backed up, too, as it was, by the decorating work every day on the door.

On the twentieth, there came a note from Mr. Godfrey. He had arranged to stop at Frizinghall that night, having occasion to consult his father on business. On the afternoon of the next day, he and his two eldest sisters would ride over to us on horseback, in good time before dinner. An elegant little casket in china accompanied the note, presented to Miss Rachel, with her cousin's love and best wishes. Mr. Franklin had only given her a plain locket not worth half the money. My daughter Penelope, nevertheless—such is the obstinacy of women—still backed him to win.

CHAPTER VII

June twenty-first, the day of the birthday, was cloudy and unsettled at sunrise, but towards noon it cleared up bravely.

After breakfast, Mr. Franklin and I had a private conference on the subject of the Moonstone—the time having now come for removing it from the bank at Frizinghall, and placing it in Miss Rachel's own hands.

We arranged that he was to ride over, after lunch, to Frizinghall, and bring the Diamond back, with Mr. Godfrey and the two young ladies, in all probability, to keep him company on the way home again.

This settled, our young gentleman went back to Miss Rachel.

They consumed the whole morning, and part of the afternoon, in the everlasting business of decorating the door, Penelope standing by to mix the colours, as directed.

Mr. Franklin snatched a morsel from the luncheon-table, and rode off to Frizinghall—to escort his cousins, as

he told my lady. To fetch the Moonstone, as was privately known to himself and to me.

I was aroused from what I am inclined to think must have been, not a nap, but a reverie, by the clatter of horses' hoofs outside ; and, going to the door, received a cavalcade comprising Mr. Franklin and his three cousins, escorted by one of old Mr. Ablewhite's grooms.

Under cover of the noise made by the young ladies, I had an opportunity of saying a private word to Mr. Franklin in the hall.

" Have you got the Diamond safe, sir ? "

He nodded, and tapped the breast-pocket of his coat.

" Have you seen anything of the Indians ? "

" Not a glimpse." With that answer, he asked for my lady, and, hearing she was in the small drawing-room, went there straight. The bell rang before he had been a minute in the room, and Penelope was sent to tell Miss Rachel that Mr. Franklin Blake wanted to speak to her.

Crossing the hall, about half an hour afterwards, I was brought to a sudden standstill by an outbreak of screams from the small drawing-room. I can't say I was at all alarmed, for I recognized in the screams the favourite large O of the Miss Ablewhites. However, I went in (on pretence of asking for instructions about the dinner) to discover whether anything serious had really happened.

There stood Miss Rachel at the table, like a person fascinated, with the Colonel's unlucky Diamond in her hand. There, on either side of her, knelt the two Miss Ablewhites devouring the jewel with their eyes, and screaming with ecstasy every time it flashed on them in a new light. There, at the opposite side of the table, stood Mr. Godfrey, clapping his hands like a large child, and singing out softly, " Exquisite ! exquisite ! " There sat Mr. Franklin in a chair by the bookcase, tugging at his beard, and looking

anxiously towards the window. And there, at the window, stood the object he was contemplating—my lady, having the extract from the Colonel's will in her hand, and keeping her back turned on the whole of the company.

She faced me, when I asked for my instructions ; and I saw the family frown gathering over her eyes, and the family temper twitching at the corners of her mouth.

" Come to my room in half an hour," she answered. " I shall have something to say to you then."

Before I could leave the room in my turn, Miss Rachel, always considerate to the old servant who had been in the house when she was born, stopped me. " Look, Gabriel ! " she said, and flashed the jewel before my eyes in a ray of sunlight that poured through the window.

Lord bless us ! it *was* a Diamond ! As large, or nearly, as a plover's egg ! The light that streamed from it was like the light of the harvest moon. When you looked down into the stone, you looked into a yellow deep that drew your eyes into it so that they saw nothing else. It seemed unfathomable ; this jewel, that you could hold between your finger and thumb, seemed unfathomable as the heavens themselves. We set it in the sun, and then shut the light out of the room, and it shone awfully out of the depths of its own brightness, with a moony gleam, in the dark. No wonder Miss Rachel was fascinated : no wonder her cousins screamed.

At the end of half an hour, I presented myself, as directed, in my lady's room.

What passed between my mistress and me, on this occasion, was, in the main, a repetition of what had passed between Mr. Franklin and me at the Shivering Sand—with this difference, that I took care to keep my own counsel about the jugglers, seeing that nothing had happened to justify me in alarming my lady on this head. When I

received my dismissal, I could see that she took the blackest view possible of the Colonel's motives, and that she was bent on getting the Moonstone out of her daughter's possession at the first opportunity.

That same evening my girl said to me, " News for you, father ! Miss Rachel has refused him."

" Who's ' *him* ' ? " I asked.

" The ladies' committee-man, father," says Penelope. " A nasty sly fellow ! I hate him for trying to supplant Mr. Franklin ! "

CHAPTER VIII

One on the top of the other the rest of the company followed the Ablewhites, till we had the whole tale of them complete. Including the family, they were twenty-four in all. It was a noble sight to see, when they were settled in their places round the dinner-table, and the Rector of Frizinghall (with beautiful elocution) rose and said grace.

There is no need to worry you with a list of the guests. You will meet none of them a second time—in my part of the story, at any rate—with the exception of two.

Those two sat on either side of Miss Rachel, who, as queen of the day, was naturally the great attraction of the party. On this occasion she was more particularly the centre-point towards which everybody's eyes were directed; for (to my lady's secret annoyance) she wore her wonderful birthday present, which eclipsed all the rest—the Moonstone. It was without any setting when it had been placed in her hands ; but that universal genius, Mr. Franklin, had contrived, with the help of his neat fingers and a little bit of silver wire, to fix it as a brooch in the bosom of her white dress. Everybody wondered at the prodigious size and beauty of the Diamond, as a matter of course. But the

only two of the company who said anything out of the common way about it were those two guests I have mentioned, who sat by Miss Rachel on her right hand and her left.

The guest on her left was Mr. Candy, our doctor at Frizinghall.

This was a pleasant, companionable little man, with the drawback, however, I must own, of being too fond, in season and out of season, of his joke, and of plunging in rather a headlong manner into talk with strangers, without waiting to feel his way first. What *he* said about the Diamond to Miss Rachel was said, as usual, by way of a mystification or joke. He gravely entreated her (in the interests of science) to let him take it home and burn it. "We will first heat it, Miss Rachel," says the doctor, "to such and such a degree; then we will expose it to a current of air; and, little by little—puff!—we evaporate the Diamond, and spare you a world of anxiety about the safe keeping of a valuable precious stone!" My lady, listening with rather a careworn expression on her face, seemed to wish that the doctor had been in earnest, and that he could have found Miss Rachel zealous enough in the cause of science to sacrifice her birthday gift.

The other guest, who sat on my young lady's right hand, was an eminent public character—being no other than the celebrated Indian traveller, Mr. Murthwaite, who, at risk of his life, had penetrated in disguise where no European had ever set foot before.

This was a long, lean, wiry, brown, silent man. He had a weary look, and a very steady, attentive eye. It was rumoured that he was tired of the humdrum life among the people in our parts, and longing to go back and wander off on the tramp again in the wild places of the East. Except what he said to Miss Rachel about her jewel, I doubt if he

spoke six words or drank so much as a single glass of wine, all through the dinner. The Moonstone was the only object that interested him in the smallest degree. The fame of it seemed to have reached him, in some of those perilous Indian places where his wanderings had lain. After looking at it silently for so long a time that Miss Rachel began to get confused, he said to her in his cool immovable way, "If you ever go to India, Miss Verinder, don't take your uncle's birthday gift with you. A Hindoo diamond is sometimes part of a Hindoo religion. I know a certain city and a certain temple in that city, where, dressed as you are now, your life would not be worth five minutes' purchase." Miss Rachel, safe in England was quite delighted to hear of her danger in India. My lady fidgeted in her chair, and changed the subject.

Mr. Franklin was in wonderful force and spirits, Penelope having informed him, I suspect, of Mr. Godfrey's reception in the rose-garden. But, talk as he might, nine times out of ten he pitched on the wrong subject, or he addressed himself to the wrong person. Getting on the subject of the medical profession, he said such downright things in ridicule of doctors, that he actually put good-humoured little Mr. Candy in a rage.

The dispute between them began in Mr. Franklin being led—I forget how—to acknowledge that he had latterly slept very badly at night. Mr. Candy thereupon told him that his nerves were all out of order, and that he ought to go through a course of medicine immediately. Mr. Franklin replied that a course of medicine, and a course of groping in the dark, meant, in his estimation, one and the same thing. Mr. Candy, hitting back smartly, said that Mr. Franklin himself was, constitutionally speaking, groping in the dark after sleep, and that nothing but medicine could help him to find it. Mr. Franklin, keeping the ball

upon his side, said he had often heard of the blind leading the blind, and now, for the first time, he knew what it meant. In this way, they kept it going briskly, cut and thrust, till they both of them got hot. The Devil (or the Diamond) possessed that dinner-party ; and it was a relief to everybody when my mistress rose, and gave the ladies the signal to leave the gentlemen over their wine.

I had just ranged the decanters in a row before old Mr. Ablewhite (who represented the master of the house), when there came a sound from the terrace which startled me out of my company manners on the instant. Mr. Franklin and I looked at each other ; it was the sound of the Indian drum. As I live by bread, here were the jugglers returning to us with the return of the Moonstone to the house !

As they rounded the corner of the terrace, and came in sight, I hobbled out to warn them off. But, as ill-luck would have it, the two Miss Ablewhites were beforehand with me. They whizzed out on to the terrace like a couple of sky-rockets, wild to see the Indians exhibit their tricks. The other ladies followed ; the gentlemen came out on their side. Before you could say, " Lord bless us ! " the rogues were making their salaams ; and the ladies were kissing the pretty little boy.

Mr. Franklin got on one side of Miss Rachel, and I put myself behind her. If our suspicions were right, there she stood, innocent of all knowledge of the truth, showing the Indians the Diamond in the bosom of her dress !

I can't tell you what tricks they performed, or how they did it. What with the vexation about the dinner, and what with the provocation of the rogues coming back just in the nick of time to see the jewel with their own eyes, I own I lost my head. The first thing that I remember noticing was the sudden appearance on the scene of the Indian traveller, Mr. Murthwaite. Skirting the half-circle

in which the gentlefolks stood or sat, he came quietly behind the jugglers and spoke to them on a sudden in the language of their own country.

If he had pricked them with a bayonet, I doubt if the Indians could have started and turned on him with a more tigerish quickness than they did, on hearing the first words that passed his lips. The next moment they were bowing and salaaming to him in their most polite and snaky way. After a few words in the unknown tongue had passed on either side, Mr. Murthwaite withdrew as quietly as he had approached. The chief Indian, who acted as interpreter, thereupon wheeled about again towards the gentlefolks. I noticed that the fellow's coffee-coloured face had turned grey since Mr. Murthwaite had spoken to him. He bowed to my lady, and informed her that the exhibition was over. The little boy went round with the hat. The ladies withdrew to the drawing-room ; and the gentlemen (excepting Mr. Franklin and Mr. Murthwaite) returned to their wine. I and the footman followed the Indians, and saw them safe off the premises.

Going back by way of the shrubbery, I smelt tobacco, and found Mr. Franklin and Mr. Murthwaite (the latter smoking a cheroot) walking slowly up and down among the trees. Mr. Franklin beckoned to me to join them.

"This," says Mr. Franklin, presenting me to the great traveller, "is Gabriel Betteredge, the old servant and friend of our family of whom I spoke to you just now. Tell him, if you please, what you have just told me."

Mr. Murthwaite took his cheroot out of his mouth, and leaned in his weary way against the trunk of a tree.

"Mr. Betteredge," he began, "those three Indians are no more jugglers than you and I are."

Here was a new surprise ! I naturally asked the traveller if he had ever met with the Indians before.

"Never," says Mr. Murthwaite; "but I know what Indian juggling really is. All you have seen to-night is a very bad and clumsy imitation of it. Unless, after long experience, I am utterly mistaken, those men are high-caste Brahmins. I charged them with being disguised, and you saw how it told on their feelings. There is a mystery about their conduct that I can't explain. They have doubly sacrificed their caste—first, in crossing the sea; secondly, in disguising themselves as jugglers. In the land they live in that is a tremendous sacrifice to make. There must be some very serious motive at the bottom of it, and some justification of no ordinary kind to plead for them, in recovery of their caste, when they return to their own country."

Mr. Franklin told Mr. Murthwaite about the Diamond.

"Now," says Mr. Franklin, when he had done, "what does your experience say?"

"My experience," answered the traveller, "says that you have had more narrow escapes of your life, Mr. Franklin Blake, than I have had of mine; and that is saying a great deal."

It was Mr. Franklin's turn to be astonished now.

"They have seen the Moonstone on Miss Verinder's dress," he said. "What is to be done?" he asked.

"What your uncle threatened to do," answered Mr. Murthwaite. "Colonel Herncastle understood the people he had to deal with. Send the Diamond to-morrow (under guard of more than one man) to be cut up at Amsterdam. Make half a dozen diamonds of it, instead of one. There is an end of its sacred identity as the Moonstone—and there is an end of the conspiracy."

Mr. Franklin turned to me.

"There is no help for it," he said. "We must speak to Lady Verinder to-morrow."

"What about to-night, sir?" I asked. "Suppose the Indians come back?"

Mr. Murthwaite answered me before Mr. Franklin could speak.

"The Indians won't risk coming back to-night," he said. "The direct way is hardly ever the way they take to anything—let alone a matter like this, in which the slightest mistake might be fatal to their reaching their end."

The arrival of the carriages was the signal for the arrival of the rain. It poured as if it meant to pour all night. With the exception of the doctor, whose gig was waiting for him, the rest of the company went home snugly, under cover, in close carriages. I told Mr. Candy that I was afraid he would get wet through. He told me, in return, that he wondered I had arrived at my time of life, without knowing that a doctor's skin was waterproof. So he drove away in the rain, laughing over his own little joke; and so we got rid of our dinner company.

The next thing to tell is the story of the night.

CHAPTER IX

When the last of the guests had driven away, I went back into the inner hall and found Samuel, the footman, at the side-table, presiding over the brandy and soda-water. My lady and Miss Rachel came out of the drawing-room, followed by the two gentlemen. Mr. Godfrey had some brandy and soda-water. Mr. Franklin took nothing. He sat down, looking dead tired; the talking on this birthday occasion had, I suppose, been too much for him.

My lady, turning round to wish them good-night, looked hard at the wicked Colonel's legacy shining in her daughter's dress.

"Rachel," she asked, "where are you going to put your Diamond to-night?"

Miss Rachel was in high good spirits, just in that humour for talking nonsense, and perversely persisting in it as if it was sense, which you may have sometimes observed in young girls, when they are highly wrought up, at the end of an exciting day. First, she declared she didn't know where to put the Diamond. Then she said, " on her dressing table, of course, along with her other things." Then she remembered that the Diamond might take to shining of itself, with its awful moony light in the dark—and that would terrify her in the dead of night. Then she bethought herself of an Indian cabinet which stood in her sitting-room; and instantly made up her mind to put the Indian diamond in the Indian cabinet, for the purpose of permitting two beautiful native productions to admire each other. Having let her little flow of nonsense run on as far as that point, her mother interposed and stopped her.

" My dear ! your Indian cabinet has no lock to it," says my lady.

" Good heavens, mamma ! " cried Miss Rachel, " is this an hotel ? Are there thieves in the house ? "

Without taking notice of this fantastic way of talking, my lady wished the gentlemen good-night. She next turned to Miss Rachel, and kissed her. " Why not let *me* keep the Diamond for you to-night ? " she asked.

Miss Rachel received that proposal as she might, ten years since, have received a proposal to part her from a new doll. My lady saw there was no reasoning with her that night. " Come into my room, Rachel, the first thing to-morrow morning," she said. " I shall have something to say to you." With those last words she left us slowly ; thinking her own thoughts, and, to all appearance, not best pleased with the way by which they were leading her.

Miss Rachel was the next to say good-night. She shook hands first with Mr. Godfrey, who was standing at the

other end of the hall, looking at a picture. Then she turned back to Mr. Franklin, still sitting weary and silent in a corner.

What words passed between them I can't say. But standing near the old oak frame which holds our large looking-glass, I saw her reflected in it, slyly slipping the locket which Mr. Franklin had given to her, out of the bosom of her dress, and showing it to him for a moment, with a smile which certainly meant something out of the common, before she tripped off to bed. This incident staggered me a little in the reliance I had previously felt on my own judgment. I began to think that Penelope might be right about the state of her young lady's affections, after all.

As soon as Miss Rachel left him eyes to see with, Mr. Franklin noticed me. His variable humour, shifting about everything, had shifted about the Indians already.

"Betteredge," he said, "I'm half inclined to think I took Mr. Murthwaite too seriously, when we had that talk in the shrubbery. I wonder whether he has been trying any of his traveller's tales on us? Are you going to let the dogs loose?"

"I'll relieve them of their collars, sir," I answered, "and leave them free to take a turn in the night, if they smell a reason for it."

"All right," says Mr. Franklin. "We'll see what is to be done to-morrow. I am not at all disposed to alarm my aunt, Betteredge, without a very pressing reason for it. Good-night."

He looked so worn and pale as he nodded to me, and took his candle to go upstairs, that I ventured to advise his having a drop of brandy and water, by way of night-cap. Mr. Godfrey, walking towards us from the other end of the hall, backed me. He pressed Mr. Franklin, in the friendliest manner, to take something, before he went to bed.

This is a Good book

Mr. Franklin declined the brandy and water, and went upstairs with Mr. Godfrey, their rooms being next door to each other. On the landing, however, either his cousin persuaded him, or he veered about and changed his mind as usual. "Perhaps I may want it in the night," he called down to me. "Send up some brandy and water into my room."

I sent up Samuel with the brandy and water; and then went out and unbuckled the dogs' collars. They both lost their heads with astonishment on being set loose at that time of night, and jumped upon me like a couple of puppies! However, the rain soon cooled them down again: they lapped a drop of water each, and crept back into their kennels. As I went into the house I noticed signs on the sky which betokened a break in the weather for the better. For the present, it still poured heavily, and the ground was in a perfect sop.

Samuel and I went all over the house, and shut up as usual. I examined everything myself, and trusted nothing to my deputy on this occasion. All was safe and fast when I rested my old bones in bed, between midnight and one in the morning.

The worries of the day had been a little too much for me, I suppose. At any rate I had a touch of Mr. Franklin's malady that night. It was sunrise before I fell off at last into a sleep. All the time I lay awake the house was as quiet as the grave.

About half-past seven I woke, and opened my window on a fine sunshiny day. The clock had struck eight, and I was just going out to chain up the dogs again, when I heard a sudden whisking of petticoats on the stairs behind me.

I turned about, and there was Penelope, flying down after me like mad. "Father!" she screamed, "come upstairs, for God's sake! *The Diamond is gone!*"

This is a Good Book

"Are you out of your mind?" I asked her.

"Gone!" says Penelope. "Gone, nobody knows how! Come up and see."

She dragged me after her into our young lady's sitting-room, which opened into her bedroom. There, on the threshold of her bedroom door, stood Miss Rachel, almost as white in the face as the white dressing-gown that clothed her. There also stood the two doors of the Indian cabinet, wide open. One of the drawers inside was pulled out as far as it would go.

"Look!" says Penelope. "I myself saw Miss Rachel put the Diamond into that drawer last night."

I went to the cabinet. The drawer was empty.

"Is this true, miss?" I asked.

With a look that was not like herself, with a voice that was not like her own, Miss Rachel answered as my daughter had answered: "The Diamond is gone!"

Having said those words, she withdrew into her bedroom, and shut and locked the door.

Before we knew which way to turn next, my lady came in, hearing my voice in her daughter's sitting-room, and wondering what had happened. The news of the loss of the Diamond seemed to petrify her. She went straight to Miss Rachel's bedroom, and insisted on being admitted. Miss Rachel let her in.

The alarm, running through the house like fire, caught the two gentlemen next.

Mr. Godfrey was the first to come out of his room. All he did when he heard what had happened was to hold up his hands in a state of bewilderment, which didn't say much for his natural strength of mind. Mr. Franklin, whose clear head I had confidently counted on to advise us, seemed to be as helpless as his cousin when he heard the news in his turn. For a wonder, he had had a good night's rest

at last ; and the unaccustomed luxury of sleep had, as he said himself, apparently stupefied him. However, when he had swallowed his cup of coffee—which he always took, on the foreign plan, some hours before he ate any breakfast —his brains brightened ; the clear-headed side of him turned up, and he took the matter in hand, resolutely and cleverly, much as follows :

He first sent for the servants, and told them to leave all the lower doors and windows (with the exception of the front door, which I had opened) exactly as they had been left when we locked up overnight. He next proposed to his cousin and to me to make quite sure, before we took any further steps, that the Diamond had not accidentally dropped somewhere out of sight—say at the back of the cabinet, or down behind the table on which the cabinet stood. Having searched in both places, and found nothing —having also questioned Penelope, and discovered from her no more than the little she had already told me—Mr. Franklin suggested next extending our inquiries to Miss Rachel, and sent Penelope to knock at her bedroom door.

My lady answered the knock, and closed the door behind her. The moment after we heard it locked inside by Miss Rachel. My mistress came out among us, looking sorely puzzled and distressed. " The loss of the Diamond seems to have quite overwhelmed Rachel," she said, in reply to Mr. Franklin. " She shrinks, in the strangest manner, from speaking of it, even to *me*. It is impossible you can see her for the present."

Having added to our perplexities by this account of Miss Rachel, my lady, after a little effort, recovered her usual composure, and acted with her usual decision.

" I suppose there is no help for it," she said quietly. " I suppose I have no alternative but to send for the police."

Mr. Franklin galloped off, and a little before eleven he came back.

"Well," says my lady, "are the police coming?"

"Yes," says Mr, Franklin; "they said they would follow me in a fly. Superintendent Seegrave, of your local police force, and two of his men. A mere form! The case is hopeless."

"What! have the Indians escaped, sir?" I asked.

"The poor ill-used Indians have been most unjustly put in prison," says Mr. Franklin. "They are as innocent as the babe unborn. My idea that one of them was hidden in the house has ended, like all the rest of my ideas, in smoke. It's been proved," says Mr. Franklin, dwelling with great relish on his own incapacity, "to be simply impossible."

After astonishing us by announcing this totally new turn in the matter of the Moonstone, our young gentleman, at his aunt's request, took a seat, and explained himself.

He had put the whole case plainly before the magistrate at Frizinghall, and the magistrate had at once sent for the police. The first inquiries instituted about the Indians showed that they had not so much as attempted to leave the town. Further questions addressed to the police, proved that all three had been seen returning to Frizinghall with their boy, on the previous night between ten and eleven—which (regard being had to hours and distances) also proved that they had walked straight back after performing on our terrace. Later still, at midnight, the police, having occasion to search the common lodging-house where they lived, had seen them all three again, and their little boy with them as usual. Soon after midnight I myself had safely shut up the house. Plainer evidence than this, in favour of the Indians, there could not well be. The magistrate said there was not even a case of suspicion against

them so far. But, as it was just possible, when the police came to investigate the matter, that discoveries affecting the jugglers might be made, he would contrive, by committing them as rogues and vagabonds, to keep them at our disposal, under lock and key, for a week. They had ignorantly done something (I forget what) in the town, which barely brought them within the operation of the law. Every human institution will stretch a little, if you only pull it the right way. The worthy magistrate was an old friend of my lady's, and the Indians were " committed " for a week, as soon as the court opened that morning.

Such was Mr. Franklin's narrative of events at Frizinghall.

Ten minutes later, to our infinite relief, Superintendent Seegrave arrived at the house.

For a family in our situation, the Superintendent of the Frizinghall police was the most comforting officer you could wish to see. Mr. Seegrave was tall and portly, and military in his manners. He had a fine commanding voice, and a mighty resolute eye, and a grand frock-coat which buttoned beautifully up to his leather stock. " I'm the man you want ! " was written all over his face.

He began by going round the premises, outside and in, the result of that investigation proving to him that no thieves had broken in upon us from outside, and that the robbery, consequently, must have been committed by some person in the house. I leave you to imagine the state the servants were in when this official announcement first reached their ears. The Superintendent decided to begin by examining the boudoir, and, that done, to examine the servants next. At the same time, he posted one of his men on the staircase which led to the servants' bedrooms, with instructions to let nobody in the house pass him, till further orders.

At this latter proceeding, the weaker half of the human family went distracted on the spot. They bounced out of their corners, whisked upstairs in a body to Miss Rachel's room, burst in on Superintendent Seegrave, and, all looking equally guilty, summoned him to say which of them he suspected, at once.

Mr. Superintendent proved equal to the occasion; he looked at them with his resolute eye, and he cowed them with his military voice.

"Now then, you women, go downstairs again, every one of you; I won't have you here. Look!" says Mr. Superintendent, suddenly pointing to a little smear of the decorative painting on Miss Rachel's door, at the outer edge, just under the lock. "Look what mischief the petticoats of some of you have done already. Clear out! clear out!"

Rosanna Spearman, who was nearest to him, and nearest to the little smear on the door, set the example of obedience, and slipped off instantly to her work. The rest followed her out.

The Superintendent finished his examination of the room, and, making nothing of it, asked me who had first discovered the robbery.

My daughter had first discovered it. My daughter was sent for and questioned.

The questions and answers went swimmingly, and ended in nothing worth mentioning. My daughter had seen Miss Rachel put the Diamond in the drawer of the cabinet the last thing at night. She had gone in with Miss Rachel's cup of tea at eight the next morning, and had found the drawer open and empty. Upon that, she had alarmed the house—and there was an end of Penelope's evidence.

Mr. Superintendent next asked to see Miss Rachel

herself. Penelope mentioned his request through the door. The answer reached us by the same road : " I have nothing to tell the policeman—I can't see anybody." Our experienced officer looked equally surprised and offended when he heard that reply. I told him my young lady was ill, and begged him to wait a little and see her later. We thereupon went downstairs again, and were met by Mr. Godfrey and Mr. Franklin crossing the hall.

The two gentlemen, being inmates of the house, were summoned to say if they could throw any light on the matter. Neither of them knew anything about it. Had they heard any suspicious noises during the previous night? They had heard nothing but the pattering of the rain. Had I, lying awake longer than either of them, heard nothing either? Nothing! Released from examination, Mr. Franklin, still sticking to the helpless view of our difficulty, whispered to me : " That man will be of no earthly use to us. Superintendent Seegrave is an ass." Released in his turn Mr. Godfrey whispered to me : " Evidently a most competent person. I have the greatest faith in him ! "

The last step in the investigation brought matters to a crisis. The officer had an interview (at which I was present) with my lady. After informing her that the Diamond must have been taken by somebody in the house, he requested permission for himself and his men to search the servants' rooms and boxes on the spot. My good mistress, like the generous high-bred woman she was, refused to let us be treated like thieves. " I will never consent to make such a return as that," she said, " for all I owe to the faithful servants who are employed in my house."

Mr. Superintendent made his bow, with a look in my direction, which said plainly, " Why employ me, if you are to tie my hands in this way? " As head of the servants, I

felt directly that we were bound, in justice to all parties, not to profit by our mistress's generosity. "We gratefully thank your ladyship," I said; "but we ask permission to do what is right in this matter, by giving up our keys. When Gabriel Betteredge sets the example," says I, stopping Superintendent Seegrave at the door, "the rest of the servants will follow, I promise you. There are my keys to begin with!" My lady took me by the hand, and thanked me with tears in her eyes. Lord! what would I not have given, at that moment, for the privilege of knocking Superintendent Seegrave down!

As I had promised for them, the other servants followed my lead, sorely against the grain, of course, but all taking the view that I took. The women were a sight to see while the police-officers were rummaging among their things. The cook looked as if she could grill Mr. Superintendent alive on a furnace, and the other women looked as if they could eat him when he was done.

The search over, and no Diamond or sign of a Diamond being found, of course, anywhere, Superintendent Seegrave retired to my little room to consider with himself what he was to do next. He and his men had now been hours in the house, and had not advanced us one inch towards a discovery of how the Moonstone had been taken, or of whom we were to suspect as the thief.

Mr. Franklin had volunteered to take the Superintendent back to the town. Mr. Godfrey, still devoutly believing in Mr. Seegrave, and greatly interested in witnessing the examination of the Indians, had begged leave to accompany the officer to Frizinghall. One of the two inferior policemen who had come with the Superintendent, was to be left at the house, in case anything happened. The other was to go back with the Superintendent to the town. So the four places in the pony-chaise were just filled.

Half an hour before dinner-time the two gentlemen came back from Frizinghall, having arranged with Superintendent Seegrave that he was to return to us the next day. They had called on Mr. Murthwaite, the Indian traveller, at his present residence near the town. At Mr. Franklin's request he had kindly given them the benefit of his knowledge of the language in dealing with those two, out of the three, Indians who knew nothing of English. The examination, conducted carefully and at great length, had ended in nothing, not the shadow of a reason being discovered for suspecting the jugglers of having tampered with any of our servants. On reaching that conclusion, Mr. Franklin had despatched a telegram to his father (who knew the Chief Commissioner of the Police) asking if he could lay his hand on the right man to solve the mystery of the Diamond, and there the matter rested till to-morrow came.

CHAPTER X

The Thursday night passed, and nothing happened. With the Friday morning came two pieces of news.

Item the first: the baker's man declared he had met Rosanna Spearman on the previous afternoon, with a thick veil on, walking towards Frizinghall by the footpath way over the moor. It seemed strange that anybody should be mistaken about Rosanna, whose shoulder marked her out pretty plainly, poor thing—but mistaken the man must have been; for Rosanna had been all the Thursday afternoon ill upstairs in her room.

Item the second came through the postman. Worthy Mr. Candy had said one more of his many unlucky things, when he drove off in the rain on the birthday night, and told me that a doctor's skin was waterproof. In spite of his skin, the wet had got through him. He had caught a

chill that night, and was now down with a fever. The last accounts brought by the postman represented him to be light-headed—talking nonsense as glibly, poor man, in his delirium as he often talked it in his sober senses. We were all sorry for the little doctor ; but Mr. Franklin appeared to regret his illness chiefly on Miss Rachel's account. From what he said to my lady, while I was in the room at breakfast-time, he appeared to think that Miss Rachel—if the suspense about the Moonstone was not soon set at rest—might stand in urgent need of the best medical advice at our disposal.

Breakfast had not been over long when a telegram from Mr. Blake, the elder, arrived in answer to his son. It informed us that he had laid hands (by help of his friend, the Commissioner) on the right man to help us. The name of him was Sergeant Cuff ; and the arrival of him from London might be expected by the morning train.

When the time came for the Sergeant's arrival, I went down to the gate to look out for him.

A fly from the railway drove up as I reached the lodge ; and out got a grizzled, elderly man, so miserably lean that he looked as if he had not got an ounce of flesh on his bones in any part of him. He was dressed all in decent black, with a white cravat round his neck. His face was as sharp as a hatchet, and the skin of it was as yellow and dry and withered as an autumn leaf. His eyes, of a steely light grey, had a very disconcerting trick, when they encountered your eyes, of looking as if they expected something more from you than you were aware of yourself. His walk was soft ; his voice was melancholy ; his long lanky fingers were hooked like claws. He might have been a parson, or an undertaker—or anything else you like, except what he really was. A more complete opposite to Superintendent Seegrave than Sergeant Cuff, and a less comforting officer

to look at, for a family in distress, I defy you to discover, search where you may.

"Is this Lady Verinder's?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"I am Sergeant Cuff."

"This way, sir, if you please."

On our road to the house I mentioned my name and position in the family, to satisfy him that he might speak to me about the business on which my lady was to employ him. Not a word did he say about the business, however, for all that. We reached the house in the temper of two strange dogs coupled up together for the first time in their lives by the same chain.

Asking for my lady, and hearing that she was in one of the conservatories, we went round to the gardens at the back, and sent a servant to seek her.

The Sergeant's appearance, or the Sergeant's errand—one or both— seemed to cause my lady some little embarrassment. She was, for the first time in all my experience of her, at a loss what to say at an interview with a stranger. Sergeant Cuff put her at ease directly. He asked if any other person had been employed about the robbery before we sent for him; and hearing that another person had been called in, and was now in the house, begged leave to speak to him before anything else was done.

Why Superintendent Seegrave should have appeared to be several sizes smaller than life, on being presented to Sergeant Cuff, I can't undertake to explain. I can only state the fact. They retired together; and remained a weary long time shut up from all mortal intrusion. When they came out, Mr. Superintendent was excited, and Mr. Sergeant was yawning.

"The Sergeant wishes to see Miss Verinder's sitting-room," says Mr. Seegrave, addressing me with great pomp

and eagerness. "The Sergeant may have some questions to ask. Attend the Sergeant, if you please!"

While I was being ordered about in this way, I looked at the great Cuff. The great Cuff, on his side, looked at Superintendent Seegrave in that quietly expecting way which I have already noticed.

I led the way upstairs. The Sergeant went softly all over the Indian cabinet and all round the boudoir; asking questions (occasionally only of Mr. Superintendent and continually of me), the drift of which I believe to have been equally unintelligible to both of us. In due time his course brought him to the door, and put him face to face with the decorative painting that you know of. He laid one lean inquiring finger on the small smear, just under the lock, which Superintendent Seegrave had already noticed when he reproved the women-servants for all crowding together into the room.

"That's a pity," says Sergeant Cuff. "How did it happen?"

He put the question to me. I answered that the women-servants had crowded into the room on the previous morning, and that some of their petticoats had done the mischief. "Superintendent Seegrave ordered them out, sir," I added, "before they did any more harm."

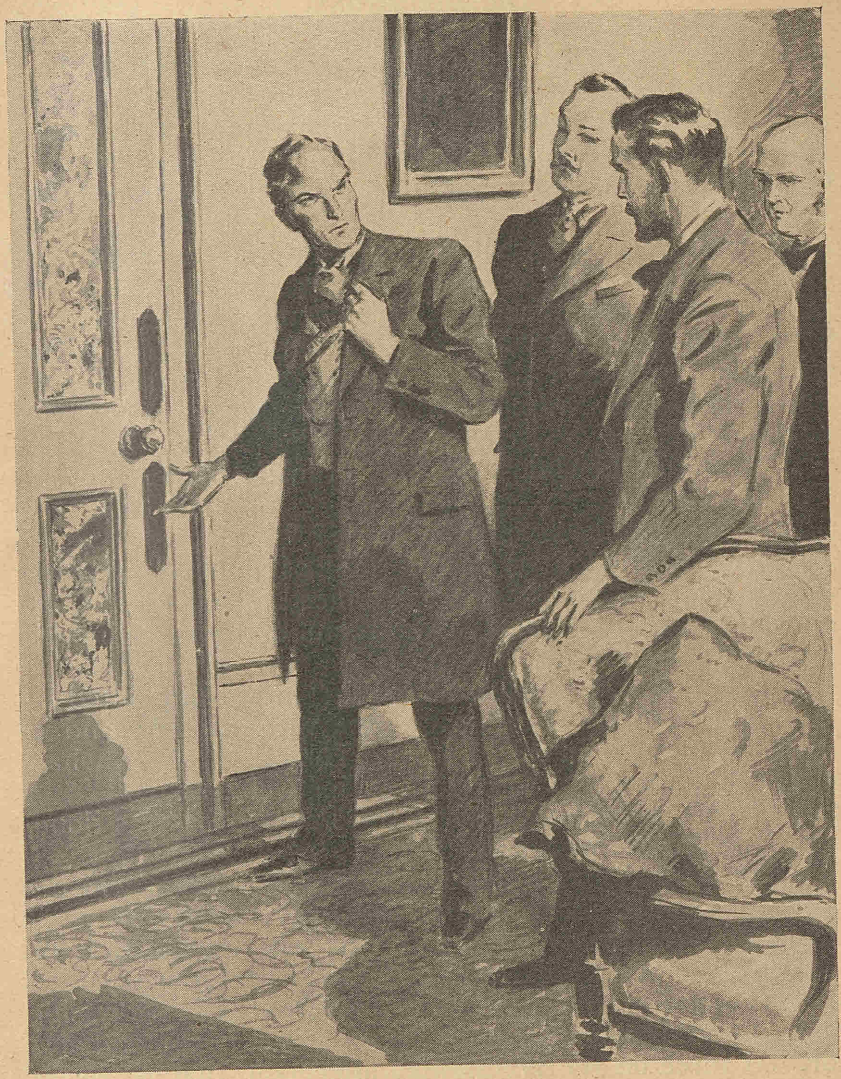
"Right!" says Mr. Superintendent in his military way. "I ordered them out. The petticoats did it, Sergeant—the petticoats did it."

"Did you notice which petticoat did it?" asked Sergeant Cuff, still addressing himself, not to his brother-officer, but to me.

"No, sir."

He turned to Superintendent Seegrave upon that, and said, "*You* noticed, I suppose?"

Mr. Superintendent looked a little taken aback; but he



'"Do you remember when the smeared bit was done, sir?"' asked the Sergeant.'—*Page* 58

made the best of it. "I can't charge my memory, Sergeant," he said, "a mere trifle—a mere trifle."

Mr. Superintendent—taking his set-down rather sulkily—asked if he should summon the women. Sergeant Cuff, after considering a minute, sighed, and shook his head.

"No," he said, "we'll take the matter of the paint first. It's a question of Yes or No with the paint—which is short. It's a question of petticoats with the women—which is long. What o'clock was it when the servants were in this room yesterday morning? Eleven o'clock—eh? Is there anybody in the house who knows whether that paint was wet or dry at eleven yesterday morning?"

"Her ladyship's nephew, Mr. Franklin Blake, knows," I said.

"Is the gentleman in the house?"

Mr. Franklin was as close at hand as could be—waiting for his first chance of being introduced to the great Cuff. In half a minute he was in the room, and was giving his evidence as follows:

"That door, Sergeant," he said, "has been painted by Miss Verinder under my inspection, with my help, and in a vehicle of my own composition. The vehicle dries, whatever colours may be used with it, in twelve hours."

"Do you remember when the smeared bit was done, sir?" asked the Sergeant.

"Perfectly," answered Mr. Franklin. "That was the last morsel of the door to be finished. We wanted to get it done on Wednesday last—and I myself completed it by three in the afternoon, or soon after."

"To-day is Friday," said Sergeant Cuff, addressing himself to Superintendent Seegrave. "Let us reckon back, sir. At three on the Wednesday afternoon, that bit of the painting was completed. The vehicle dried it in twelve

hours—that is to say, dried it by three o'clock on Thursday morning. At eleven on Thursday morning you held your inquiry here. Take three from eleven, and eight remains. That paint had been *eight hours dry*, Mr. Superintendent, when you supposed that the women-servants' petticoats smeared it."

"Who was the last person in the room, the last thing on Wednesday night?"

"Miss Rachel, I suppose, sir," I replied.

Mr. Franklin struck in there, "Or possibly your daughter, Betteredge." He turned to Sergeant Cuff, and explained that my daughter was Miss Verinder's maid.

"Mr. Betteredge, ask your daughter to step up."

Penelope examined: Took a lively interest in the painting on the door, having helped to mix the colours. Noticed the bit of work under the lock, because it was the last bit done. Had seen it, some hours afterwards, without a smear. Had left it, as late as twelve at night, without a smear. Had, at that hour, wished her young lady good-night in the bedroom; had heard the clock strike in the boudoir; had her hand at the time on the handle of the painted door; knew the paint was wet (having helped to mix the colours, as aforesaid); took particular pains not to touch it; could swear that she held up the skirts of her dress, and that there was no smear on the paint then; could *not* swear that her dress mightn't have touched it accidentally in going out; remembered the dress she had on, because it was new, a present from Miss Rachel; her father remembered, and could speak to it, too; could, and would, and did fetch it; dress recognized by her father as the dress she wore that night; skirts examined, a long job from the size of them; not the ghost of a paint-stain discovered anywhere. End of Penelope's evidence—and very pretty and convincing too. Signed, Gabriel Betteredge.

Having brought his investigation to this point, Sergeant Cuff discovered that such a person as Superintendent Seegrave was still left in the room, upon which he summed up the proceedings for his brother-officer's benefit, as follows :

" This trifle of yours, Mr. Superintendent," says the Sergeant, pointing to the place on the door, " has grown a little in importance since you noticed it last. At the present stage of the inquiry there are, as I take it, three discoveries to make, starting from that smear. Find out (first) whether there is any article of dress in this house with the smear of the paint on it. Find out (second) who that dress belongs to. Find out (third) how the person can account for having been in this room, and smeared the paint, between midnight and three in the morning. If the person can't satisfy you, you haven't far to look for the hand that has got the Diamond. I'll work this by myself, if you please, and detain you no longer from your regular business in the town. You have got one of your men here, I see. Leave him here at my disposal, in case I want him—and allow me to wish you good-morning."

Addressing me, he asked for ten minutes' conversation with my mistress, at her ladyship's earliest convenience.

Leaving the room with this message, I heard Mr. Franklin ask the Sergeant a question, and stopped to hear the answer also at the threshold of the door.

" Can you guess yet," inquired Mr. Franklin, " who has stolen the Diamond ? "

" *Nobody has stolen the Diamond,*" answered Sergeant Cuff.

We both started at the extraordinary view of the case, and both earnestly begged him to tell us what he meant.

" Wait a little," said the Sergeant. " The pieces of the puzzle are not all put together yet."

CHAPTER XI

I found my lady in her own sitting-room. She started and looked annoyed when I mentioned that Sergeant Cuff wished to speak to her.

"If I must see him, I must," she said. "But I can't prevail on myself to see him alone. Bring him in, Gabriel, and stay here as long as he stays."

Sergeant Cuff and I went straight to my mistress's room.

"I have already formed an opinion on this case," says Sergeant Cuff, "which I beg your ladyship's permission to keep to myself for the present. My business now is to mention what I have discovered upstairs in Miss Verinder's sitting-room, and what I have decided (with your ladyship's leave) on doing next."

He then went into the matter of the smear on the paint, and stated the conclusions he drew from it—just as he had stated them (only with greater respect of language) to Superintendent Seegrave. "One thing," he said, in conclusion, "is certain. The Diamond is missing out of the drawer in the cabinet. Another thing is next to certain. The marks from the smear of the door must be on some article of dress belonging to somebody in this house. We must discover that article of dress before we go a step further."

The servants and their wardrobes were examined. Sergeant Cuff's suspicions of Rosanna were aroused by something that he found out at the examination of the servants. Mr. Godfrey, who was leaving for London that morning, had his luggage examined. Mr. Franklin agreed to his being searched too, but Rachel flatly refused to have her wardrobe examined. Sergeant Cuff's suspicions of Rosanna were deepened by learning that Rosanna had been seen on the Thursday afternoon on the footway to

Frizinghall, when she was supposed to be ill in her room.

That same evening, Sergeant Cuff and I set forth for the Shivering Sand.

The Sergeant remained silent, thinking his own thoughts, till we entered the plantation of firs which led to the quicksand. There he roused himself, like a man whose mind was made up, and spoke to me again.

"Mr. Betteredge," he said, "Rosanna Spearman is not in the slightest danger of getting into trouble—no, not if I fix her with being concerned in the disappearance of the Diamond, on evidence which is as plain as the nose on your face!"

"Do you mean that my lady won't prosecute?" I asked.

"I mean that your lady *can't* prosecute," said the Sergeant. "Rosanna Spearman is simply an instrument in the hands of another person, and Rosanna Spearman will be held harmless for that other person's sake."

He spoke like a man in earnest—there was no denying that. Still, I felt something stirring uneasily against him in my mind. "Can't you give that other person a name?" I said.

"Can't you, Mr. Betteredge?"

"No."

"This is a miserable world," says the Sergeant. "Human life, Mr. Betteredge, is a sort of target—misfortune is always firing at it, and always hitting the mark. Surely you know what Rosanna was about yesterday, after she was taken ill? You can't guess? Oh dear me, it's as plain as that strip of light there at the end of the trees. At eleven on Thursday morning Superintendent Seegrave (who is a mass of human infirmity) points out to all the women servants the smear on the door. Rosanna has her own reasons for suspecting her own things; she takes the first opportunity of getting to her room, finds the paint-

stain on her nightgown, shams ill, and slips away to the town, gets the materials for making a new nightgown, makes it alone in her room on the Thursday night, lights a fire (not to destroy it ; two of her fellow-servants are prying outside her door, and she knows better than to make a smell of burning, and to have a lot of tinder to get rid of)—lights a fire, I say, to dry and iron the substitute nightgown after wringing it out, keeps the stained garment hidden (probably *on* her), and is at this moment occupied in making away with it, in some convenient place, on that lonely bit of beach ahead of us. I have traced her this evening to your fishing village, and to one particular cottage, which we may possibly have to visit before we go back. She stopped in the cottage for some time, and she came out with (as I believe) something hidden under her cloak. A cloak (on a woman's back) is an emblem of charity—it covers a multitude of sins. I saw her set off northwards along the coast after leaving the cottage. Is your sea-shore here considered a fine specimen of marine landscape, Mr. Betteredge ? "

I answered, " Yes," as shortly as might be.

We called at the cottage which Rosanna had visited and learned from Mrs. Yolland, who lived there with her lame daughter, Lucy, that Rosanna had purchased from her a tin box and some chains to tie round it. She had told them she needed them for travelling as she was leaving her present job.

We also discovered Rosanna's footprints on the sands.

When we got back the servants were at supper. The first person we saw in the outer yard was the policeman whom Superintendent Seegrave had left at the Sergeant's disposal. The Sergeant asked if Rosanna Spearman had returned. Yes. When ? Nearly an hour since. What had she done ? She had gone upstairs to take off her bonnet and cloak—and she was now at supper with the rest.

CHAPTER XIII

We were told that my lady wanted us, had been wanting us for an hour.

We found my lady with no light in the room but the reading-lamp. The shade was screwed down so as to overshadow her face. Instead of looking up at us in her usual straightforward way, she sat close to the table, and kept her eyes fixed obstinately on an open book.

" Officer," she said, " is it important to the inquiry you are conducting to know beforehand if any person now in this house wishes to leave it ? "

" Most important, my lady."

" I have to tell you, then, that Miss Verinder proposes going to stay with her aunt, Mrs. Ablewhite, of Frizinghall. She has arranged to leave us the first thing to-morrow morning."

Sergeant Cuff looked at me. I made a step forward to speak to my mistress—and, feeling my heart fail me (if I must own it), took a step back again, and said nothing.

" May I ask your ladyship *when* Miss Verinder informed you that she was going to her aunt's ? " inquired the Sergeant.

" About an hour since," answered my mistress.

" I have no claim, my lady," says the Sergeant, " to control Miss Verinder's actions. All I can ask you to do is to put off her departure, if possible, till later in the day. I must go to Frizinghall myself to-morrow morning—and I shall be back by two o'clock, if not before. If Miss Verinder can be kept here till that time, I should wish to say two words to her—unexpectedly—before she goes."

My lady directed me to give the coachman her orders that the carriage was not to come for Miss Rachel until two o'clock.

"Tell me the truth, Sergeant," I said later in my little sitting-room. "What do you suspect? It's no kindness to hide it from me now."

"I don't suspect," said Sergeant Cuff. "I know."

"Do you mean to tell me, in plain English," I said, "that Miss Rachel has stolen her own Diamond?"

"Yes," says the Sergeant; "that is what I mean to tell you, in so many words. Miss Verinder has been in secret possession of the Moonstone from first to last; and she has taken Rosanna Spearman into her confidence, because she has calculated on our suspecting Rosanna Spearman of the theft. There is the whole case in a nutshell."

"Give me your reasons!" That was all I could say to him.

"You shall hear my reasons to-morrow," said the Sergeant.

But on the morrow Miss Verinder departed without saying anything to Sergeant Cuff, nor would she say good-bye to Mr. Franklin. Great consternation was also caused by the disappearance of Rosanna. Sergeant Cuff told my lady of his suspicions concerning her daughter and that same day she rode off to Frizinghall to see Rachel and exact some information from her.

CHAPTER XIV

The pony-chaise returned a good half-hour before I had ventured to expect it. My lady had decided to remain for the present at her sister's house. The groom brought two letters from his mistress: one addressed to Mr. Franklin, and the other to me.

Mr. Franklin's letter I sent to him in the library—into which refuge his driftings had now taken him for the second time. My own letter I read in my own room. A cheque,

which dropped out when I opened it, informed me (before I had mastered the contents) that Sergeant Cuff's dismissal from the inquiry after the Moonstone was now a settled thing.

I sent to the conservatory to say that I wished to speak to the Sergeant directly. He appeared, with his mind full. "Ah!" he said in a weary way, "you have heard from her ladyship. Have I anything to do with it, Mr. Betteredge?"

"You shall judge for yourself, Sergeant." I thereupon read him the letter (with my best emphasis and discretion), in the following words:

"My good Gabriel,—I request that you will inform Sergeant Cuff that I have performed the promise I made to him, with this result, so far as Rosanna Spearman is concerned. Miss Verinder solemnly declares that she has never spoken a word in private to Rosanna since that unhappy woman first entered my house. They never met even accidentally on the night when the Diamond was lost, and no communication of any sort whatever took place between them from the Thursday morning when the alarm was first raised in the house to this present Saturday afternoon, when Miss Verinder left us. After telling my daughter suddenly, and in so many words, of Rosanna Spearman's disappearance—this is what has come of it.

"Having appealed to Miss Verinder in the manner which the officer thought most desirable, I spoke to her next in the manner which I myself thought most likely to impress her. On two different occasions, before my daughter left my roof, I privately warned her that she was exposing herself to suspicion of the most unendurable and most degrading kind. I have now told her, in the plainest terms, that my apprehensions have been realized.

"Her answer to this, on her own solemn affirmation, is as plain as words can be. In the first place, she owes no

money privately to any living creature. In the second place, the Diamond is not now, and never has been, in her possession since she put it into her cabinet on Wednesday night.

"The confidence which my daughter has placed in me goes no further than this. She maintains an obstinate silence when I ask her if she can explain the disappearance of the Diamond. She refuses, with tears, when I appeal to her to speak out for my sake. 'The day will come when you will know why I am careless about being suspected, and why I am silent even to *you*. I have done much to make my mother pity me—nothing to make my mother blush for me.' Those are my daughter's own words.

"After what has passed between the officer and me, I think—stranger as he is—that he should be made acquainted with what Miss Verinder has said, as well as you. Read my letter to him, and then place in his hands the cheque which I enclose. In resigning all further claim on his services, I have only to say that I am convinced of his honesty and his intelligence; but I am more firmly persuaded than ever that the circumstances in this case have fatally misled him."

There the letter ended. Before presenting the cheque, I asked Sergeant Cuff if he had any remark to make.

"It's no part of my duty, Mr. Betteredge," he answered, "to make remarks on a case when I have done with it."

I tossed the cheque across the table to him. "Do you believe in *that* part of her ladyship's letter?" I said indignantly.

The Sergeant looked at the cheque, and lifted up his dismal eyebrows in acknowledgment of her ladyship's liberality.

"This is such a generous estimate of the value of my time," he said, "that I feel bound to make some return

for it. I'll bear in mind the amount in this cheque, Mr. Betteredge, when the occasion comes round for remembering it."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Her ladyship has smoothed matters over for the present very cleverly," said the Sergeant. "But *this* family scandal is of the sort that bursts up again when you least expect it. We shall have more detective-business on our hands, sir, before the Moonstone is many months older."

"I am quite satisfied myself," I said. "But never mind that! Go on as if I was still open to conviction. You think Miss Rachel is not to be believed on her word; and you say we shall hear of the Moonstone again. Back your opinion, Sergeant," I concluded, in an airy way. "Back your opinion."

"First," said the Sergeant, "you will hear something from the Yollands—when the postman delivers Rosanna's letter at Cobb's Hole, on Monday next." (Nancy, the kitchen-maid, had heard Rosanna ask the butcher's man who had been delivering some meat at the back door, to post a letter.)

If he had thrown a bucket of cold water over me, I doubt if I could have felt it much more unpleasantly than I felt those words. Miss Rachel's assertion of her innocence had left Rosanna's conduct—the making of the new nightgown, the hiding of the smeared nightgown, and all the rest of it—entirely without explanation. And this had never occurred to me till Sergeant Cuff forced it on my mind all in a moment!

"In the second place," proceeded the Sergeant, "you will hear of the three Indians again. You will hear of them in the neighbourhood if Miss Rachel remains in the neighbourhood. You will hear of them in London if Miss Rachel goes to London."

Having lost all interest in the three jugglers, and having thoroughly convinced myself of my young lady's innocence, I took this second prophecy easily enough. " So much for two of the three things that are going to happen," I said. " Now for the third! "

" Third, and last," said Sergeant Cuff, " you will, sooner or later, hear something of that money-lender in London, whom I have taken the liberty of mentioning already. Give me your pocket-book, and I'll make a note for you of his name and address—so that there may be no mistake about it if the thing really happens."

He wrote accordingly on a blank leaf: " Mr. Septimus Luker, Middlesex Place, Lambeth, London."

" There," he said, pointing to the address ," are the last words on the subject of the Moonstone which I shall trouble you with for the present. Time will show whether I am right or wrong."

CHAPTER XV

I had kept the pony-chaise ready in case Mr. Franklin persisted in leaving us by the train that night as he had said he would. The appearance of the luggage, followed downstairs by Mr. Franklin himself, informed me plainly enough that he had held firm to a resolution for once in his life.

" So you have really made up your mind, sir ? " I said, as we met in the hall. " Why not wait a day or two longer, and give Miss Rachel another chance ? "

Instead of replying to me in words, he put the letter which her ladyship had addressed to him into my hand. The greater part of it said over again what had been said already in the other communication received by me. But there was a bit about Miss Rachel added at the end, which will

account for the steadiness of Mr. Franklin's determination, if it accounts for nothing else.

"You will wonder, I dare say", (her ladyship wrote), "at my allowing my own daughter to keep me perfectly in the dark. A Diamond worth twenty thousand pounds has been lost—and I am left to infer that the mystery of its disappearance is no mystery to Rachel, and that some incomprehensible obligation of silence has been laid on her by some person or persons utterly unknown to me, with some object in view at which I cannot even guess. Is it conceivable that I should allow myself to be trifled with in this way? It is quite conceivable in Rachel's present state. She is in a condition of nervous agitation pitiable to see. I dare not approach the subject of the Moonstone again until time has done something to quiet her. To this end I have not hesitated to dismiss the police-officer.

"It is impossible for me to excuse the perversity that holds you responsible for consequences which neither you nor I could imagine or foresee. She is not to be reasoned with—she can only be pitied. I am grieved to have to say it, but, for the present, you and Rachel are better apart. The only advice I can offer you is, to give her time."

I handed the letter back, sincerely sorry for Mr. Franklin, for I knew how fond he was of my young lady; and I saw that her mother's account of her had cut him to the heart.

On the next day (Sunday) the close carriage, which had been kept at Mr. Ablewhite's, came back to us empty. The coachman brought a message for me, and written instructions for my lady's own maid, and for Penelope.

The message informed me that my mistress had determined to take Miss Rachel to her house in London on the Monday. The written instructions informed the two maids of the clothing that was wanted, and directed them to meet

their mistresses in town at a given hour. Most of the other servants were to follow.

How the Monday affected the rest of the household I don't know. The Monday gave *me* a good shake up. The first of Sergeant Cuff's prophecies of what was to happen —namely, that I should hear from the Yollands—came true on that day.

The fisherman's daughter came, very angry and in tears. She had received a letter from Rosanna bidding her farewell, and enclosed with it was a letter to Mr. Franklin, which was to be given to Mr. Franklin himself.

But Mr. Franklin had already started for foreign parts. To what particular place he was bound nobody (himself included) could presume to guess.

So Lucy Yolland kept the letter and at once stopped any further progress of mine on the way to discovery. Penelope's belief was that her fellow-servant had destroyed herself through unrequited love for Mr. Franklin Blake, and there the matter rested.

Saturday, the last day of the week, is also the last day in my narrative.

The morning's post brought me a surprise in the shape of a London newspaper. The handwriting on the direction puzzled me. I compared it with the money-lender's name and address as recorded in my pocket-book, and identified it at once as the writing of Sergeant Cuff.

Looking through the paper eagerly enough, after this discovery, I found an ink-mark drawn round one of the police reports. Here it is, at your service. Read it as I read it, and you will set the right value on the Sergeant's polite attention in sending me the news of the day.

"LAMBETH—Shortly before the closing of the court, Mr. Septimus Luker, the well-known dealer in ancient gems, carvings, intagli, etc., etc., applied to the sitting magistrate

for advice. The applicant stated that he had been annoyed, at intervals throughout the day, by the proceedings of some of those strolling Indians who infest the streets. The persons complained of were three in number. After having been sent away by the police, they had returned again and again, and had attempted to enter the house on the pretence of asking for charity. Warned off in the front, they had been discovered again at the back of the premises. Besides the annoyance complained of, Mr. Luker expressed himself as being under some apprehension that robbery might be contemplated. His collection contained many unique gems, both classical and Oriental, of the highest value. He had only the day before been compelled to dismiss a skilled workman in ivory carving from his employment (a native of India, as we understood), on suspicion of attempted theft; and he felt by no means sure that this man and the street jugglers of whom he complained might not be acting in concert. In reply to the magistrate, Mr. Luker admitted that he had no evidence to produce of any attempt at robbery being in contemplation. He could speak positively to the annoyance and interruption caused by the Indians, but not to anything else. The magistrate remarked that if the annoyance were repeated, the applicant could summon the Indians to that court, where they might easily be dealt with under the act. As to the valuables in Mr. Luker's possession, Mr. Luker himself must take the best measures for their safe custody. He would do well perhaps to communicate with the police, and to adopt such additional precautions as their experience might suggest. The applicant thanked his worship, and withdrew."

After hearing from the Yollands on the Monday, I had now heard of the Indians, and of the money-lender, in the news from London—Miss Rachel herself, remember, being also in London at the time. You see, I put things at their

worst, even when they tell dead against my own view. If you desert me, and side with the Sergeant, on the evidence before you—if the only rational explanation you can see is, that Miss Rachel and Mr. Luker must have got together, and that the Moonstone must now be in pledge in the money-lender's house—I own I can't blame you for arriving at that conclusion. In the dark, I have brought you thus far. In the dark I am compelled to leave you, with my best respects.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRUTH (1848–1849)

NARRATIVE CONTRIBUTED BY FRANKLIN BLAKE

CHAPTER I

IN the spring of the year eighteen hundred and forty-nine I was wandering in the East, and had then recently altered the travelling plans which I had laid out some months before, and which I had communicated to my lawyer and my banker in London.

This change made it necessary for me to send one of my servants to obtain my letters and remittances from the English consul in a certain city, which was no longer included as one of my resting-places in my new travelling scheme. The man was to join me again at an appointed place and time. An accident, for which he was not responsible, delayed him on his errand. For a week I and my people waited, encamped on the borders of a desert. At the end of that time the missing man made his appearance, with the money and the letters, at the entrance of my tent.

"I am afraid I bring you bad news, sir," he said, and pointed to one of the letters, which had a mourning border round it, and the address on which was in the handwriting of Mr. Bruff.

It informed me that my father was dead, and that I was heir to his great fortune. The wealth which had thus fallen into my hands brought its responsibilities with it, and Mr. Bruff entreated me to lose no time in returning to England.

By daybreak the next morning I was on my way back to my own country.

The picture presented of me by my old friend Betteredge at the time of my departure from England is (as I think) a little overdrawn. But, I am bound to own that he has stated no more than the truth in representing me as wounded to the heart by Rachel's treatment, and as leaving England in the first keenness of suffering caused by the bitterest disappointment of my life.

On leaving England she was the last person in the world whose name I would have suffered to pass my lips. On returning to England she was the first person I inquired after when Mr. Bruff and I met again.

I was informed, of course, of all that had happened in my absence: that Rachel's mother was dead, that Rachel and Godfrey had become engaged, and that the engagement was broken off, Godfrey having discovered that Rachel would not be an heiress and Rachel being apprized by Bruff of this. I troubled him with no embarrassing questions on this delicate subject. It was relief enough to me, after the jealous disappointment caused by hearing that she had ever contemplated being Godfrey's wife, to know that reflection had convinced her of acting rashly, and that she had effected her own release from her marriage engagement. I also learned that Mr. Luker had deposited a valuable of great price (generally supposed to be the Moonstone) with his bankers, that the Indians were aware of this, that they knew also that the unknown person who had pledged the Moonstone would redeem it at the end of June, 1849.

Having heard the story of the past my next inquiries (still inquiries after Rachel!) advanced naturally to the present time. Where was she living now?

She was living under the care of a widowed sister of the late Sir John Verinder—one Mrs. Merridew—whom her mother's executors had requested to act as guardian, and

who had accepted the proposal. They were reported to me as getting on together admirably well, and as being now established for the season in Mrs. Merridew's house in Portland Place.

Half an hour after receiving this information, I was on my way to Portland Place—without having had the courage to own it to Mr. Bruff!

But Rachel would not see me! So that same day I went to Yorkshire.

Towards sunset that evening I stood again on the well-remembered terrace and looked once more at the peaceful old country house. The gardener was the first person whom I saw in the deserted grounds. He had left Betteredge an hour since sunning himself in the customary corner of the back yard. I knew it well; and I said I would go and seek him myself.

I walked round by the familiar paths and passages, and looked in at the open gate of the yard.

There he was—the dear old friend of the happy days that were never to come again—there he was in the old corner, on the old beehive chair, with his pipe in his mouth and his *Robinson Crusoe* on his lap, and his two friends, the dogs, dozing on either side of him!

My own eyes were full of tears. I was obliged to wait for a moment before I could trust myself to speak to him.

The next day I went with him to Cobb's Hole and Lucy Yolland gave me Rose Spearman's letter.

I broke the seal. The envelope contained a letter; and this, in its turn, contained a slip of paper. I read the letter first:

"SIR—If you are curious to know the meaning of my behaviour to you whilst you were staying in the house of my mistress, Lady Verinder, do what you are told to do in the memorandum enclosed with this—and do it without

any person being present to overlook you.—Your humble servant, ROSANNA SPEARMAN."

I turned to the slip of paper next. Here is the literal copy of it, word for word:

"Memorandum: To go to the Shivering Sand at the turn of the tide. To walk out on the South Spit, until I get the South Spit Beacon, and the flagstaff at the Coast-guard station above Cobb's Hole, in a line together. To lay down on the rocks a stick, or any straight thing to guide my hand, exactly in the line of the beacon and the flagstaff. To take care, in doing this, that one end of the stick shall be at the edge of the rocks, on the side of them which overlooks the quicksand. To feel along the stick among the seaweed (beginning from the end of the stick which points towards the beacon) for the chain. To run my hand along the chain, when found, until I come to the part of it which stretches over the edge of the rocks, down into the quicksand. *And then, to pull the chain.*"

Just as I had read the last words—underlined in the original—I heard the voice of Betteredge behind me. "I can't stand it any longer, Mr. Franklin. What does her letter say? For mercy's sake, sir, tell us, what does her letter say?"

I handed him the letter, and the memorandum. He read the first without appearing to be much interested in it. But the second—the memorandum—produced a strong impression on him.

"The Sergeant said it!" cried Betteredge. "From first to last, sir, the Sergeant said she had got a memorandum of the hiding-place. And here it is! It's the ebb now, sir, as anybody may see for themselves. How long will it be till the turn of the tide?" He looked up, and observed a lad at work, at some little distance from us, mending a net. "Tammie Bright!" he shouted at the top of his voice.

"I hear you!" Tammie shouted back.

"When's the turn of the tide?"

"In an hour's time."

We both looked at our watches.

"We can go round by the coast, Mr. Franklin," said Betteredge; "and get to the quicksand in that way, with plenty of time to spare. What do you say, sir?"

"Come along!"

With Betteredge's help, I soon stood in the right position to see the beacon and the Coast-guard flagstaff in a line together. Following the memorandum as our guide, we next laid my stick in the necessary direction as neatly as we could on the uneven surface of the rocks. And then we looked at our watches once more.

It wanted nearly twenty minutes yet of the turn of the tide. I suggested waiting through this interval on the beach, instead of on the wet and slippery surface of the rocks. Having reached the dry sand, I prepared to sit down; and, greatly to my surprise, Betteredge prepared to leave me.

"What are you going away for?" I asked.

"Look at the letter again, sir, and you will see."

A glance at the letter reminded me that I was charged, when I made my discovery, to make it alone.

The turn of the tide came before my cigar was finished. I saw the preliminary heaving of the Sand, and then the awful shiver that crept over its surface—as if some spirit of terror lived and moved and shuddered in the fathomless deeps beneath. I threw away my cigar, and went back again to the rocks.

My directions in the memorandum instructed me to feel along the line traced by the stick, beginning with the end which was nearest to the beacon.

I advanced, in this manner, more than half-way along

the stick without encountering anything but the edges of the rocks. An inch or two further on, however, my patience was rewarded. In a narrow little fissure, just within reach of my forefinger, I felt the chain. Attempting, next, to follow it, by touch, in the direction of the quicksand, I found my progress stopped by a thick growth of seaweed—which had fastened itself into the fissure, no doubt, in the time that had elapsed since Rosanna Spearman had chosen her hiding-place.

It was equally impossible to pull up the seaweed or to force my hand through it. After marking the spot indicated by the end of the stick which was placed nearest to the quicksand, I determined to pursue the search for the chain on a plan of my own. My idea was to "sound" immediately under the rocks, on the chance of recovering the lost trace of the chain at the point at which it entered the sand. I took up the stick, and knelt down on the brink of the South Spit.

In this position, my face was within a few feet of the surface of the quicksand. The sight of it so near me, still disturbed at intervals by its hideous shivering fit, shook my nerves for the moment. A horrible fancy that the dead woman might appear on the scene to assist my search—an unutterable dread of seeing her rise through the heaving surface of the sand and point to the place—forced itself into my mind, and turned me cold in the warm sunlight. I own I closed my eyes at the moment when the point of the stick first entered the quicksand.

The instant afterwards, before the stick could have been submerged more than a few inches, I was free from the hold of my own superstitious terror, and was throbbing with excitement from head to foot. Sounding blindfold, at my first attempt—at that first attempt I had sounded right! The stick struck the chain.

Taking a firm hold of the roots of the seaweed with my left hand, I laid myself down over the brink, and felt with my right hand under the overhanging edges of the rock. My right hand found the chain.

I drew it up without the slightest difficulty. And there was the japanned tin case fastened to the end of it.

The action of the water had so rusted the chain that it was impossible for me to unfasten it from the hasp which attached it to the case. Putting the case between my knees and exerting my utmost strength, I contrived to draw off the cover. Some white substance filled the whole interior when I looked in. I put in my hand, and found it to be linen.

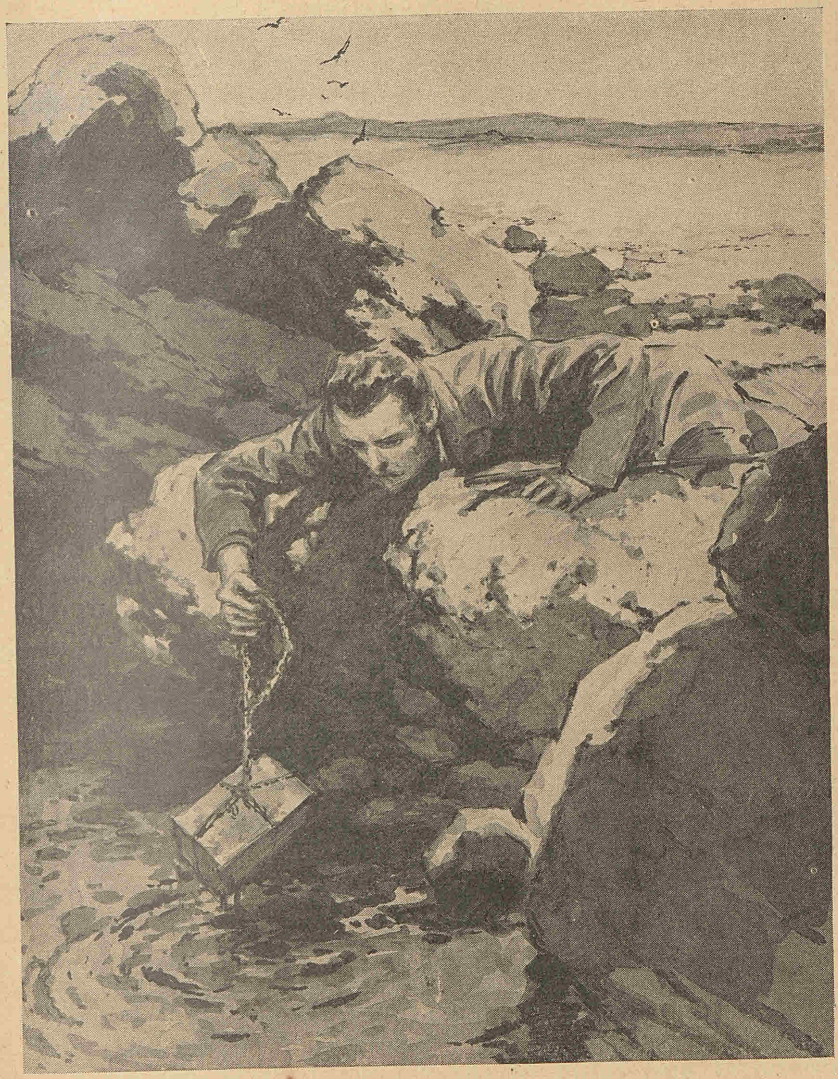
In drawing out the linen, I also drew out a letter crumpled up with it. After looking at the direction, and discovering that it bore my name, I put the letter in my pocket, and completely removed the linen. It came out in a thick roll, moulded, of course, to the shape of the case in which it had been so long confined, and perfectly preserved from any injury by the sea.

I carried the linen to the dry sand of the beach, and there unrolled and smoothed it out. There was no mistaking it as an article of dress. It was a nightgown.

The uppermost side, when I spread it out, presented to view innumerable folds and creases, and nothing more. I tried the undermost side next—and instantly discovered the smear of the paint from the door of Rachel's boudoir!

My eyes remained riveted on the stain, and my mind took me back at a leap from present to past. The very words of Sergeant Cuff recurred to me, as if the man himself was at my side again, pointing to the unanswerable inference which he drew from the smear on the door.

"Find out whether there is any article of dress in this house with the stain of paint on it. Find out who that



'There was the japanned tin case fastened to the end of it'—*Page* 80

dress belongs to. Find how out the person can account for having been in the room, and smeared the paint, between midnight and three in the morning. If the person can't satisfy you, you haven't far to look for the hand that took the Diamond."

My first impulse was to consult the letter in my pocket —the letter which I had found in the case.

As I raised my hand to take it out, I remembered that there was a shorter way to discovery than this. The nightgown itself would reveal the truth; for, in all probability the nightgown was marked with its owner's name.

I took it up from the sand and looked for the mark.

I found the mark, and read—

My Own Name.

There were the familiar letters which told me that the nightgown was mine. I looked up from them. There was the sun; there were the glittering waters of the bay; there was old Betteredge, advancing nearer and nearer to me. I looked back again at the letters. My own name. Plainly confronting me—my own name.

"If time, pains, and money can do it, I will lay my hand on the thief who took the Moonstone." I had left London with those words on my lips. I had penetrated the secret which the quicksand had kept from every other living creature. And, on the unanswerable evidence of the paint-stain, I had discovered Myself as the Thief.

CHAPTER II

The scene shifts from the plantation to Betteredge's little sitting-room. My resolution not to enter Rachel's house is forgotten. I feel gratefully the coolness and shadiness and quiet of the room. I drink the grog (a perfectly new luxury to me at that time of day) which my

good old friend mixes with icy-cold water from the well. Under any other circumstances the drink would simply stupefy me. As things are, it strings up my nerves. I begin to "face it," as Betteredge has predicted. And Betteredge, on his side, begins to "face it" too.

"Now, Mr. Franklin, there's one thing certain, at any rate," said Betteredge, throwing the nightgown down on the table between us, and pointing to it as if it was a living creature that could hear him. "*He's* a liar, to begin with."

This comforting view of the matter was not the view that presented itself to my mind.

"I am as innocent of all knowledge of having taken the Diamond as you are," I said. "But there is the witness against me! The paint on the nightgown, and the name on the nightgown are facts."

Betteredge lifted my glass, and put it persuasively into my hand.

"Facts?" he repeated. "Take a drop more grog, Mr. Franklin, and you'll get over the weakness of believing in facts! Foul play, sir!" he continued, dropping his voice confidentially. "That is how I read the riddle. Was there nothing else in the tin case when you put your hand into it?"

The question instantly reminded me of the letter in my pocket. I took it out and opened it. It was a letter of many pages, closely written. I looked impatiently for the signature at the end. "Rosanna Spearman."

I began—and read these lines:

"SIR,—I have something to own to you. A confession which means much misery may sometimes be made in very few words. This confession can be made in three words. I love you."

The letter dropped from my hand. I looked at

Betteredge. "In the name of Heaven," I said, "what does it mean?"

He seemed to shrink from answering the question.

I resumed the reading of the letter:

"My work, sir, was to make your bed and to put your room tidy. It was the happiest hour I had in the whole day.

"Well, I went in that morning to do my work in your room. There was your nightgown tossed across the bed, just as you had thrown it off. I took it up to fold it—and I saw the stain of the paint from Miss Rachel's door!

"I was so startled by the discovery that I ran out, with the nightgown in my hand, and made for the back stairs, and locked myself into my own room, to look at it in a place where nobody could intrude and interrupt me."

There, I broke off in the reading of the letter for the second time.

"Read the rest for yourself," I said, handing the letter to Betteredge across the table. "If there is anything in it that I *must* look at, you can tell me as you go on."

I proceed to copy the continuation of the letter from the original in my own possession.

"Having determined to keep the nightgown, the next thing to discover was how to keep it without the risk of being found out.

"There was only one way—to make another nightgown exactly like it before Saturday came and brought the laundry-woman and her inventory to the house.

"I was afraid to put it off till next day (the Friday), being in doubt lest some accident might happen in the interval. I determined to make the new nightgown on that same day (the Thursday), while I could count, if I played my cards properly, on having my time to myself. The first thing to do (after locking up your nightgown in my drawer) was to

go back to your bedroom—not so much to put it to rights (Penelope would have done that for me, if I had asked her), as to find out whether you had smeared off any of the paint-stain from your nightgown on the bed or on any piece of furniture in the room).

"I examined everything narrowly, and at last I found a few streaks of the paint on the inside of your dressing-gown—not the linen dressing-gown you usually wore in that summer season, but a flannel dressing-gown which you had with you also. I suppose you felt chilly after walking to and fro in nothing but your nightdress, and put on the warmest thing you could find. At any rate, there were the stains, just visible, on the inside of the dressing-gown. I easily got rid of these by scraping away the stuff of the flannel. This done, the only proof left against you was the proof locked up in my drawer.

"I shammed ill at dinner; and so secured the whole of the interval from then till tea-time to my own use.

"What I was about, while the household believed me to be lying down in my own room; and how I spent the night, after shamming ill again at tea-time, and having been sent up to bed, there is no need to tell you. Sergeant Cuff discovered that much, if he discovered nothing more. And I can guess how. I was detected (though I kept my veil down) in the draper's shop at Frizinghall. There was a glass in front of me at the counter where I was buying the longcloth; and—in that glass—I saw one of the shopmen point to my shoulder and whisper to another. At night again, when I was secretly at work, locked into my room, I heard the breathing of the women-servants, who suspected me, outside my door.

"It didn't matter then; it doesn't matter now. On the Friday morning, hours before Sergeant Cuff entered the house, there was the new nightgown—to make up your

number in place of the nightgown that I had got—made, wrung out, dried, ironed, marked, and folded as the laundry woman folded all the others, safe in your drawer.

" The next thing was the arrival of Sergeant Cuff; and the next great surprise was the announcement of what *he* thought about the smear on the door."

At this moment, some person outside knocked at the door of the room. Betteredge looked surprised as well as annoyed by the interruption.

" Come in," he called out irritably, " whoever you are!"

The door opened, and there entered to us, quietly, the most remarkable-looking man that I had ever seen. Judging him by his figure and his movements, he was still young. Judging him by his face, and comparing him with Betteredge, he looked the elder of the two. His complexion was of a gipsy darkness; his fleshless cheeks had fallen into deep hollows, over which the bone projected like a pent-house.

" I beg your pardon," he said. " I had no idea that Mr. Betteredge was engaged." He took a slip of paper from his pocket and handed it to Betteredge, " The list for next week," he said. His eyes just rested on me again—and he left the room as quietly as he had entered it.

" Who is that ? " I asked.

" Mr. Candy's assistant," said Betteredge. " By the by, Mr. Franklin, you will be sorry to hear that the little doctor has never recovered from that illness he caught going home from the birthday dinner. He's pretty well in health; but he lost his memory in the fever, and he has never recovered more than the wreck of it since. The work all falls on his assistant."

" What is his name ? " I asked.

" As ugly a name as need be," Betteredge answered gruffly. " Ezra Jennings."

Having told me the name of Mr. Candy's assistant, Betteredge appeared to think that we had wasted enough of our time on an insignificant subject. He resumed the perusal of Rosanna Spearman's letter.

"I determined to hide it; and the place I fixed on was the place I knew best—the Shivering Sand.

"As soon as the questioning was over, I made the first excuse that came into my head, and got leave to go out for a breath of fresh air. I went straight to Cobb's Hole, to Mr. Yolland's cottage. His wife and daughter were the best friends I had. Don't suppose I trusted them with your secret—I have trusted nobody. All I wanted was to write this letter to you, and to have a safe opportunity of taking the nightgown off me. Suspected as I was, I could do neither of those things with any sort of security up at the house.

"And now I have nearly got through my long letter, writing it alone in Lucy Yolland's bedroom. When it is done, I shall go downstairs with the nightgown rolled up and hidden under my cloak. I shall find the means I want for keeping it safe and dry in its hiding place, among the litter of old things in Mrs. Yolland's kitchen. And then I shall go to the Shivering Sand—don't be afraid of my letting my footmarks betray me!—and hide the nightgown down in the sand, where no living creature can find it without being first let into the secret by myself.

"And when that's done, what then? "Good-bye to life, which nothing but a little kindness from you can ever make pleasurable again. Don't blame yourself sir, if it ends in this way."

"I beg to remain, sir, your true lover and humble servant,

"ROSANNA SPEARMAN."

The reading of the letter was completed by Betteredge

in silence. After carefully putting it back in the envelope, he sat thinking, with his head bowed down and his eyes on the ground.

"Betteredge," I said, "is there any hint to guide me at the end of the letter?"

He looked up slowly, with a heavy sigh.

"There is nothing to guide you, Mr. Franklin," he answered. "If you take my advice you will keep the letter in the cover till these present anxieties of yours have come to an end. It will sorely distress you, whenever you read it. Don't read it now."

I put the letter away in my pocket-book.

CHAPTER III

I walked to the railway station accompanied, it is needless to say, by Gabriel Betteredge. I had the letter in my pocket and the nightgown safely packed in a little bag—both to be submitted, before I slept that night, to the investigation of Mr. Bruff.

The hour at which I arrived in London precluded all hope of my finding Mr. Bruff at his place of business. I drove from the railway to his private residence at Hampstead, and disturbed the old lawyer dozing alone in his dining-room, with his favourite pug-dog on his lap, and his bottle of wine at his elbow.

I shall best describe the effect which my story produced on the mind of Mr. Bruff by relating his proceedings when he had heard it to the end. He ordered lights, and strong tea, to be taken into his study; and he sent a message to the ladies of his family forbidding them to disturb us on any pretence whatever. These preliminaries disposed of, he first examined the nightgown, and then devoted himself to the reading of Rosanna Spearman's letter.

The reading completed, Mr. Bruff addressed me for the first time since we had been shut up together in the seclusion of his own room.

"Franklin Blake," said the old gentleman, "this is a very serious matter, in more respects than one. In my opinion, it concerns Rachel quite as nearly as it concerns you. Her extraordinary conduct is no mystery *now*. She believes you have stolen the Diamond."

I had shrunk from reasoning my own way fairly to that revolting conclusion. But it had forced itself on me, nevertheless. My resolution to obtain a personal interview with Rachel rested really and truly on the ground just stated by Mr. Bruff.

"The first step to take in this investigation," the lawyer proceeded, "is to appeal to Rachel. She has been silent all this time from motives which I (who know her character) can readily understand. It is impossible, after what has happened, to submit to that silence any longer. She must be persuaded to tell us, or she must be forced to tell us, on what grounds she bases her belief that you took the Moonstone. The chances are that the whole of this case, serious as it seems now, will tumble to pieces, if we can only break through Rachel's inveterate reserve and prevail upon her to speak out."

"That is a very comforting opinion for *me*," I said. "I own I should like to know——"

"You would like to know how I can justify it," interposed Mr. Bruff. "I can tell you in two minutes. Understand, in the first place, that I look at this matter from a lawyer's point of view. It's a question of evidence with me. Very well. The evidence breaks down, at the outset, on one important point."

"On what point?"

"You shall hear. I admit that the mark of the name

proves the nightgown to be yours. I admit that the mark of the paint proves the nightgown to have made the smear on Rachel's door. But what evidence is there to prove that you are the person who wore it on the night when the Diamond was lost?"

The objection struck me all the more forcibly that it reflected an objection which I had felt myself.

"As to this," pursued the lawyer, taking up Rosanna Spearman's confession, "I can understand that the letter is a distressing one to *you*. I can understand that you may hesitate to analyse it from a purely impartial point of view. But *I* am not in your position. I can bring my professional experience to bear on this document, just as I should bring it to bear on any other. Without alluding to the woman's career as a thief, I will merely remark that her letter proves her to have been an adept at deception, on her own showing; and I argue from that, that I am justified in suspecting her of not having told the whole truth. I won't start any theory, at present, as to what she may or may not have done. I will only say that, if Rachel has suspected you *on the evidence of the nightgown only*, the chances are ninety-nine to a hundred that Rosanna Spearman was the person who showed it to her."

"But suppose it turns out that I did wear the nightgown? What then?"

"I don't see how the fact is to be proved," said Mr. Bruff. "But assuming the proof to be possible, the vindication of your innocence would be no easy matter. We won't go into that now. Let us wait and see whether Rachel hasn't suspected you on the evidence of the nightgown only."

"How coolly you talk of Rachel suspecting me!" I broke out. "What right has she to suspect me, on any evidence, of being a thief?"

He rose and began walking thoughtfully up and down the room. Twice I was on the point of telling him that I had determined on seeing Rachel personally; and twice, having regard to his age and his character, I hesitated to take him by surprise at an unfavourable moment.

"The grand difficulty is," he resumed, "how to make Rachel show her whole mind in this matter without reserve. Have you any suggestions to offer?"

"I have made up my mind, Mr. Bruff, to speak to Rachel myself."

And I did see her the next day at Mr. Bruff's house.

"You coward!" she said, when she first saw me. "You mean, miserable, heartless coward!"

Those were her first words! The most unendurable reproach that a woman can address to a man, was the reproach that she picked out to address to me.

"If my honour was not in your hands," I said, "I would leave you this instant and never see you again. You have spoken of what I have done. What have I done?"

"What have you done! *You* ask that question of *me*?"

"I ask it."

"I have kept your infamy a secret," she answered. "And I have suffered the consequences of concealing it. Have I no claim to be spared the insult of your asking me what you have done? Is *all* sense of gratitude dead in you? You were once a gentleman. You were once dear to my mother, and dearer still to me——"

Her voice failed her. She dropped into a chair and turned her back on me, and covered her face with her hands.

I waited a little before I trusted myself to say any more. In that moment of silence I hardly know which I felt most keenly—the sting which her contempt had planted in me,

or the proud resolution which shut me out from all community with her distress.

"If you will not speak first," I said, "I must. I have come here with something serious to say to you. Will you do me the common justice of listening while I say it?"

She neither moved nor answered. I made no second appeal to her; I never advanced an inch nearer to her chair. With a pride which was as obstinate as her pride, I told her of my discovery at the Shivering Sands, and of all that had led to it. The narrative, of necessity, occupied some little time. From beginning to end she never looked round at me, and she never uttered a word.

"I have a question to ask you," I said. "It obliges me to refer again to a painful subject. Did Rosanna Spearman show you the nightgown? Yes or No?"

She started to her feet, and walked close up to me of her own accord. Her eyes looked me searchingly in the face, as if to read something there which they had never read yet.

"Are you mad?" she asked.

I still restrained myself. I said quietly, "Rachel, will you answer my question?"

She went on without heeding me.

"Have you some object to gain which I don't understand? Some mean fear about the future in which I am concerned? They say your father's death has made you a rich man. Have you come here to compensate me for the loss of my Diamond? And have you heart enough left to feel ashamed of your errand? Is *that* the secret of your pretence of innocence and your story about Rosanna Spearman? Is there a motive of shame at the bottom of all the falsehood, this time?"

I stopped her there. I could control myself no longer.

"You have done me an infamous wrong!" I broke out

hotly. "You suspect me of stealing your Diamond. I have a right to know, and I *will* know, the reason why!"

"Suspect you!" she exclaimed, her anger rising with mine. "*You villain, I saw you take the Diamond with my own eyes!*"

The revelation which burst upon me in those words, the overthrow which they instantly accomplished of the whole view of the case on which Mr. Bruff had relied, struck me helpless. Innocent as I was, I stood before her in silence. To her eyes, to any eyes, I must have looked like a man overwhelmed by the discovery of his own guilt.

She drew back from the spectacle of my humiliation and of her triumph. The sudden silence that had fallen upon me seemed to frighten her. "I spared you at the time," she said. "I would have spared you now if you had not forced me to speak." She moved away as if to leave the room—and hesitated before she got to the door. "Why did you come here to humiliate yourself?" she asked. "Why did you come here to humiliate me?" She went on a few steps, and paused once more. "For God's sake, say something!" she exclaimed passionately. "If you have any mercy left, don't let me degrade myself in this way! Say something—and drive me out of the room!"

I drew her gently back into the middle of the room. I seated her by the side of me.

"I want to ask you something," I said. "I want you to tell me everything that happened, from the time when we wished each other good night, to the time when you saw me take the Diamond.

"Let us begin," I went on, "with what happened after we had wished each other good night. Did you go to bed or did you sit up?"

"I went to bed."

"Did you notice the time? Was it late?"

"Not very. About twelve o'clock, I think."

"Did you fall asleep?"

"No. I couldn't sleep that night."

"You were restless?"

"I was thinking of you."

The answer almost unmanned me. Something in the tone, even more than in the words, went straight to my heart. It was only after pausing a little first that I was able to go on.

"Had you any light in your room?" I asked.

"None—until I got up again and lit my candle."

"How long was that after you had gone to bed?"

"About an hour after, I think. About one o'clock."

"Did you leave your bedroom?"

"I was going to leave it. I had put on my dressing-gown; and I was going into my sitting-room to get a book——"

"Had you opened your bedroom door?"

"I had just opened it."

"But you had not gone into the sitting-room?"

"No—I was stopped from going into it."

"What stopped you?"

"I saw a light under the door, and I heard footsteps approaching it."

"Were you frightened?"

"Not then. I knew my poor mother was a bad sleeper; and I remembered that she had tried hard that evening to persuade me to let her take charge of my Diamond. She was unreasonably anxious about it, as I thought; and I fancied she was coming to me to see if I was in bed, and to speak to me about the Diamond again, if she found that I was up."

"What did you do?"

"I blew out my candle so that she might think I was in

bed. I was unreasonable on my side—I was determined to keep my Diamond in the place of my own choosing."

"After blowing the candle out, did you go back to bed?"

"I had no time to go back. At the moment when I blew the candle out the sitting-room door opened and I saw——"

"You saw?"

"You."

"Dressed as usual?"

"No."

"In my nightgown?"

"In your nightgown—with your bedroom candle in your hand."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"Could you see my face?"

"Yes."

"Plainly?"

"Quite plainly. The candle in your hand showed it to me."

"Were my eyes open?"

"Yes."

"Did you notice anything strange in them? Anything like a fixed vacant expression?"

"Nothing of the sort. Your eyes were bright—brighter than usual. You looked about in the room as if you knew you were where you ought not to be, and as if you were afraid of being found out."

"Did you observe one thing when I came into the room—did you observe how I walked?"

"You walked as you always do. You came in as far as the middle of the room—and then you stopped and looked about you."

"What did you do on first seeing me?"

"I could do nothing. I was petrified. I couldn't speak.

I couldn't call out, I couldn't even move to shut my door."

"Could I see you where you stood?"

"You might certainly have seen me. But you never looked towards me. It's useless to ask the question. I am sure you never saw me."

"How are you sure?"

"Would you have taken the Diamond? Would you have acted as you did afterwards? Would you be here now—if you had seen that I was awake and looking at you? Don't make me talk of that part of it! I want to answer you quietly. Help me to keep as calm as I can. Go on to something else."

She was right—in every way right. I went on to other things.

"What did I do after I had got to the middle of the room and had stopped there?"

"You turned away, and went straight to the corner near the window—where my Indian cabinet stands."

"When I was at the cabinet my back must have been turned towards you. How did you see what I was doing?"

"When you moved I moved."

"So as to see what I was about with my hands?"

"There are three glasses in my sitting-room. As you stood there I saw all that you did reflected in one of them."

"What did you see?"

"You put your candle on the top of the cabinet. You opened and shut one drawer after another until you came to the drawer in which I had put my Diamond. You looked at the open drawer for a moment. And then you put your hand in and took the Diamond out."

"How do you know I took the Diamond out?"

"I saw your hand go into the drawer. And I saw the gleam of the stone between your finger and thumb when you took your hand out."

"Did my hand approach the drawer again—to close it, for instance?"

"No. You had the Diamond in your right hand; and you took the candle from the top of the cabinet with your left hand."

"Did I look about me again after that?"

"No."

"Did I leave the room immediately?"

"No. You stood quite still for what seemed a long time. I saw your face sideways in the glass. You looked like a man thinking, and dissatisfied with his own thoughts."

"What happened next?"

"You roused yourself on a sudden and you went straight out of the room."

"Did I close the door after me?"

"No. You passed out quickly into the passage and left the door open."

"And then?"

"Then your light disappeared and the sound of your steps died away, and I was left alone in the dark."

"Did nothing happen—from that time to the time when the whole house knew that the Diamond was lost?"

"Nothing."

"Are you sure of that? Might you not have been asleep a part of the time?"

"I never slept. I never went back to my bed. Nothing happened until Penelope came in at the usual time in the morning."

I rose and took a turn in the room. Every question that I could put had been answered. Every detail that I could desire to know had been placed before me. What was to be said next? What was to be done next? Not a glimpse of light to guide me, when I had possessed myself of Rosanna Spearman's secret at the Shivering Sand. And

not a glimpse of light now, when I had appealed to Rachel herself and had heard the hateful story of the night from her own lips.

She was first, this time, to break the silence.

"Well?" she said, "you have asked and I have answered. You have made me hope something from all this because *you* hoped something from it. What have you to say now?"

Rashly and uselessly, I reproached her for the silence which had kept me until that moment in ignorance of the truth.

"If you had spoken when you ought to have spoken," I began; "if you had done me the common justice to explain yourself——"

She broke in on me with a cry of fury. The few words I had said seemed to have lashed her on the instant into a frenzy of rage.

"Explain myself!" she repeated. "Oh! is there another man like this in the world? I spare him when my heart is breaking; I screen him when my own character is at stake; and *he*—of all human beings, *he*—turns on me now, and tells me that I ought to have explained myself! After believing in him as I did, after loving him as I did, after thinking of him by day and dreaming of him by night—he wonders I didn't charge him with his disgrace the first time we met: 'My heart's darling, you are a thief! My hero, whom I love and honour, you have crept into my room under cover of the night and stolen my Diamond!' That is what I ought to have said. You villain, you mean, mean, mean villain, I would have lost fifty diamonds rather than see your face lying to me as I see it lying now!"

I took up my hat. In mercy to *her*—yes! I can honestly say it—in mercy to *her*, I turned away without a word and opened the door by which I had entered the room.



"'What have you to say now?'"—*Page* 98

The next moment the worst bitterness of it was over. I was out in the garden again. I saw her and heard her no more.

CHAPTER IV

It was Ezra Jennings who supplied the key to the mystery. He told me how during his illness Mr. Candy had in moments of delirium let fall some words which showed that on the birthday night he had given me some laudanum to make me sleep. It was put in the brandy which I had before going to bed.

Ezra Jennings thought that the drug had had the opposite effect from what had been intended; and under the influence of the drug I had taken the Moonstone.

"When you left Miss Verinder's sitting-room with the jewel in your hand, you went back in all probability to your own room," he said.

"Yes! And what then?"

"It is possible, Mr. Blake—I dare not say more—that your idea of preserving the Diamond led, by a natural sequence, to the idea of hiding the Diamond, and that the place in which you hid it was somewhere in your bedroom. You may remember, under the influence of a second dose of opium, the place in which you hid the Diamond under the influence of the first."

It was my turn now to enlighten Ezra Jennings. I stopped him before he could say any more.

"You are speculating," I said, "on a result which cannot possibly take place. The Diamond is, at this moment, in London."

He started, and looked at me in great surprise.

"In London?" he repeated. "How did it get to London from Lady Verinder's house?"

"Nobody knows."

"You removed it with your own hands from Miss Verinder's room. How was it taken out of your keeping?"

"I have no idea how it was taken out of my keeping."

"Did you see it, when you awoke in the morning?"

"No."

"Has Miss Verinder recovered possession of it?"

"No."

"Mr. Blake! there seems to be something here which wants clearing up. May I ask how you know that the Diamond is, at this moment, in London?"

I had put precisely the same question to Mr. Bruff when I made my first inquiries about the Moonstone on my return to England. In answering Ezra Jennings, I accordingly repeated what I had myself heard from the lawyer's own lips—and what the reader already knows.

He showed plainly that he was not satisfied with my reply.

"With all deference to you," he said, "and with all deference to your legal adviser, I maintain the opinion which I expressed just now. It rests, I am well aware, on a mere assumption. Pardon me for reminding you that your opinion also rests on a mere assumption as well."

The view he took of the matter was entirely new to me. I waited anxiously to hear how he would defend it.

"*I* assume," pursued Ezra Jennings, "that the influence of the opium—after impelling you to possess yourself of the Diamond, with the purpose of securing its safety—might also impel you, acting under the same influence and the same motive, to hide it somewhere in your own room. Have you any evidence to prove that the Moonstone was taken to London at all? You can't even guess how, or by whom, it was removed from Lady Verinder's house! Have you any evidence that the jewel was pledged to Mr. Luker? He declares that he never heard of the Moonstone;

and his bankers' receipt acknowledges nothing but the deposit of a valuable of great price. The Indians assume that Mr. Luker is lying—and you assume that the Indians are right. All I say, in differing with you, is—that my view is possible. What more, Mr. Blake, either logically or legally, can be said for yours ? "

It was put strongly; but there was no denying that it was put truly as well.

" I confess you stagger me," I replied. " Do you object to my writing to Mr. Bruff and telling him what you have said ? "

" On the contrary, I shall be glad if you will write to Mr. Bruff. If we consult his experience, we may see the matter under a new light. For the present, let us return to our experiment with the opium. We have decided that you leave off the habit of smoking from this moment."

" From this moment! "

" That is the first step. The next step is to reproduce, as nearly as we can, the domestic circumstances which surrounded you last year."

How was this to be done ? Lady Verinder was dead. Rachel and I, so long as the suspicion of theft rested on me, were parted irrevocably. Godfrey Ablewhite was away travelling on the Continent. It was simply impossible to reassemble the people who had inhabited the house when I had slept in it last. The statement of this objection did not appear to embarrass Ezra Jennings. He attached very little importance, he said, to reassembling the same people —seeing that it would be vain to expect them to reassume the various positions which they had occupied towards me in the past times. On the other hand, he considered it essential to the success of the experiment that I should see the same objects about me which had surrounded me when I was last in the house.

"Above all things," he said, "you must sleep in the room which you slept in on the birthday night, and it must be furnished in the same way. The stairs, the corridors, and Miss Verinder's sitting-room must also be restored to what they were when you saw them last. It is absolutely necessary, Mr. Blake, to replace every article of furniture in that part of the house which may now be put away. The sacrifice of your cigars will be useless unless we can get Miss Verinder's permission to do that."

"Who is to apply to her for permission?" I asked.

"Is it not possible for *you* to apply?"

"Quite out of the question. After what has passed between us on the subject of the lost Diamond, I can neither see her nor write to her as things are now."

Ezra Jennings paused and considered for a moment.

"May I ask you a delicate question?" he said.

I signed to him to go on.

"Am I right, Mr. Blake, in fancying (from one or two things which have dropped from you) that you felt no common interest in Miss Verinder in former times?"

"Quite right."

"Was the feeling returned?"

"It was."

"Do you think Miss Verinder would be likely to feel a strong interest in the attempt to prove your innocence?"

"I am certain of it."

"In that case, *I* will write to Miss Verinder—if you will give me leave."

"Telling her of the proposal that you have made to me?"

"Telling her of everything that has passed between us to-day."

It is needless to say that I eagerly accepted the service which he offered to me.

"I shall have time to write by to-day's post," he said, looking at his watch. "Don't forget to lock up your cigars when you get back to the hotel! I will call to-morrow morning and hear how you have passed the night."

I rose to take leave of him; and attempted to express the grateful sense of his kindness which I really felt.

Mr. Jennings wrote to Rachel, and Rachel consented in the kindest manner to his proposal that the whole procedure of the birthday night should be gone through again as far as was possible. A mock Diamond was substituted for the Moonstone and I was given a dose of laudanum as on the birthday night.

Ezra Jennings who informed me later of what took place told me that my movements on the birthday night were repeated exactly up to the point when I took the mock diamond out of the drawer with my right hand and with the other took the candle from the top of the cabinet.

For the sake of clarity I will now let Ezra Jennings tell in his own words the remainder of that night's experiment.

"Thus far he had exactly repeated what he had done on the birthday night. Would his next proceeding be the same as the proceeding of last year? Would he leave the room? Would he go back now, as I believed he had gone back then, to his bed-chamber? Would he show us what he had done with the Diamond when he had returned to his own room?

"His first action, when he moved once more, proved to be an action which he had *not* performed when he was under the influence of the opium for the first time. He put the candle down on a table, and wandered on a little towards the farther end of the room. There was a sofa there. He leaned heavily on the back of it with his left hand—then roused himself and returned to the middle of the room.

I could now see his eyes. They were getting dull and heavy; the glitter in them was fast dying out.

"Still, so long as he stood where he was, there was hope. We waited in unutterable expectation to see what would happen next.

"The next event was decisive. He let the mock Diamond drop out of his hand.

"It fell on the floor before the doorway—plainly visible to him and to everyone. He made no effort to pick it up: he looked down at it vacantly, and as he looked his head sank on his breast. He staggered—roused himself for an instant—walked back unsteadily to the sofa—and sat down on it. He made a last effort; he tried to rise, and sank back. His head fell on the sofa cushions. It was then twenty-five minutes past one o'clock. Before I had put my watch back in my pocket he was asleep.

"It was all over now. The sedative influence had got him; the experiment was at an end."

Rachel no longer doubted me. We were friends again. But what of the Diamond? Mr. Bruff did not agree with Ezra Jennings' theory, that I had hidden the Moonstone in my room. He was convinced that the Moonstone was in the possession of Mr. Luker's bank in London. "I have had a watch kept at the bank," he said to me at breakfast, "for the last few days, and I shall cause that watch to be continued until the last day of the month. I know that Mr. Luker must take the Diamond himself out of the bankers' hands, and I am acting on the chance that the person who pledged the Diamond may force him to do this by redeeming the pledge. In that case I may be able to lay my hand on the person. If I succeed I clear up the mystery exactly at the point where the mystery baffles us now."

He asked me to accompany him to London, so that I should be close at hand and there I was surprised by a visit from Sergeant Cuff, who was now retired.

I had written to him and informed him of what had happened since his work on the Moonstone was suspended last year.

"I thought I would look in here, Mr. Blake, on the chance of your being in town before I wrote to Yorkshire," said the Sergeant. "I only got back from Ireland last night. Before I went to bed I read your letter telling me what has happened since my inquiry after the Diamond was suspended last year. There's only one thing to be said about the matter on my side. I completely mistook my case. I own that I made a mess of it. Not the first mess, Mr. Blake, which has distinguished my professional career! It's only in books that the officers of the detective force are superior to the weakness of making a mistake. Now tell me how the case stands since you wrote to me last."

I told him of the experiment with the opium and of the watch that was being kept at the bank in Lombard Street. He was greatly struck by the experiment—it was something entirely new in his experience. And he was particularly interested in the theory of Ezra Jennings relating to what I had done with the Diamond after I had left Rachel's sitting-room on the birthday night.

"I don't hold with Mr. Jennings that you hid the Moonstone," said Sergeant Cuff. "But I agree with him that you must certainly have taken it back to your own room."

"Well?" I asked. "And what happened then?"

"Have you no suspicion yourself of what happened, sir?"

"None whatever."

"Has Mr. Bruff no suspicion?"

"No more than I have."

Sergeant Cuff rose and went to my writing-table. He came back with a sealed envelope. It was marked "Private"; it was addressed to me; and it had the Sergeant's signature in the corner.

"I suspected the wrong person last year," he said, "and I may be suspecting the wrong person now. Wait to open the envelope, Mr. Blake, till you have got at the truth. And then compare the name of the guilty person with the name that I have written in that sealed letter."

I put the letter into my pocket—and then asked for the Sergeant's opinion of the measures which we had taken at the bank.

"Very well intended, sir," he answered, "and quite the right thing to do. But there was another person who ought to have been looked after besides Mr. Luker."

"The person named in the letter you have just given to me?"

"Yes, Mr. Blake, the person named in the letter. It can't be helped now."

Sergeant Cuff talked of other matters. He asked after his old friend Betteredge and his old enemy the gardener. In a minute more he would, no doubt, have got from this to the subject of his favourite roses. But at that moment Gooseberry came.

Gooseberry—so called because of his prominent eyes—was a small boy employed in a general way by Mr. Bruff. He had discovered that, the previous day, a package had been taken from the bank by Mr. Luker and given to a man disguised as a sailor, whom he followed to "The Wheel of Fortune" public house. I was unfortunately not in when he had called at my house the previous evening with this information.

We hastened as fast as we could to "The Wheel of Fortune" and found the sailor lying dead in an upstairs room.

The man's swarthy face was placid and still; his black hair and beard were slightly, very slightly, discomposed. His eyes stared wide-open, glassy and vacant, at the ceiling. The filmy look and the fixed expression of them horrified me. I turned away and went to the open window. The rest of them remained, where Sergeant Cuff remained, at the bed.

"He's in a fit," I heard the landlord say.

"He's dead," the Sergeant answered. "Send for the nearest doctor, and send for the police."

The waiter was dispatched on both errands. Some strange fascination seemed to hold Sergeant Cuff to the bed. Some strange curiosity seemed to keep the rest of them waiting to see what the Sergeant would do next.

I felt a soft pull at my coat-tails and a small voice whispered, "Look here, sir." It was Gooseberry who had followed us unto the room. "Look here, sir," he repeated, and led me to a table in the corner of the room.

On the table stood a little wooden box, open and empty. On one side of the box lay some jewellers' cotton. On the other side was a torn sheet of white paper, with a seal on it partly destroyed, and with an inscription in writing which was still perfectly legible. The inscription was in these words:

"Deposited with Messrs. Bushe, Lysaught, and Bushe, by Mr. Septimus Luker, of Middlesex Place, Lambeth, a small wooden box, sealed up in this envelope, and containing a valuable of great price. The box when claimed, to be only given up by Messrs. Bushe and Co. on the personal application of Mr. Luker."

Those lines removed all further doubt, on one point at least. The sailor had been in possession of the Moonstone when he had left the bank on the previous day.

At that moment I heard Sergeant Cuff's voice calling me to the bedside.

"Mr. Blake!" he said. "Look at the man's face. It is a face disguised—and here's proof of it!"

He traced with his finger a thin line of livid white, running backward from the dead man's forehead, between the swarthy complexion and the slightly-disturbed black hair. "Let's see what is under this," said the Sergeant, suddenly seizing the black hair with a firm grip of his hand.

My nerves were not strong enough to bear it. I turned away again from the bed.

The first sight that met my eyes at the other end of the room was the irrepressible Gooseberry, perched on a chair, and looking with breathless interest over the heads of his elders at the Sergeant's proceedings.

"He's pulling off his wig!" whispered Gooseberry, compassionating my position as the only person in the room who could see nothing.

There was a pause—and then a cry of astonishment among the people round the bed.

"He's pulled off his beard!" cried Gooseberry.

There was another pause—Sergeant Cuff asked for something. The landlord went to the washhand-stand, and returned to the bed with a basin of water and a towel.

Gooseberry danced with excitement on the chair. "Come up here, along with me, sir! He's washing off his complexion now!"

The Sergeant suddenly burst his way through the people about him, and came, with horror in his face, straight to the place where I was standing.

"Come back to the bed, sir!" he began. He looked at me closer, and checked himself. "No!" he resumed. "Open the sealed letter first—the letter I gave you this morning."

I opened the letter.

"Read the name, Mr. Blake, that I have written inside."

I read the name that he had written. It was—*Godfrey Ablewhite.*

"Now," said the Sergeant, "come with me, and look at the man on the bed."

I went with him, and looked at the man on the bed.

GODFREY ABLEWHITE!

NARRATIVE CONTRIBUTED BY SERGEANT CUFF

I

Dorking, Surrey, July 30th, 1849. To Franklin Blake, Esq. SIR,—I beg to apologize for the delay that has occurred in the production of the Report with which I engaged to furnish you. I have waited to make it a complete Report; and I have been met, here and there, by obstacles which it was only possible to remove by some little expenditure of patience and time.

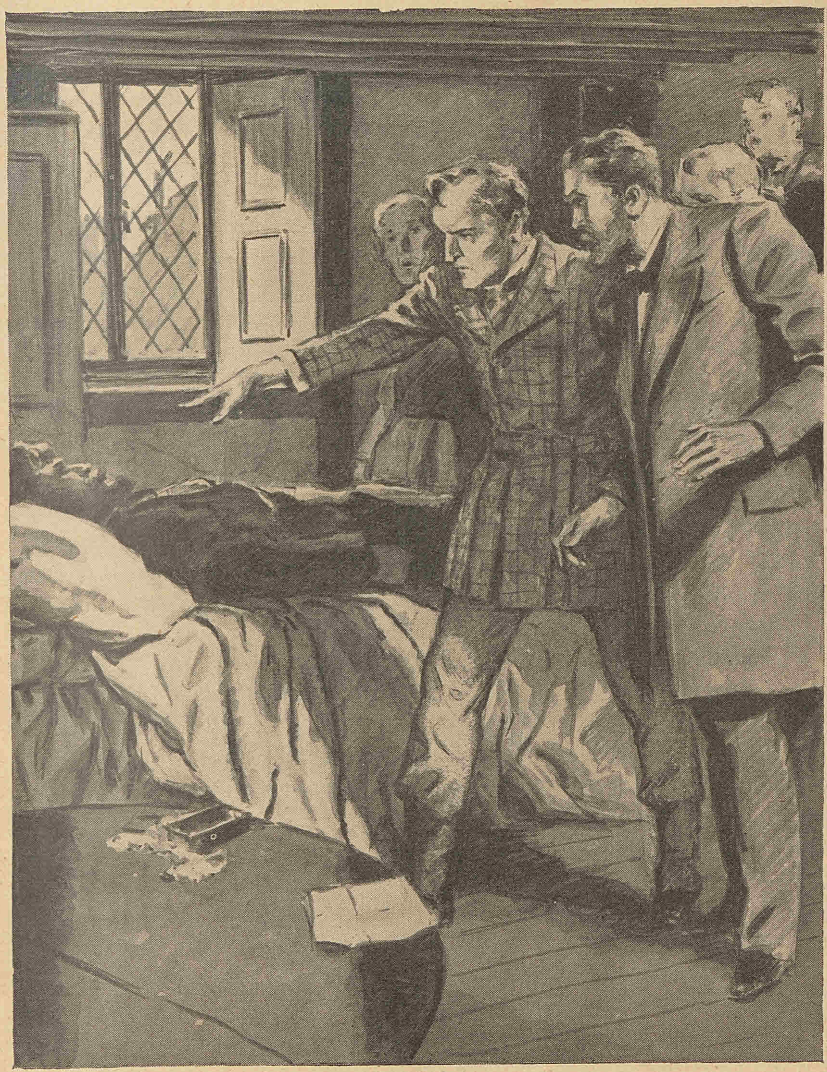
The object which I proposed to myself has now, I hope, been attained. You will find, in these pages, answers to the greater part—if not all—of the questions concerning the late Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite which occurred to your mind when I last had the honour of seeing you.

I propose to tell you—in the first place—what is known of the manner in which your cousin met his death. I shall then endeavour—in the second place—to put you in possession of such discoveries as I have made respecting the proceedings of Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite before, during, and after the time when you and he met as guests at the late Lady Verinder's country-house.

II

As to your cousin's death, then first.

It appears to me to be established beyond any reasonable doubt that he was killed (while he was asleep, or



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immediately on his waking) by being smothered with a pillow from his bed—that the persons guilty of murdering him are the three Indians—and that the object contemplated (and achieved) by the crime was to obtain possession of the Diamond called the Moonstone.

The facts from which this conclusion is drawn are derived partly from an examination of the room at the tavern, and partly from the evidence obtained at the Coroner's Inquest.

On forcing the door of the room the deceased gentleman was discovered dead, with the pillow of the bed over his face. The medical man who examined him, being informed of this circumstance, considered the post-mortem appearances as being perfectly compatible with murder by smothering.

Next, as to the motive for the crime.

A small box, with a sealed paper torn off from it (the paper containing an inscription), was found open and empty on a table in the room. Mr. Luker has himself personally identified the box, the seal, and the inscription. He has declared that the box did actually contain the Diamond called the Moonstone; and he has admitted having given the box (thus sealed up) to Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite (then concealed under a disguise) on the afternoon of the twenty-sixth of June last. The fair inference from all this is, that the stealing of the Moonstone was the motive of the crime.

Next, as to the manner in which the crime was committed.

On examination of the room (which is only seven feet high), a trap-door in the ceiling, leading out on to the roof of the house, was discovered open. The short ladder used for obtaining access to the trap-door (and kept under the bed) was found placed at the opening, so as to enable any

person or persons in the room to leave it again easily. In the trap-door itself was found a square aperture cut in the wood, apparently with some exceedingly sharp instrument, just behind the bolt which fastened the door on the inner side. In this way any person from the outside could have drawn back the bolt and opened the door, and have dropped (or have been noiselessly lowered by an accomplice) into the room—its height, as already observed, being only seven feet. That some person, or persons, must have got admission in this way appears evident from the fact of the aperture being there.

As to the manner in which he (or they) obtained access to the roof of the tavern, it is to be remarked that the third house lower down in the street was empty and under repair—that a long ladder was left by the workmen, leading from the pavement to the top of the house—and that on returning to their work, on the morning of the 27th, the men found the plank which they had tied to the ladder, to prevent anyone from using it in their absence, removed and lying on the ground. As to the possibility of ascending by this ladder, passing over the roofs of the houses, passing back, and descending again unobserved—it is discovered on the evidence of the night policeman that he only passes through Shore Lane twice in an hour when out on his beat. It seems fair to infer that—with ordinary caution—any man, or men, might have ascended by the ladder, and might have descended again, unobserved. Once on the roof of the tavern, it has been proved by experiment that a man might cut through the trap-door while lying down on it, and that in such a position the parapet in front of the house would conceal him from the view of anyone passing in the street.

Lastly, as to the person, or persons, by whom the crime was committed.

It is known (1) that the Indians had an interest in possessing themselves of the Diamond. (2) A morsel of torn gold thread was picked up in the bedroom, which persons expert in such matters declare to be of Indian manufacture, and to be a species of gold thread not known in England. (3) On the morning of the 27th, three men, answering to the description of the three Indians, were observed in Lower Thames Street, were traced to the Tower Wharf, and were seen to leave London by the steamer bound for Rotterdam.

There is here moral, if not legal, evidence that the murder was committed by the Indians.

Acting by himself, one man could hardly have smothered Mr. Ablewhite—without a struggle taking place or a cry being heard. A servant girl sleeping in the next room heard nothing. The landlord sleeping in the room below heard nothing. The whole evidence points to the inference that more than one man was concerned in this crime—and the circumstances, I repeat, morally justify the conclusion that the Indians committed it.

I have only to add, that the verdict at the Coroner's Inquest was Wilful Murder against some person, or persons, unknown. Mr. Ablewhite's family have offered a reward, and no effort has been left untried to discover the guilty persons. The Indians have been traced. As to the prospect of ultimately capturing these last, I shall have a word to say to you on that head when I reach the end of the present Report.

In the meanwhile, having now written all that is needful on the subject of Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's death, I may pass next to the narrative of his proceedings before, during, and after the time when you and he met at the late Lady Verinder's house.

III

With regard to the subject now in hand, I may state, at the outset, that Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's life had two sides to it.

The side turned up to the public view presented the spectacle of a gentleman possessed of considerable reputation as a speaker at charitable meetings, and endowed with administrative abilities, which he placed at the disposal of various Benevolent Societies, mostly of the female sort. The side hidden from the general notice exhibited this same gentleman in the totally different character of a man of pleasure, with a villa in the suburbs which was not taken in his own name.

My investigations in the villa have shown me several fine pictures and statues; furniture tastefully selected and admirably made; and a conservatory of the rarest flowers, the match of which it would not be easy to find in all London. All this so far is common enough. But what is not common and not familiar (in my experience) is that all these fine things were not only ordered but paid for.

I might have tried to find the right reading of this riddle, and tried in vain—but for Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's death, which caused an inquiry to be made into the state of his affairs.

The inquiry elicited these facts:

That Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite was entrusted with the care of a sum of twenty thousand pounds as one of two Trustees for a young gentleman, who was still a minor in the year eighteen hundred and forty-eight. That the Trust was to lapse, and that the young gentleman was to receive the twenty thousand pounds on the day when he came of age, in the month of February, eighteen hundred and fifty. That, pending the arrival of this period, an income of six

hundred pounds was to be paid to him by his two trustees, half-yearly—at Christmas and Midsummer Day. That this income was regularly paid by the active Trustee, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite. That the twenty thousand pounds (from which the income was supposed to be derived) had every farthing of it been sold out of the Funds, at different periods, ending with the end of the year eighteen hundred and forty-seven. That the power of attorney, authorizing the bankers to sell out the stock, and the various written orders telling them what amounts to sell out, were formally signed by both the Trustees. That the signature of the second Trustee (a retired army officer, living in the country) was a signature forged, in every case, by the active Trustee—otherwise Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite.

In these facts lies the explanation of Mr. Godfrey's honourable conduct in paying the debts incurred for the villa—and (as you will presently see) of more besides.

We may now advance to the date of Miss Verinder's birthday (in the year eighteen hundred and forty-eight)—the twenty-first of June.

Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite rode over with you to Lady Verinder's house. A few hours afterwards, Mr. Godfrey (as you yourself have told me) made a proposal of marriage to Miss Verinder. Here he saw his way no doubt—if accepted—to the end of all his money anxieties, present and future. But, as events actually turned out, what happened? Miss Verinder refused him.

On the night of the birthday, therefore, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's pecuniary position was this. He had three hundred pounds to find on the twenty-fourth of the month, and twenty thousand pounds to find in February, eighteen hundred and fifty. Failing to raise these sums at these times, he was a ruined man.

Under those circumstances, what takes place next?

You exasperate Mr. Candy, the doctor, on the sore subject of his profession; and he plays you a practical joke, in return, with a dose of laudanum. He trusts the administration of the dose, prepared in a little phial, to Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite—who has himself confessed the share he had in the matter, under circumstances which shall presently be related to you. Mr. Godfrey is all the readier to enter into the conspiracy, having himself suffered from your sharp tongue in the course of the evening. He joins Betteredge in persuading you to drink a little brandy and water before you go to bed. He privately drops the dose of laudanum into your cold grog. And you drink the mixture.

Let us shift the scene if you please, to Mr. Luker's house at Lambeth, and allow me to remark, by way of preface, that Mr. Bruff and I together found a means of forcing the money-lender to make a clean breast of it. We have carefully sifted the statement he has addressed to us; and here it is at your service.

IV

Late on the evening of Friday, the twenty-third of June (forty-eight), Mr. Luker was surprised by a visit from Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite. He was more than surprised when Mr. Godfrey produced the Moonstone. No such Diamond (according to Mr. Luker's experience) was in the possession of any private person in Europe.

Mr. Luker tested the Diamond, weighed the Diamond and estimated the value of the Diamond before he said a word. *His* estimate (allowing for the flaw in the stone) was thirty thousand pounds.

Having reached that result, Mr. Luker opened his lips and put a question: "How did you come by this?"

Upon this compulsion, Mr. Godfrey came out with the following story.

After privately slipping the laudanum into your brandy and water, he wished you good night, and went into his own room. It was the next room to yours; and the two had a door of communication between them. On entering his own room Mr. Godfrey (as he supposed) closed his door. His money troubles kept him awake. He sat, in his dressing-gown and slippers, for nearly an hour thinking over his position. Just as he was preparing to get into bed, he heard you talking to yourself in your own room, and going to the door of communication, found that he had not shut it as he supposed.

He looked into your room to see what was the matter. He discovered you with the candle in your hand just leaving your bed-chamber. He heard you say to yourself, in a voice quite unlike your own voice, "How do I know? The Indians may be hidden in the house."

Up to that time he had simply supposed himself (in giving you the laudanum) to be helping to make you the victim of a harmless practical joke. It now occurred to him that the laudanum had taken some effect on you which had not been foreseen by the doctor, any more than by himself. In the fear of an accident happening he followed you softly to see what you would do.

He followed you to Miss Verinder's sitting-room, and saw you go in. You left the door open. He looked through the crevice thus produced between the door and the post before he ventured into the room himself.

In that position he not only detected you in taking the Diamond out of the drawer—he also detected Miss Verinder silently watching you from her bedroom through her open door. His own eyes satisfied him that *she* saw you take the Diamond too.

Before you left the sitting-room again you hesitated a little. Mr. Godfrey took advantage of this hesitation to get

back again to his bedroom before you came out and discovered him. He had barely got back before you got back too. You saw him (as he supposes) just as he was passing through the door of communication. At any rate, you called to him in a strange, drowsy voice.

He came back to you. You looked at him in a dull sleepy way. You put the Diamond into his hand. You said to him, "Take it back, Godfrey, to your father's bank. It's safe there—it's not safe here." You turned away unsteadily and put on your dressing-gown. You sat down in the large armchair in your room. You said, "*I* can't take it back to the bank. My head's like lead—and I can't feel my feet under me." Your head sank on the back of the chair—you heaved a heavy sigh—and you fell asleep.

Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite went back with the Diamond into his own room. His statement is, that he came to no conclusion at that time—except that he would wait and see what happened in the morning.

When the morning came, your language and conduct showed that you were absolutely ignorant of what you had said and done overnight. At the same time, Miss Verinder's language and conduct showed that she was resolved to say nothing (in mercy to you) on her side. If Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite chose to keep the Diamond he might do so with perfect impunity. The Moonstone stood between him and ruin. He put the Moonstone into his pocket.

V

This was the story told by your cousin (under pressure of necessity) to Mr. Luker.

The next question was the question of what Mr. Luker would do in the matter of the Moonstone. He proposed the following terms, as the only terms on which he would

consent to mix himself up with what was (even in *his* line of business) a doubtful and dangerous transaction.

Mr. Luker would consent to lend Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite the sum of two thousand pounds, on condition that the Moonstone was to be deposited with him as a pledge. If, at the expiration of one year from that date, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite paid three thousand pounds to Mr. Luker, he was to receive back the Diamond as a pledge redeemed. If he failed to produce the money at the expiration of the year, the pledge (otherwise the Moonstone) was to be considered as forfeited to Mr. Luker—who would, in this latter case, generously make Mr. Godfrey a present of certain promissory notes of his (relating to former dealings) which were then in the money-lender's possession.

Mr. Godfrey had no alternative but to agree to Mr. Luker's terms and Mr. Luker drew out the necessary documents on the spot. When they were signed he gave Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite two cheques. One, dated June 23rd, for three hundred pounds. Another, dated a week on, for the remaining balance—seventeen hundred pounds.

How the Moonstone was trusted to the keeping of Mr. Luker's bankers, and what followed you know already.

The next event in your cousin's life refers again to Miss Verinder. He proposed marriage to her for the second time—and (after having been accepted) he consented, at her request, to consider the marriage as broken off. One of his reasons for making this concession has been penetrated by Mr. Bruff. Miss Verinder had only a life interest in her mother's property—and there was no raising the twenty thousand pounds on *that*.

However, a legacy of five thousand pounds was left to him shortly afterwards by one of his many admirers among the fair sex and I have ascertained that on getting this five thousand pounds, he went to Amsterdam. There

he made all the necessary arrangements for having the Diamond cut into separate stones. He came back (in disguise) and redeemed the Moonstone on the appointed day. A few days were allowed to elapse (as a precaution agreed to by both parties) before the jewel was actually taken out of the bank. If he had got safe with it to Amsterdam, there would have been just time between July 'forty-nine and February 'fifty (when the young gentleman came of age) to cut the Diamond, and to make a marketable commodity (polished or unpolished) of the separate stones.

I have only to remind you, before closing this Report, that there is a chance of laying hands on the Indians and of recovering the Moonstone yet. They are now (there is every reason to believe) on their passage to Bombay in an East Indiaman. The ship will touch at no other port on her way out; and the authorities at Bombay (already communicated with by letter overland) will be prepared to board the vessel the moment she enters the harbour.

I have the honour to remain, dear sir, your obedient servant, RICHARD CUFF (late sergeant in the Detective Force, Scotland Yard, London).

NARRATIVE CONTRIBUTED BY GABRIEL BETTEREDGE

I am the person (as you remember no doubt) who led the way in these pages and opened the story.

Let nobody suppose that I have any last words to say here concerning the Indian Diamond. I hold that unlucky jewel in abhorrence—and I refer you to other authority than mine for such news of the Moonstone as you may, at the present time, be expected to receive. My purpose in this place is to state a fact in the history of the family which has been passed over by everybody, and which I won't allow to be disrespectfully smothered up in that way. The

fact to which I allude is—the marriage of Miss Rachel and Mr. Franklin Blake. This interesting event took place at our house in Yorkshire on Tuesday, October ninth, eighteen hundred and forty-nine. I had a new suit of clothes on the ocasion. And the married couple went to spend the honey-moon in Scotland.

THE FINDING OF THE DIAMOND

THE STATEMENT OF THE CAPTAIN (1849)

I AM requested by Sergeant Cuff to set in writing certain facts concerning three men (believed to be Hindoos) who were passengers last summer in the ship *Bewley Castle*, bound for Bombay direct, under my command.

The Hindoos joined us at Plymouth. On the passage out I heard no complaint of their conduct. They were berthed in the forward part of the vessel. I had but few occasions myself of personally noticing them.

In the latter part of the voyage we had the misfortune to be becalmed for three days and nights off the coast of India.

The discipline of a ship (as all seafaring persons know) becomes relaxed in a long calm. The discipline of my ship became relaxed. Certain gentlemen among the passengers got some of the smaller boats lowered, and amused themselves by rowing about, and swimming, when the sun at evening time was cool enough to let them divert themselves in that way. The boats when done with ought to have been slung up again in their places. Instead of this they were left moored to the ship's side.

On the third night, nothing unusual was heard or seen by the watch on deck. When the morning came the smallest of the boats was missing—and the three Hindoos were next reported to be missing too.

On reaching our port I there learnt, for the first time, the reason these passengers had for seizing their opportunity of escaping from the ship. I could only make the same statement to the authorities which I have made here. They considered me to blame for allowing the discipline of the vessel to be relaxed. I have expressed my regret on this

score to them, and to my owners. Since that time nothing has been heard, to my knowledge, of the three Hindoos. I have no more to add to what is here written.

THE STATEMENT OF MR. MURTHWAITE (1850)

(In a letter to MR. BRUFF)

Have you any recollection, of a semi-savage person whom you met out at dinner in London in the autumn of 'forty-eight? Permit me to remind you that the person's name was Murthwaite, and that you and he had a long conversation together after dinner. The talk related to an Indian Diamond, called the Moonstone, and to a conspiracy then in existence to get possession of the gem.

Since that time I have been wandering in Central Asia. Thence I have drifted back to the scene of some of my past adventures in the north and north-west of India. About a fortnight since I found myself in a certain district or province (but little known to Europeans) called Kattiawar.

Here an adventure befell me in which (incredible as it may appear) you are personally interested.

I had resolved not to leave Kattiawar without looking once more on the magnificent desolation of Somnauth, a sacred city sacked and destroyed long since by Mohammedan conquerors. At the place where I planned to do this, I was (as nearly as I could calculate it) some three days distant, journeying on foot, from the sacred city.

I had not been long on the road before I noticed that other people—by twos and threes—appeared to be travelling in the same direction as myself.

On the second day the number of Hindoos travelling in my direction had increased to fifties and hundreds. On the third day, the throng had swollen to thousands; all slowly converging to one point—the city of Somnauth.

A trifling service which I was able to render to one of my fellow-pilgrims during the third day's journey proved the means of introducing me to certain Hindoos of the higher caste. From these men I learnt that the multitude was on its way to a great religious ceremony which was to take place on a hill at a little distance from Somnauth. The ceremony was in honour of the god of the Moon; and it was to be held at night.

The crowd detained us as we drew near to the place of celebration. By the time we reached the hill the moon was high in the heaven. My Hindoo friends possessed some special privileges which enabled them to gain access to the shrine. They kindly allowed me to accompany them. When we arrived at the place we found the shrine hidden from our view by a curtain hung between two magnificent trees. Beneath the trees a flat projection of rock jutted out and formed a species of natural platform. Below this I stood in company with my Hindoo friends.

Looking back down the hill the view presented the grandest spectacle of Nature and Man in combination that I have ever seen. The lower slopes of the eminence melted imperceptibly into a grassy plain, the place of the meeting of three rivers. People this lovely scene with tens of thousands of human creatures, all dressed in white, stretching down the sides of the hill, overflowing into the plain, and fringing the nearer banks of the winding rivers.

A strain of plaintive music, played on stringed instruments and flutes, recalled my attention to the hidden shrine.

I turned and saw on the rocky platform the figures of three men. In the central figure of the three I recognized the man to whom I had spoken in England when the Indians appeared on the terrace at Lady Verinder's house. The other two who had been his companions on that occasion were no doubt his companions also on this.

One of the spectators near whom I was standing saw me start. In a whisper he explained to me the apparition of the three figures on the platform of rock.

They were Brahmins (he said) who had forfeited their caste in the service of the god. The god had commanded that their purification should be the purification by pilgrimage. On that night the three men were to part. In three separate directions, they were to set forth as pilgrims to the shrines of India.

As those words were whispered to me the plaintive music ceased. The three men prostrated themselves on the rock, before the curtain which hid the shrine. They rose—they looked on one another—they embraced. Then they descended separately among the people. The people made way for them in dead silence. In three different directions I saw the crowd part, at one and the same moment. Then slowly the grand white mass of the people closed together again. We saw them no more.

A new strain of music, loud and jubilant, rose from the hidden shrine. The crowd around me shuddered, and pressed together.

The curtain between the trees was drawn aside, and the shrine was disclosed to view.

There, raised high on a throne—seated on his typical antelope, with his four arms stretching towards the four corners of the earth—there, soared above us, dark and awful in the mystic light of heaven, the god of the Moon. And there, in the forehead of the deity, gleamed the yellow Diamond whose splendour had last shone on me in England from the bosom of a woman's dress!

So the years pass and repeat each other; so the same events revolve in the cycles of time. What will be the next adventures of the Moonstone? Who can tell?

EDITOR'S NOTE

WILLIAM WILKIE COLLINS was the elder son of the gifted landscape painter William Collins, R.A. He was born in London on the 8th of January 1824, and when he was eleven years old the family went to Italy where they remained for three years.

After their return to England young Collins spent four years in a tea warehouse. He was then entered at Lincoln's Inn and was called to the Bar three years later. His work as a lawyer proving uncongenial, though the knowledge he gained was very valuable to him, he gradually drifted into literature. The *Life of William Collins* (1848), which he wrote a year after the death of his father, was his first published work.

In 1851 he made the acquaintance of Charles Dickens and the two men became close friends. *After Dark* (1856) and *The Dead Secret* (1857) appeared serially in Dickens's periodical *Household Words*. But it was with the publication of *The Woman in White*, first printed in *All the Year Round* in 1860, that Collins achieved his first real success. He was now established as a popular novelist and *The Woman in White* is still regarded as his masterpiece.

His next popular work is *The Moonstone* (1868), "the first, the longest, and the best of modern English detective novels." (The abridgment given here is a greatly condensed version of the original.)

Collins possesses in the highest degree the gift of telling an interesting and perplexing story. In *The Moonstone* he handles with consummate skill a complex and ingenious plot, an absorbing and exciting mystery, sensational episodes and an unexpected and convincing dénouement. "This shocker of the 'Sixties," writes a modern reviewer, "is no black-letter manuscript, or period curio, but a detective novel of intricate device, told in seam upon seam of interlocking narrative." Allowing for its melodrama, and its occasional tendency to crudity and violence, *The Moonstone* still remains a major classic of its kind.

Collins died in London on 23rd September, 1889.

QUESTIONS

1 Give a brief account of the first appearance of the Indians in this story.

2 How was it that Rosanna Spearman came to be housemaid in Lady Verinder's establishment? What was her favourite walk?

3 Relate how the Moonstone came into the possession of Miss Verinder.

4 Write a short account of the events which followed the loss of the Diamond.

5 Who was Sergeant Cuff? Describe his appearance.

6 What three prophecies did the Sergeant make when Lady Verinder dismissed him from the case, and how were they fulfilled?

7 Describe as vividly as you can the incident pictured on page 111.

8 How was Mr. Franklin Blake's innocence proved?

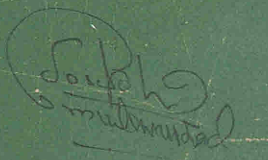
9 Narrate briefly the part played by Godfrey Ablewhite in the story of *The Moonstone*.

10 What was the last appearance of the Indians in this story?

11 Where was the Moonstone last seen and by whom?

12 Relate as vividly as you can the incident in this book which appears to you the most exciting.

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