CHAPTER XII.

THE INTERVENTION OF CHANCE.

It was a moment or so before Garth could quite grasp the fact of this new intrusion of Mrs. Boazoph into the case. When he did so, he remarked that she had no doubt gone to Mere Hall to see Louis Fellenger. Fanks dissented. "In my opinion she went to see Binjoy."

"For what reason?"

"I can't tell you. It must be a powerful reason which would make this woman seek out Binjoy when he had so carefully destroyed his connection with Renshaw. But I have long had my suspicions of Mrs. Boazoph. She removed the dead body; she answered my questions in a hesitating manner, and attempted to exculpate herself without being requested so to do. Also she got rid of the grains of gunpowder. All these things show that Mrs. Boazoph knows more about the matter than she chooses to tell."

"Do you think that she knows who committed the crime?"

"I wouldn't swear to that," said Fanks, with some hesitation; "but she must have identified Renshaw with Binjoy, else she would never have sought out the latter at Mere Hall."
"Do you believe that Mrs. Boazoph inveigled Fellenger to her hotel by means of that advertisement, and then had him killed?"

"How can I tell?" retorted Fanks; "you know as much about the matter as I do. But I will do Mrs. Boazoph the justice to say that I hardly believe she would adopt a course so dangerous to herself. I do not think that she had anything to do with the advertisement."

"The envelope was addressed in a woman's handwriting."

"No doubt; but the handwriting may not be that of Mrs. Boazoph. Still she is in some way connected with Binjoy, and he is mixed up in the crime."

"You mean that he employed the negro to commit it?"

"It looks like it; and yet," continued Fanks, with a frown, "the evidence is too clear for me to take that view."

"Why! The clearer the evidence, the more certain you must be of the truth."

Fanks shook his head. "From my experience I am inclined to doubt easily-obtained evidence. Everything points to the committal of the crime by the negro servant of Binjoy, and for that reason I do not care to accept it. It would seem that in case of trouble Mrs. Boazoph and Binjoy had provided for their own safety by throwing suspicion on the negro."

"But one thing is clear enough," said Garth, impatiently, "the negro killed my cousin."

"A negro killed your cousin, but not necessarily the negro of Binjoy."

Garth looked puzzled. "I am more in the dark than ever," he said.
"Same here, Garth. Depend upon it this murder is no bungling affair. It is a cleverly-planned and cleverly-executed scheme; carried out by people who know what they are doing. As the case now stands I cannot see my way. The evidence—in my opinion—leads to nothing. If Crate had this matter in hand he would arrest Binjoy on suspicion, and hunt for the negro servant as the supposed murderer, and by doing so he would make a mess of the whole business. I shall arrest nobody—at present. Save to yourself and perhaps Crate I shall give my opinions to nobody. I shall watch and wait; put two and two together, and when they make four I shall pounce on the assassin. It will take time and patience and money, but, as I said before, the case is a delicate one. We are dealing with people who are as clever and cleverer than we are. I confess that the outlook is anything but promising," concluded Fanks, with a sigh.

"You cannot guess who committed the crime?"

"No, I cannot. To all appearances it was the negro, but—and this is the main point—was it the negro of Binjoy, and would the negro be clever enough to conceive so subtle a method of committing a crime as the mode of the poisoned needle? Again, would a negro be in possession of such information as would induce Fellenger to permit the use of the needle? The whole mystery lies in that cross tattooed on the arm. When I discover its meaning I shall be able to name the assassin."

"Then why not see Hersham?" suggested Garth.

"He has a similar tattoo mark on his left arm. He may be able to tell you what you wish to know."

"I have an appointment with Hersham at his rooms
to-morrow. I may learn something from him; on the other hand, I may learn nothing."

"And what about Emma Calvert?"

"Oh, I shall find out about her at Taxton-on-Thames. I may discover dead Lady Fellenger of Paris alive at the Surrey village under another name. And yet," added Fanks, producing a paper, "Crate's report proves that the woman died in Paris in 1893, and was buried in Pere la Chaise."

"If that is so, who was the woman who appeared so strangely? The evidence of the photograph and the valet both prove that she is Emma Calvert."

"I can only surmise that she did not die; but that either knowingly or unknowingly some woman was buried in her place. It is the only explanation that I can give. Yet, for all I know, Emma Calvert may have employed that negro to kill her wicked husband."

"It is a wild theory," said Garth, "why should this woman, the lawful wife of my cousin, pretend to be dead, and submit to have her identity destroyed by the false burial? If she is alive, I can quite conceive that she should have my cousin killed out of revenge; but why the pretended death, which—to all appearances—was acquiesed in by Fellenger?"

"I can't answer that question until I wring the truth from Robert."

"There is no necessity for Robert. I have found another person who can tell you the truth."

"Oh!" said Fanks, looking up sharply, "and this person?"

"Herbert Vaud; the son of the lawyer you saw the other day."

"You don't say so," exclaimed Fanks, eagerly, "you laugh at chance, Garth; well, here is another chance
which may put us on the right track. If we solve the mystery of Emma Calvert, we may unravel the Tooley Alley enigma. Tell me all you know; omit no detail. Begin, begin!"

Flattered by the interest taken in his discovery, Garth related at great length the extraordinary conduct of young Vaud; the cause of such conduct as explained by the elder Vaud; and drew attention to the fact that if confronted with the missing woman, Herbert might be able to recognise her, either as an imposter, or as the dead Emma Calvert.

Fanks listened with the closest attention; nor did he venture a remark until Garth had concluded his story. Then he drew a breath and reflected.

"It is most extraordinary," he said at length, "dare you disbelieve in chance. Chance led you to the office of the Vauds; chance made you scribble that name on the paper; chance drew the attention of Herbert Vaud to the name. I have always found that chance is my best friend."

"All this is beside the point," said Garth, impatiently, "what do you say?"

"Your discovery may lead to something," replied Fanks, cautiously. "I shall see Herbert Vaud after I have interviewed Hersham. Between the two of them I may learn something likely to throw light on the darkness of this case; but we are only on the threshold of our difficulties as yet."

Garth rose to take his leave. "I agree with you," he said, "the future looks anything but hopeful. But I shall leave you now; as you are tired after your long journey."

Fanks stretched himself. "I am rather weary," he remarked, yawning, "and I shan't be sorry to go to
bed. Come and see me to-morrow, and I'll tell you how I get on with Hersham. And Garth," added Fanks, going to the door with his guest, "don't do any more detective business on your own account. It will take me some time to exhaust the information you have brought me. When I have arrived at some conclusion regarding this new evidence, I shall tell you what to do."

Garth was quite willing to be guided by Fanks' advice; the more so as he was entirely at a loss how to proceed, and was waiting for the more experienced head of the detective to guide him. With quite sufficient to think about for the next twenty-four hours he took his departure, and left Fanks to enjoy a well-earned rest.

The appointment with Hersham was for twelve o'clock the next day; and punctually at that time Fanks took his way up to Acacia Road, St. John's Wood, where the journalist had his lodgings. Certainly not a very central position for a man engaged in the press; but Hersham had been brought up in the Isle of Wight, beside the sea, and amid green trees. From the effect of early association he could not bear to be cooped up amid bricks and mortar, where he could scarcely breathe. Therefore he had taken up his abode in a suburb where he was certain of fresh air. He went to and fro between Fleet Street and St. John's Wood on his bicycle, and thus by a little dexterity, he managed to attend to his duties on the "Morning Planet," and yet to live a comparatively rural life.

When Fanks arrived at noon, Hersham, for health's sake, was digging in the garden; but, on seeing the detective, he came forward to greet his visitor. He was a slender, handsome young man of eight and twenty,
or thereabouts; with curly, brown hair and blue eyes. He wore a moustache, but otherwise he was clean shaven. Usually his face was pleasant and smiling, with a high colour and a genial expression. On this occasion he was rather pale, and there was an anxious look in his eyes which did not escape the detective. He had seen the same expression in the eyes of Binjoy.

"How are you, Fanks," said Hersham, with an obvious effort at lightness. "I see that you are punctual to the minute. I am glad of that; as I can't give you much time. I have an engagement with my editor at one-thirty."

"Oh, I can explain my business in half an hour," replied Fanks, lightly. "I won't take up more of your valuable time than I can help. You were astonished to get my note."

"Frankly speaking, I was," said Hersham, with an uneasy look. "I can't conceive what you want to see me about. I hope," he added, with a faint smile, "that it is nothing in your line of business?"

"That is just the point. It is in my line of business."

To the surprise of Fanks, the young man gave a kind of gasp, and without a word he turned and led the way into the house. This behaviour was so different to his usual manner, that Fanks suspected trouble; and, with nothing but his incurable suspicion to go on, he wondered if this agitation was in any way connected with the business he had come about. In plain words, with the tattooed cross; and with the crime of Tooley's Alley. The room into which Hersham ushered the detective, was a simply-furnished apartment of a bright and cheerful character. Furniture, carpet, wallpaper, and curtains, were all of a light and pleasant
complexion. Two dwarf book-shelves on either side of the fireplace were filled with well-chosen volumes; while boxing gloves and foils on the walls showed that the tastes of the journalist were not exclusively literary. Excellent pictures adorned the walls; and photographs—mostly those of pretty women—were ranged on the mantelpiece. As a whole, the room was remarkably bright and attractive; in both of which respects it thoroughly reflected the character of its occupant.

With commendable hospitality, Hersham produced a bottle of whisky, two glasses, and a jug of water. Signing to Fanks to help himself, he sat in a chair near the window, and waited for his apparently unwelcome visitor to speak. Fanks did not open his mouth, and Hersham looked up to see the cause of his silence. The detective was staring at the photographs on the mantleshelf—or rather, he was gazing with astonished eyes at one portrait. It was little wonder that he did so; for the picture was that of the young woman, who had appeared and disappeared so unexpectedly at the chambers of Sir Gregory Fellenger, in Half-Moon Street. For once in his life, Fanks was rendered dumb with astonishment.

"What are you staring at?" asked Hersham, sharply.

The detective pointed to the picture. "Who is that young lady?" he asked in a tone of intense curiosity.

"I don't see what business that is of yours," replied Hersham, "but to gratify your curiosity I may tell you she is the girl I am engaged to."

"The girl you are engaged to! Is she alive?"

"Of course she is," said Hersham, half angry, half
amused, "why should she be dead. Do you know her? Have you seen her? Why do you ask?"

"I shall tell you that later on," answered Fanks, "but tell me. Is the name of that girl Emma Calvert?"

"I never heard of Emma Calvert," retorted Hersham, crossly, "the name of that young lady is Anne Colmer."

"Of Taxton-on-Thames?"

"Yes! Of Taxton-on-Thames."
CHAPTER XIII.

THE TATTOOED CROSS.

Fanks was prepared for most surprises, and, from experience, he was capable of controlling his emotions thoroughly. In this instance, however, he was so overwhelmed by the unexpectedness of the discovery that it was some time before he could arrange his thoughts and plan of action. The coincidence of the tattooed cross was extraordinary, but the resemblance of the portraits was still more so. Before he could comment on the fact Hersham asked an abrupt question.

"Why do you speak of these things?" he said anxiously, "and what do you know about Miss Colmer?"

"I know nothing about Miss Colmer," replied Fanks, quickly. "Hold on a minute, my good fellow, I have had what people call a turn."

Hersham accepted this explanation with a doubtful air, and pushed the spirits towards the detective. Accepting this attention, Fanks poured himself out a stiff glass. A sip or two braced his nerves and set his brain to work, so that shortly he was able to face the unexpected situation. For obvious reasons he did not wish to reveal too much to Hersham; yet under the peculiar circumstances of the case he was
forced to tell him a certain amount. To gain his ends with the least possible risk to his plans he was reduced to manufacturing a plausible theory from the facts within his knowledge. The task was one of some little difficulty, but he succeeded fairly well in suppressing so much of the truth as he did not wish known.

"That photograph took me by surprise, Hersham," he said after a pause.

"Why should it take you by surprise?" said the other, jealously. "Have you ever met with Miss Colmer?"

"I have not met the lady," replied Fanks, slowly, "but I have seen some one who greatly resembles her. So greatly indeed that I thought the person I saw was the original of that photograph."

"Where did you see this person?"

"At Paris—in the Morgue."

It seemed to Fanks that Hersham changed colour on hearing this; but he kept his feelings under control, and merely remarked, "In the Morgue? A case of murder, no doubt."

"No! Suicide by drowning. Afterwards I heard that the body was that of an English girl called Emma Calvert." He purposely suppressed the fact of the marriage. "She is buried in Pere la Chaise under the name—whether true or not, I cannot say—of Calvert. You cannot wonder that the sight of that picture, which I took for that of the dead woman, should startle me, the more especially as you assure me that the original of that photograph is still alive and is engaged to you."

"Was it for this purpose that you came to see me?" demanded Hersham.

"No; I came to see you about something else."
Nevertheless, before telling you the object of my visit, I should like to have the mystery of the photograph explained."

"How do you know that I can explain it?"

"Perhaps you can, perhaps you can't. On the other hand, perhaps you can and perhaps you—won't."

Hersham bit his lip, and took a turn up and down the room. He appeared to be on the verge of revealing something, but checked himself when about to speak. At this stage Fanks wisely held his tongue, and resolved to let Hersham make the first remark. Evidently the young man had something on his mind, and what the something was Fanks was determined to find out; but he left the mode of revelation entirely to his host. Hersham was aware of this, and hesitated and faltered and frowned. Ultimately he resumed his seat and accepted the situation.

"I have always looked upon you as a friend, Fanks," he said in a hesitating manner; "and I have every reason to believe that you wish me well."

"My dear fellow," said Fanks, wondering what could be the reason of this appeal, "you are perfectly right. I would do anything to prove my friendship for you."

"Then answer me candidly. Did you come here to ask me about that cross which you know is tattooed on my left arm?"

"Yes," said Fanks, unhesitatingly; "I did. How did you guess my errand?"

"I read the report of the inquest on the body of Fellenger, and I remarked the fact of the poisoned needle and the tattooed cross. I was informed that you had the case in hand; I knew that you had seen the mark on my arm. So when you wrote asking
me to see you it was not hard for me to guess what you wanted. You see, I was right."

"I congratulate you on your penetration, my dear Hersham," replied Fanks, coolly. "At the same time, I do not see what this speech has to do with your former one about friendship."

"I can explain. You asked me a question about that photograph; and to answer it in a satisfactory manner I shall be forced to tell you something about the family of the girl to whom I am engaged."

"Does your explanation concern the late Sir Gregory Fellenger?"

"Yes. It has a great deal to do with the late Sir Gregory."

"And with Emma Calvert?"

"With the woman you call Emma Calvert."

"Ought I to say Lady Fellenger?" said Fanks, quickly.

Hersham shrugged his shoulders. "That makes no difference to my explanation," he said, and rose to get the photograph off the mantelshelf. "You think that this is the picture of Emma Calvert?"

For answer, Fanks produced the portrait he had found in Fellenger's rooms, and showed it to Hersham. "Is this the picture of Anne Colmer?" he asked.

"No, that is Emma Calvert."

"Then these photographs are those of two different women?"

"Certainly. The one is Emma Calvert who committed suicide in Paris. The other is Anne Colmer who is alive and engaged to me."

Fanks considered for a minute. "I now begin to see light," he said, in a sober tone. "Am I right in assuming that Emma is the sister of Anne?"
"You are perfectly right. She is the twin-sister."

"Ah! That accounts for the resemblance."

"It does," replied Hersham, with a nod, "the two sisters were so exactly alike that apart you could not tell one from the other—at least, so I have been told."

"Oh! Then you never saw the two sisters together?"

"I did not. I never saw Emma in my life."

"Of course you know her sad story," said Fanks, after a pause.

"Anne's mother told it to me. I know that Emma married Fellenger secretly, and was driven to her death by his brutality. Now, you can see why I reminded you of our friendship before telling you the truth."

"No!" said Fanks, sharply, "I can't see."

"Why! I am engaged to the sister of the dead girl; so I thought—"

"That I might accuse you of killing Sir Gregory out of revenge?"

"Well, I did have that thought in my head; and then the coincidence of the cross, you know."

Fanks laughed, and took the hand of Hersham. "My dear lad," he said. "I have no idea of accusing you of the crime; your engagement to Miss Colmer is no proof that you killed the man who acted so badly towards her sister. Do not, therefore, hesitate to tell me all you know. How Emma Calvert came to London; how she met with Sir Gregory; and how she was loved by Herbert Vaud?"

"What!" cried Hersham. "You know that also?"

"I know more than you think, Hersham; therefore, if you attempt to deceive me I shall find you out, Now go on with your story."
"I do not want to deceive you," replied the journalist, "but you must understand that I only speak from hearsay. If you want the tale first-hand you must see old Mrs. Colmer, at Taxton-on-Thames."

"Hum!" said Fanks, remembering his theory regarding the directing of the envelope which contained the cardboard star. "What kind of a person is the lady in question?"

"An invalid," said Hersham, promptly. "A paralytic; she has not moved hand or foot for years."

"Confound it!"

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing. Only your information has upset a theory. Never mind; go on."

"There isn't much to tell," said Hersham. "Mrs. Colmer is a decayed gentlewoman, whose husband died and left her with two little girls. To support these she set up a dressmaker's establishment at Taxton-on-Thames. When the children grew up, Mrs. Colmer was smitten with paralysis and laid on the shelf. Anne and Emma carried on the business, and thus supported their mother. Emma came to London to gain experience in a fashionable dressmaker's establishment; and Anne remained behind to look after the shop at Taxton-on-Thames. While in London, Emma met with young Vaud at the house of a friend of her mother's. He fell in love with Emma and wished to marry her. She liked him, but she did not love him; nevertheless, for her mother's sake, she accepted his offer. Then in an unlucky hour Herbert introduced Fellenger to Emma; she loved him, or was attracted by his title. At all events, she ran away with him to Paris and became his wife."

"She was married in a London office. Registrar's."
"I did not know that," said Hersham. "Emma told her mother that she was married, but she did not write where. Well, young Vaud had an attack of brain fever, and afterwards he went on a sea voyage. On his return he crossed to Paris to learn what had become of Emma. He ascertained that she was dead and buried; in some way he learned the whole miserable history. Vaud returned to England to see Fellenger; but before he could meet with him the baronet was killed in Tooley's Alley; and the fate of Emma was avenged by an unknown hand. That is the story, Fanks; you can make what use you like of it."

"It is a wretched story," replied Fanks. "I can now understand the hatred which young Vaud bears towards the memory of his false friend; and I can understand also how I mistook Anne for Emma. But," added Fanks, with emphasis, "I cannot understand why Anne came to the chambers of Fellenger, and why she ran away when she saw me."

Hersham looked jealous, and frowned. "I cannot understand that myself," he said. "She hated Fellenger as much as did Herbert Vaud; and I do not know why she should go to the rooms of the scoundrel."

"She asked for the valet."

"Robert, the whimpering, pitiful dog? Well, Anne might have gone to see him to ask for particulars of her sister's death."

"Well, yes," replied Fanks, thoughtfully; "but that does not explain why she went away when she saw me."

"I can only surmise that she did not wish to explain what brought her there, and so tell the tale of her sister's death to a stranger."
"No; there is more in it than that," said the detective, remembering that Anne had been among the crowd on the night of the murder; "but we will talk of this hereafter. In the meantime, let us return to the main object of my visit, and show me this famous cross."

Hersham made no objection to this request, and removed his coat. Rolling up his sleeve he exposed the cross tattooed on the flesh of the left forearm. It was a St. Catherine cross, the size of a florin, and Fanks examined it long and carefully. "Did you get that tattooed at school?" he asked when Hersham had resumed his coat.

"I did not get it done at all. I have had it ever since I can remember; and I have asked my father often about it, but he cannot, or will not, give me any information."

"He will not most probably. Are you sure that there is no story attached to the tattooing?"

"None that I know of; but my father might be better informed."

"Would your mother know?"

"I have no mother; she died when I was a baby."

"Strange," muttered Fanks, pensively; "it is strange that you should have this mark on you and yet be ignorant of its significance. I wish you would speak to your father about it."

"He won't tell me anything; I have asked him before."

"You have no idea why a cross similar to this should have been tattooed on Sir Gregory's arm by a negro?"

"Certainly not. I did not even know Sir Gregory."

"I wonder if your father could tell me?"
"I don't know. He might or he might not. Do you think that this cross has anything to do with the murder you are investigating?"

"That is just what I do think," retorted Fanks. "The man was killed by means of a poisoned needle used to prick in a cross similar to that on your arm."

"But that insinuates that I am mixed up in the matter."

"It does nothing of the sort. Don't be an ass."

But Hersham was not content with this friendly assurance. "You think that I have something to do with the crime," he said obstinately.

Fanks looked at his agitated face, at his trembling hands, and a strange suspicion entered his mind. "I'll tell you what I do think," he said in an abrupt tone; "I think that you have not told me all the truth."

Hersham trembled still more, and clasped his hands together. "I cannot," he muttered, shrinking away from Fanks; "I dare not."
CHAPTER XIV.

FANKS MAKES UP HIS MIND.

Naturally Fanks was astonished at this confession; but he was so conversant with the character of the young man that he could not believe the journalist was guilty. Despite the coincidence of the tattooed cross and the relationship of Fellenger's wife with Anne Colmer, he did not think for a moment that his friend had anything to do with the crime. Nevertheless, it would appear from the hesitation of Hersham to speak openly that he had some knowledge—if not of the crime itself—at all events of the circumstances leading to its accomplishment. This was the only construction he could place on this last outburst.

"After what I have said, Hersham, I think you ought to confide in me," he remarked after a pause. "I do not suspect you in any way; yet you refuse to aid me. You ought to be the first to help me."

"I do not see how you make that out," replied Hersham, with a pale face. "I never met with Sir Gregory. I heard nothing but evil of his life, and he drove to suicide the sister of the girl to whom I am engaged. Why should I help you?"
"Ah!" cried Fanks, sharply; "then you can help me if you choose."

"I certainly cannot," returned Hersham, doggedly. "I have not the slightest idea who killed Fellenger. I can tell you nothing."

"Yes, you can; only you refuse to. Why I cannot say. You had better be careful, Hersham; you will not find me easy to deal with if you rouse my suspicions."

"Do you threaten me?"

"I warn you," retorted Fanks, smartly, "I am not accustomed to have my offers of help repelled. Your remark of a few moments ago shows me that you know something. What is it?"

"I know nothing."

"You do! Speak, if not for your own sake, at least for that of Miss Colmer."

Hersham stepped up to Fanks with an angry face. "How dare you introduce the name of Miss Colmer?" he cried. "I forbid you to speak of her."

"All the worse for you and for—her. She called at the chambers of the dead man. Why did she call there? She was at Tooley's Alley on the night of the murder. What was she doing in such a place? You refuse to tell me? I shall ask her."

Hersham sprang forward, and grasped the arm of Fanks to prevent his leaving the room. "Think of what you are about," he gasped. "Ask her nothing, you hear me, nothing."

"That rests with yourself. Tell me what you know and—"

"I know nothing," said Hersham, and turned away with an obstinate look.
"Good!" said Fanks, putting on his hat. "We now understand one another. I shall find out all without troubling you. Good-bye. And you may thank your stars that I do not arrest you on suspicion."

"I swear that I am innocent."

"I know that, else I would have had you in custody by this time. But you are screening another person. Anne Colmer, for instance."

"She knows nothing."

"I shall judge of that for myself," retorted Fanks, and left the room.

In Acacia Road the detective hailed a cab and drove to the nearest telegraph office. It had occurred to him that Hersham might attempt to communicate with Anne; and he was resolved to checkmate such a move. To this end he sent a wire to the head of the rural police at Taxton-on-Thames, instructing him to delay if possible all letters and telegrams which might come to Miss Colmer. Thereby he hoped to prevent Hersham warning the girl.

Arriving at New Scotland Yard, he detailed a man to watch Hersham, and sent him up to Acacia Road. A glance at "Bradshaw" assured him that to reach Taxton-on-Thames, Hersham would have to start from Waterloo. Thither he sent another detective, to keep an eye on the trains. Therefore, by letter, by telegram, and by railway, he had stopped Hersham from communicating with Anne Colmer. After taking these precautions he saw Crate.

"I am going to Taxton-on-Thames at three o'clock," he said.

"Are you going to look for the woman who directed the envelope, Mr. Fanks?"

Fanks stretched out his legs, and began fiddling
with his ring. "That is just what is puzzling me, Crate," observed he. "I have told you of my conver­sation with Mr. Hersham. Well, unless he is deceiving me, Mrs. Colmer, is a paralytic. She could not have directed that envelope; yet, going by the writing, I'll swear that an elderly woman penned the address. If not Mrs. Colmer—an obvious impossibility—who wrote it?"

"Anne Colmer," said Crate, promptly.

"No. For disguise, she would rather have adopted a masculine hand."

"Mrs. Boazoph?"

"If Mrs. Boazoph had been traced to Taxton-on-Thames I should say yes; if the letter had been sent from Mere Hall I should have said yes. But," added Fanks, with emphasis, "as it did not come from Mere Hall, and Mrs. Boazoph has nothing to do with Taxton-on-Thames, I am not inclined to suspect the lady."

"Then there is nobody else."

"There must be somebody else; and the somebody else committed the crime."

Crate thought. "Do you think that the negro sent that star?" he asked.

"I feel perfectly certain that the negro had nothing to do with the star."

"But we have proved conclusively that a negro killed Fellenger."

Fanks smiled complacently. "I should not be at all surprised if we found out that a negro had nothing to do with the murder," he said, slowly.

"But that is impossible, Mr. Fanks."

"Nothing is impossible in a criminal case," said Fanks. "Look here, Crate, as you know, it is not my
habit to give an opinion before I have thoroughly threshed out the subject matter of a case; but in this instance, I shall depart from my rule. I should not be surprised if I had already spotted the assassin of Sir Gregory Fellenger."

"No!" cried Crate in admiration. "And who is it, Mr. Fanks. Man or woman?"

"Walls have ears, Crate. I shall whisper the name and when the case comes to an end—if it ever does—you can laugh at me or congratulate me at your will. Now then."

Fanks approached his mouth to the ear of Crate and whispered a single name. "That is my opinion," he said slowly.

Crate shook his head. "No, Mr. Fanks. I am loth to put my opinion against yours, but I think you are making a mistake."

"Perhaps I am," assented Fanks, carelessly, "the case is a difficult one, and I am quite prepared to find out that I am wrong. All the same, I am confident that the person I named is guilty. I'll bet you five pounds to five shillings that I am correct."

Crate grinned and took up the bet. The behaviour of his chief flattered him, and he would not have minded losing. But he could not bring himself to agree with Fanks as to the name of the guilty person; for he had a theory of his own in which he believed. This theory was diametrically opposed to that of his superior.

"How long shall you be at Taxton-on-Thames," he asked Fanks, when this little piece of amusement was concluded.

"I may be a few days, a few hours, or a month. It all depends on what I find out. I must interview Anne
Colmer; see her mother; and make inquiries about Binjoy and his negro servant."

"But the doctor is at Mere Hall. You must go there to ask about the negro."

"Rubbish. As I told you before, the negro has never been seen at Mere Hall. Binjoy lived at Taxton-on-Thames, and it is there that I must ask after this mysterious black man. Afterwards, I can go to Mere Hall."

"Have you any reason for going?"

"One. I wish to find out why Mrs. Boazoph visited the Hall."

"And what about the tattooed cross, Mr. Fanks?"

"Oh, I shall see that later on. But in the meantime I must pay these visits. Firstly, Taxton-on-Thames. Secondly, Mere Hall. Thirdly, the Isle of Wight and the Rev. Mr. Hersham."

"Humph!" said Crate, doubtfully. "From what you say, I should think Mr. Hersham junior would thwart your plans, if he could."

"I have not the least doubt of it," replied Fanks dryly, "but he is being watched. If he tries to thwart me I shall, at least, have the satisfaction of knowing it. By the way, do you know anything about Bombay?"

"That's in India, isn't it?" said Crate, rather taken aback by the apparent irrelevancy of this question. "I don't know anything about Bombay, Mr. Fanks, except what I've seen in books."

"You must extend your knowledge then; for I may want you to go there in a week or so."

"Has my going there anything to do with this case?" demanded Crate, still very much astonished at the turn the conversation had taken.
"It has everything to do with this case," replied Fanks, enjoying his perplexity, and the confusion of his somewhat slow-moving mind.

"Dr. Renshaw did not go to India," was Crate's next remark.

"Quite so. Renshaw having resumed his real name of Binjoy, is now at Mere Hall—in safety, as he thinks. I can lay hands on him any time; but I can't lay hands on that negro. You must do that, Crate."

"But the negro isn't in India, Mr. Fanks?"

"In my humble opinion—I may be wrong—he is," replied the other. "See here, Crate. Dr. Binjoy must know that as I am employed by Sir Louis to hunt down the assassin, I must see him sooner or later. If I see the new baronet, I can hardly help seeing his 'Fidus Achates.' Now, although Binjoy has—as he thinks—destroyed all trace of his connection with Renshaw, yet he cannot quite alter his personal appearance, which is rather noticeable. He may shave off his beard so as to make himself look younger; he may even get rid of his stoutness; but he cannot alter his voice or entirely change his pompous manner. He must, therefore guess that I may be struck with his resemblance to Renshaw. In some way—for I give him the credit of being clever—he will endeavour to account for the resemblance. I do not know the particular lie he will stick to; but of one thing I am certain;—he will keep up the deception that Renshaw is in India by means of prepared letters written to Dr. Turnor."

"It is my opinion, Crate," continued Fanks, solemnly, "that Binjoy has got rid of his negro servant by sending him to Bombay; and, from Bombay the negro will forward letters—already written—to Turnor of Great Auk Street. I may be wrong, of course, and
I do not wish to act in a hurry. But the first letter I see from India, purporting to be from Binjoy-Renshaw, that very day you start for Bombay to look for the negro who is at present missing. I am content to stake my professional reputation that you will find him there."

"Well, you are a 'cute one, Mr. Fanks,"" said Crate in an admiring tone. ""I should never have thought of that."

This tribute of respect from Crate put an end to the conversation for the time being. Fanks went to his chambers, packed a few clothes, and repaired to Waterloo Station. The detective who was watching there, assured him that Hersham had not been seen on the platform; and Fanks went down to Taxton-on-Thames quite satisfied that he had what the Americans call "the inside running."

He amused himself while in the train by making notes in his pocket book; and with figuring out the questions which he intended to ask Miss Colmer. Notwithstanding his assurance to Crate, he was very doubtful if he would be able to discover the assassin of Sir Gregory, for the further he went into the case the more intricate did it become. So far as he could see at the present moment, the person who had killed the Tooley Alley victim had every chance of escaping the gallows. All that the detective could do was to go on in the darkness; and trust to any stray gleam of light which might reveal the assassin; but at present, he could not see an inch ahead of him.

On arriving at Taxton-on-Thames he drove at once to the local post office; and, as he expected, he there found a telegram, which the police had succeeded in delaying. It was addressed to
Anne Colmer, and ran as follows: "Detective coming; answer him nothing." There was no name; but from the context, and the place whence it had been sent — High Street, St. John's Wood — Fanks had no difficulty in guessing that it had come from Hersham.

"Very good," he murmured. "What Hersham knows, the girl knows. I failed to get the information from him; I may from her."
CHAPTER XV.

COMING EVENTS.

The Colmers, mother and daughter, dwelt at the further end of the village in a cottage adjoining the shop. The former was small, but the latter was quite an imposing structure for so sparsely-populated a neighbourhood. Indeed its owners made an excellent income out of the dressmaking business; and they were fairly comfortable in the position of life into which they had been forced by circumstances. They employed five or six girls in the workroom and three in the shop, so that Anne found her hands full in looking after these underlings, and in supervising the general run of the business. She was an admirable administratrix.

As may be guessed from the nature of her complaint, Mrs. Colmer was a mere cypher in the domestic economy of Briar Cottage—for so the house was named. The old woman usually sat in a wheeled chair beside a bow window, looking out on to the back garden. This latter sloped down to the river banks, and was prettily laid out, with a summerhouse at the lower end. From her window the paralytic could see the passing of boats and steamers, and enjoy the brightness of the aquatic life. She viewed this panorama from morn
COMING EVENTS.

A mild and placid woman, she was of a singularly sweet disposition; and although she was chained to her chair by her affliction, she never complained. The paralysis extended only to her limbs, but her brain was still active, and she could give, and did give, her daughter excellent advice in connection with the business. The sorrowful expression on her face showed how keenly she had felt the loss of Emma. But that was not the only melancholy event in her life; there were others which will be spoken of in due course. Mrs. Colmer was not without her troubles, but she had her consolations also, and of these the love of Anne was the greatest.

On the day of Fanks' arrival the old lady was seated in her usual place, between five and six, waiting for Anne. Tea was ready for the girl, but Mrs. Colmer had already been fed by her nurse, and was looking forward to the usual conversation which took place at this time. All day Anne was busy in the shop, and Mrs. Colmer was left to her own devices; but when the labours of the day were ended, mother and daughter met to converse. To Mrs. Colmer this had been the happiest hour of the day—but that was before Emma went to London. She still talked to Anne, and took an interest in domestic and local affairs; but she was haunted by a feeling of impending evil, and she clung despairingly to her remaining child, dreading lest she should meet with the fate of her sister. An atmosphere of apprehension existed in Briar Cottage.

In due course Anne entered, and, having kissed her mother, sat down to tea. She was as beautiful as ever, but there was a haggard look on her face which ac-
corded but ill with her youth. It would seem as though she dreaded the future also, and was expecting the happening of some terrible misfortune. After a short discussion of domestic matters the conversation languished, for, wrapped in her own thoughts, Anne did not seem inclined to talk. Mrs. Colmer noticed this, and commented thereon with affectionate solicitude, bent on knowing what made Anne so absent-minded.

"Is there anything wrong, my dear?", she asked nervously.

"Nothing, mother; I am a little tired, that is all."

"There is more than that, Anne. For some days you have not been at all like yourself."

"Can you wonder at that, mother?" replied Anne, bitterly. "Think of all that has happened this last month."

An angry light came into the faded eyes of the old woman. "You should be glad of what has happened," she said in a stern voice; "that wicked man has been punished for his evil courses. He drove my Emma to her death, and himself has perished by violence. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; that is Scripture."

"All the same, mother, I wish that he had not been murdered. Gregory was a brute, I know, and the death of poor Emma lies at his door; but murder—" she shuddered. "It is so terrible to think that he should have been cut off in the midst of his wickedness."

"He has gone down into the pit, child. Let us talk no more of him. It is said that we must forgive our enemies, but it is hard for me to forgive him, even though he is dead. My beautiful Emma, she should have lived as Lady Fellenger, instead of dying
through his cruelty. I hope, Anne, that your marriage will turn out happier than that of your poor sister."

"Ted will be the best of husbands," said Anne, in a tone of conviction. "He loves me as dearly as I love him. I wonder when he is coming down to see me again? I have so much to tell him."

"About your visit to Half-Moon Street?"

"That and other things," was Anne's answer; then, after a pause, "though indeed he may not be so ignorant of that visit as you think."

"Who could tell him but yourself?"

"That detective, mother. He saw me when I entered the room, and he followed me also. If I had not escaped him in the manner I told you, I should have been in trouble."

"You need not be anxious about that now, Anne. The detective can never find you——"

"I am not so sure about that," said Anne, in parenthesis.

"And as to Mr. Hersham knowing about your visit to Half-Moon Street," Mrs. Colmer continued, "I do not see how this detective you speak of can possibly tell him."

"I can see, mother. Mr. Hersham knows this detective—a Mr. Fanks; and he will probably see him about the case in the interests of the 'Morning Planet.' Should they meet—as they are almost sure to do—my name will certainly be mentioned. Then the story of my visit will come out, with the result that Mr. Fanks will find me here."

Mrs. Colmer turned slightly pale. "Are you afraid to meet him," she asked.

Anne shrugged her shoulders. "I can't say that I am over-pleased," was her reply. "He is a clever
man, and I shall have considerable difficulty in keep­ing my own counsel.”

“You must tell him nothing—nothing.”

“You can be sure of that, mother. Should Mr. Fanks come here he will go away as wise as he came. I know when to hold my tongue as on this occasion. Matters are too serious to be spoken of openly.”

“Oh, dear, dear,” said Mrs. Colmer in an agitated tone. “Into what difficulties have we not been led. I wish I had never let Emma go to London.”

“Rather wish that she had never met with Herbert Vaud, mother.”

“But, Anne, she loved Herbert.”

“I do not think so, else she would never have married Sir Gregory. But you know she always was ambitious and impulsive; look where her ambitious have led her. If she had not met with Herbert she would not have become the wife of that wicked man; if she had not been his wife she would not have been driven to her death; and if she had not died, we should not have been involved in all this trouble.”

“Trouble, trouble!” moaned Mrs. Colmer. “What troubles we have had, and more will come.”

“Do not be afraid, mother,” said Anne, kissing her. “You have always me to stand between you and dan­ger. I may never meet with this detective; I may never be questioned by him, and so all will be well. But should he come, why—I shall know how to answer him.”

“You will say nothing.”

“On the contrary, I shall say a great deal,” replied Anne. “But such things as will mislead Mr. Fanks. He shall never be set on the right path by my telling; be sure of that.”
"I wish I could see you married to Ted, my dear," said her mother, comforted by these assurances. "It would be such a relief to my mind."

"I am afraid we will not be able to marry for some considerable time. My dear Ted is very clever, but he cannot earn enough for us both to live on; and I do not wish to be a drag on him. No, no, mother, we must wait until things mend, and the outlook is brighter."

"You could have married Dr. Binjoy."

"I would not marry Dr. Binjoy if there was not another man in the world," said Anne, with supreme contempt. "He is a self-indulgent sensualist. My Ted is worth a dozen of him."

"Still he is well-off," sighed Mrs. Colmer.

"I do not see how you make that out, mother. He was, and is, entirely dependent on Sir Louis Fellenger for his money; and I want to have nothing to do with the Fellengers. Their family have cost us dear enough already."

This reference to the dead Emma made Mrs. Colmer weep, and Anne had considerable difficulty in quietening her. However, she succeeded in the end, and left her mother to her own thoughts, while she herself went out into the garden for a breath of fresh air. Moreover, she wanted to be alone, for the purpose of thinking over the position of things. Anne could not but recognise that if certain contingencies arose, she and her mother would find themselves very awkwardly placed.

The evening was warm, and the sky was filled with a mellow light, which rendered languid the atmosphere. Against this, the trees stood out in bold relief, every twig and leaf being sharply outlined against
the amber sky. The sound of distant laughter, and the musical splash of oars came to the ears of the girl as she walked slowly down the path towards the summer-house. A low, red-brick wall ran along the bank of the river, and as she leaned over this low parapet, Anne could see some considerable distance to right and left. Before a boating house on the opposite shore a number of people were collected; and every now and then a boat would shoot out into the gleaming waters bearing two or three of them away. Someone musically inclined had brought a banjo, and Anne could hear the thrumming of the strings, and the echo of the latest music-hall ditty. Altogether, the scene was not without its charm; but she was too much taken up with her own troubles to pay much attention to the pleasant picture spread out before her. The quiet of the evening brought no peace to her.

"How foolishly I have acted," she thought, with a shiver. "If I had been wise I would have left these matters alone. I feel certain that Mr. Fanks recognised me as the woman he saw in Tooley's Alley. If he finds me out, he will ask me what I was doing there on the night of the murder. What can I say. I dare not tell him the truth, and he may refuse to believe what I say to him. I acted for the best, it is true, but my good intentions have led me into a position of danger. But I may be wrong—I may be quite safe. That man may never find me. If he does,"—she shivered again, and looked up the river.

Under the glow of the sunset sky, the waters rolled, a broad sheet of gold flecked here and there with the dark forms of boats. To the left Anne saw a skiff containing one carsman, coming swiftly down the stream.
In a half dreamy moment she calculated that he would pass almost immediately under the wall. Then she returned to her self-communings.

"If Ted were only here," she thought. "I should like to tell him all that I have done, and ask him how to act. For his own sake he must keep silent; and for the sake of my mother I must hold my tongue. Oh, it is terrible—terrible to know what I know, and yet remain dumb. And I am afraid of that detective. His eyes seemed to pierce me through on that day. Should he find me out he may compel me to speak. And if I speak—oh, the disgrace and shame of it. Why, why are such things permitted in this world. Oh, Ted! Ted, I wish you were here to comfort me."

She leaned her head on the wall and burst into tears. Anne was not easily moved; and it was an unusual thing for her to thus give way to her emotions. But she was only a girl after all, and her system was strung up and nervously excited by the knowledge of the secret she knew. She would like to have confided in someone, if only to relieve her overburdened mind; but she shrank from the consequences of such a step. A word from her, and the murder in Tooley’s Alley—but, no, she put the thought out of her mind, and, still leaning her head on her arms, she wept bitterly.

Meanwhile the single oarsman rowed steadily towards the red brick wall, which was evidently the point for which he was making. Soon he came abreast of it; shortly he came under it, and Anne raised her head at the sound of the splash of oars, to behold the very man of whom she had been thinking. It was Ted Hersham.
Hersham brought his boat under the wall with a sweep, but before disembarking he looked up to Anne with an anxious expression on his face.

"Did you get my telegram?" he demanded hastily.

"Telegram!" she repeated. "I have received no telegram from you."

"I thought so," said the journalist, and laughed in a savage sort of manner.

"What do you mean?" demanded Anne, noting how haggard he looked. "Is anything wrong?"

"More than I like to say," was his answer.

At that moment it seemed to Anne that her presentiments were about to become true, and she waited with vague terror for his next speech. Ted did not open his mouth for some minutes, being fully occupied in making fast his boat prior to landing. In spite of the importance of the interview, and his desire to prepare Anne for the immediate coming of Fanks, he did not hurry himself, but executed his task with the utmost deliberation. On her part the girl held her peace, and not until her lover had taken her in his
arms to kiss her passionately did she speak. Then she led him to the summerhouse—out of sight of Mrs. Colmer at the window—and broached the subject which was uppermost in her mind.

"Ted," she asked in a low voice, "is there any danger?"

"There is a great deal of danger."

"From what quarter?"

"From the worst of all quarters. Fanks has found you out."

"Ah!" she sat back suddenly and her face turned pale with apprehension. "Is he here?"

Hersham nodded. "I sent a telegram to warn you not to answer his questions."

"I did not receive it."

"I guessed you would not," replied her lover, with a nod. "Fanks visited me to-day, and left me with the intention of coming down here to see you. I sent the wire. Then I fancied that he might manage to get it delayed at the office here. I did not dare to go by Waterloo, as I made sure he would have the station watched. In this dilemma there was nothing left for me to do but to come down on my bicycle, which I did. I rode to Warby's boat-house, left my machine there, and came on to warn you."

Anne considered for a few minutes. "How was it that Mr. Fanks found me out?" she asked anxiously.

"He saw your portrait in my rooms."

"What was he doing in your rooms?"

"He came to question me about the cross tattooed on my arm."

"Did you tell him anything?"

"Nothing! What could I tell him? I am quite
unaware how the cross came to be there. But with regard to his recognition of you; how was it that you went to the chambers of that dead scoundrel?"

"I went to get a photograph of Emma's that was in the possession of her late husband."

"Why did you wish to get the photograph?"

"It had some writing on the back, which may implicate another person in this trouble of the death. I think," she added, pointedly, "that you can guess the name of that person."

"I think I can," replied Hersham, gloomily, "and the worst of it is that Fanks will certainly find out that name."

"Impossible! I may be able to thwart him on that point."

"I hope so; but you do not know the man as I do. He is the most patient and pertinacious of men. He will stick to this case until he has the assassin of Sir Gregory in jail."

"God forbid!" ejaculated Anne, with a shudder.

"Amen to that!" answered Hersham. "Oh, Anne, my dear Anne," he continued, taking her hand, "how I wish we could end all this and fly to the ends of the earth!"

"My dear," she said gently, "we have others to think of besides ourselves. It would never do to desert them at the present moment. Besides there may not be so much chance of discovery as you think."

"I don't know; I am certain of nothing," said Hersham, with a sigh. "I only dread one thing—lest Fanks should force you into betraying that which you would rather hide."

"Don't trouble about that, Ted," returned Anne,
"I think Mr. Fanks will find me more than his match. You need not have come to prepare me, for I am quite ready for the gentleman as soon as he chooses to call."

"That will be very soon. He is in the village now. I don't want him to see me. For that reason I came here in a boat."

"Do not be foolish, Ted," said Anne, quickly. "You must let him see you, else he will suspect that you know something about this matter. And you must be aware, dear, that you have your own safety to look to."

"Oh!" groaned Hersham, "how are we to extricate ourselves from this mess?"

"I think we will leave that to time; and you have me to comfort you."

"Dearest!" he drew her towards him; "without you I should not be able to move one step. At present all is dark and dreary; but let us hope that there are brighter days in store."

"I am certain that there are," said Anne; "but we have a great deal to endure before peace comes. We must go through the valley of humiliation to reach the promised land."

"Well!" said Ted, emphatically, "when we do reach it I think we must go to America, there to commence a new life. It is no use trying to construct a new one here out of the ruins of the old."

"That we shall see," replied Anne, with a sigh. "God knows we have had a great deal to endure since the death of my poor sister. But let us for the moment banish this gloomy subject, and talk of ourselves. How are you getting on with your work?"

Hersham smiled and kissed her. He saw that she
was striving to lighten the burden which had been laid upon him; and he was grateful for the kindness. All the same he found it difficult to put his troubles out of sight and memory, seeing that they were so insistent, and that within the next half hour he might be called upon to defend himself from a dangerous charge. Alone as they were in the summerhouse, they were afraid to speak openly, lest the birds of the air should carry to Fanks undesirable news which would please him, but ruin them. Under these circumstances Hersham agreed with Anne that it was best to let affairs connected with the case of Tooley's Alley remain in abeyance, until they were compelled to take action. In the meantime the unhappy pair went hand in hand into a Fool's Paradise of make-believe, and hollow joys. There was something pitiful in this playing with happiness.

"We will be very poor, my love," said Hersham, somewhat later in the conversation; "and I am afraid that you will miss all the luxuries to which you have been accustomed."

Anne laughed and kissed him. "You silly boy," she said kindly; "my luxuries are of the cheapest kind, as you well know. Besides I can face poverty with a brave heart with you."

"But your mother?"

"I am afraid she will not live long," sighed Anne. "She is growing so weak, and she has long, long fits of silence. Poor mother! she has had a hard life. I do not think she ever got over the death of Emma."

"Does she know anything about these other matters?"

"Very little. I kept as much from her as I could."
Indeed, she would never have heard of the death at all had it not been for Herbert Vaud."

"He might as well have held his tongue," said Ted, angrily; but the fact is, that since Emma's death and his illness he has not been quite right in his head. He returned comparatively well, as you know; but that journey to Paris to inquire after Lady Fellenger unsettled him again."

"Don't talk of Lady Fellenger," said Anne, with a shudder.

"Why not? Your sister was lawfully the wife of Sir Gregory."

"I know that. All the same, I hate to hear the name of the family."

"And yet," said Hersham, meaningly, "you were fond enough of Louis."

Again Anne laughed. "You must not be jealous of my friendship for Louis, Ted. He is a good fellow in his way. I was never in love with him as I am with you, but I liked him."

"And Binjoy, that pompous doctor, did you like him?"

"I hated him. I hate him still," she flashed out. "He is the evil genius of Louis. If these matters only concerned Dr. Binjoy, I should not keep silent and bear the burden I am doing."

"You have me to bear it with you," said Hersham, softly.

"I know that, my dear. But there are some things which men and women have to face singly. Such a thing is this coming interview with Mr. Fanks. I wanted you to see him so as to disarm any suspicions which he may entertain. Still, I wish you to take no part in the conversation."
"But why?" asked Ted, with a frown. "I can't leave you to fight my battle."

"You must in this case," replied Anne, "you are a dear, good fellow, Ted, but you allow your heart to govern your head."

"That is very true. And it is the reverse with you, Anne."

"Not so far as you are concerned, Ted. I am as weak as water with you. If you see me hard to other people you must set it down to the severe training I have had in the school of adversity. I am only a girl in years, but I am a woman in experience."

"You are the dearest and bravest woman in the whole world," said Hersham fondly, kissing her hand, "and if happiness comes to us in the future, it will be through you. I shall do what you say and hold my tongue. But, my darling, are you sure that you can cope with Fanks."

"I do not know as I have only seen him, but once we cross swords and I shall soon learn my strength. I have a large stake to fight for, and the remembrance of that will make me desperate."

"Well," said Ted, dolefully, "we cannot turn back now. The enemy is within our gates, and we must fight. 'Vae victis.'"

"You may well say that," said Anne, bitterly. "'Woe to the vanquished' indeed. Come let us go to the house and see my mother, but you must say nothing to her about our conversation. She knows as much as is good for her, and her health will not stand any great shock."

"In that case," observed Hersham, as they strolled up the path, "you must not let her see Fanks."
"Trust me, Ted. Forewarned is forearmed."

Mrs. Colmer was delighted to see Ted, for he was a great favourite with the invalid. She had no suspicion of what had brought him down in so unexpected a manner, and chatted to the young man in the most cheerful of spirits. Meanwhile Anne gave her lover a cup of tea, and cut him some sandwiches. All the time she was straining her ears to catch the fall of the knocker on the front door. Every moment she expected to hear the crash which would announce the arrival of the detective, and as the minutes went by her nerves became strained to their utmost pitch. Ted saw what she suffered, but in the presence of Mrs. Colmer he could say nothing, and the old lady went chattering on. There was something cruelly ironical about the situation.

At last, Hersham could bear the suspense no longer, and making some excuse to Mrs. Colmer, he drew Anne out into the passage. There he placed his hands on her shoulders.

"Are you afraid?" he said, anxiously. "Are you afraid of the coming interview with this man?"

"Yes," said Anne, and shivered; the colour had left her cheeks, and she suddenly appeared older, and more haggard.

"Why are you afraid? Because of your visit to those chambers?"

"That and another thing."

"Does the other thing concern yourself."

"Yes. It concerns a visit to London on that night."

"Heavens! Where did you go?"

Before Anne could answer, a sharp knock came to the door, which drove all the blood into their hearts.
They looked at one another, for they now felt that the danger was on them. What would happen within the next hour.

"Where did you go on that night?" asked Hersham, hoarsely.

"To Tooley's Alley—to the Red Star Hotel."

"Anne, Anne. And you saw—"

Anne nodded. "Yes," she said, steadily, "I saw."
CHAPTER XVII.

TWO AGAINST ONE.

On arriving at Taxton-on-Thames Fanks had taken up his abode at the Royal Arms Hotel. It was his intention to make inquiries about Sir Louis Fellenger, Dr. Binjoy, and the negro servant of the latter. Ignorant that he had been thwarted by Hersham, he had also intended to interview Anne Colmer without loss of time, before she could see or even hear from her lover. The intercepted telegram proved conclusively that this girl knew something which Hersham did not want her to reveal; and in the absence—as Fanks supposed of all warning—he hoped to take her at a disadvantage. In this mood he took his way to her home.

So far as the detective could see, his future plans depended almost entirely upon the information which he expected to obtain from this girl within the next few hours. And in that supposition lay the irony of the situation. Being in this frame of mind, his astonishment may be conceived when on the door of Briar Cottage being opened he saw before him the man whom he thought was at that moment in London. For the minute he was unable to speak, but recovered himself to ironically
congratulate Hersham on his dexterity in evading the machinery of the law. In reality Fanks was angered, but he had too much good sense to give way to bad temper. It was, in his opinion, useless to make bad worse.

"So you have stolen a march on me, Hersham," he said sardonically. "I was doubtful of your honesty in London; I am still more so now. How did you manage to dodge the traps I laid for you?"

"By knowing where they were laid," said Hersham, sullenly. "I guessed you would have the railway stations watched, so I came down here on my bicycle."

"A very ingenious idea; you have no doubt warned Miss Colmer not to answer my questions?"

"Yes," said Hersham, defiantly; "I have done so. As I did not receive a reply to my telegram, I guessed that you had intercepted my message in some way. It has arrived now, when it is too late. To see Miss Colmer, to warn her, I came down here at the risk of my own safety."

"Oh!" remarked Fanks, taking note of this in­judicious speech. "That is as much as to say that you risked being arrested by me. I don't know that you are wrong, my friend. You deserve punishment for your trickery."

"You have evidence against me?"

"I have sufficient to ensure your arrest. On the whole, Hersham," said the detective, "I should advise you to help me. Otherwise I shall arrest you within the hour. Take your choice."

Before Hersham could answer this question Anne appeared at the door with a pale face and a determined manner. At once she intervened in the conversation, and placed herself between the two men.
“There is no necessity to threaten, Mr. Fanks,” said she, quickly. “Come inside, and let us discuss this matter calmly. I am sure that Mr. Hersham will agree that this is the best course.”

The journalist nodded sullenly, and the two men passed into the house, conducted by Anne. She led them into a room, the window of which looked on to the road, and here, when they were seated, she addressed herself more particularly to Hersham.

“You were wrong to speak as you did to Mr. Fanks,” she said meaningly. “There is no reason why you or I should conceal anything. I am perfectly willing to tell all that I know—which is not much—and to afford this gentleman every information in my power.”

“You will regret it if you do, Anne,” said Hersham, warningly.

“You will regret it if you don’t,” interposed Fanks. “I really do not understand why you should act in this childish manner. I have always been your friend, yet you treat me as though I were your bitterest enemy.”

“You are trying to trap me.”

“If your conscience is clear I do not think you need be afraid of being trapped,” retorted Fanks; “but it seems useless to hope for any sense from you. Perhaps this young lady may be more amenable to reason.”

“You can depend upon me to help you, Mr. Fanks,” said Anne, calmly.

Hersham rose to his feet with an agitated look on his face. “I shall leave you to reveal what you think fit,” he declared. “At the same time I wash my hands of the consequences which may result.”
And with a significant look at Anne, he left the room.

Fanks gave him a parting warning as he passed through the door. "You had better stay here, Hersham," he said, "as I may want to see you again. Whether you stay or go I can lay my hands on you at any moment."

"You are having me watched?" questioned Hersham, fiercely.

"Yes, I am having you watched; and you may thank yourself that you are placed in so unpleasant a position. Now, then, will you go to London, or stay here?"

Hersham hesitated for a moment, then, biassed by a look from Anne, he compromised. "I shall stay in the village," he said, and passed through the open door, leaving the detective with Miss Colmer.

Strange to say, Fanks was by no means at his ease with this woman the more so, as he mistrusted her promise to tell him all she knew. She had deceived him by flying from the chambers in Half-Moon Street; she might again mislead him with false reports. If she had anything to conceal, this ready acquiescence hinted that she would not tell her secret; and the detective was far more distrustful of her craft than of the foolish behaviour of Hersham. He might combat obstinacy with more or less success, but to deal with a diplomatic person like Miss Colmer, required a dexterous use of all the intelligence he possessed. Fanks, therefore, prepared for a duel of words; and weighed both expression, and information, during the ensuing conversation.

"Well, Mr. Fanks," said Miss Colmer, coolly, "I must congratulate you on your cleverness in deter-
mining my identity; I thought when I left you in Sir Gregory's chambers that I should be able to elude you altogether. I was wrong, it seems; you have found me out. Now that you have done so, may I ask what you want to know?"

"I want to know a great many things," said Fanks, emulating her coolness; "but the question is whether you will consent to answer all my questions?"

"You can judge for yourself. Ask me what question you will, and I shall answer to the best of my ability. But," added she, pointedly, "before you begin, let me ask you one question. Do you suspect that I have anything to do with the murder of Sir Gregory?"

"I can't answer that until you have replied to my questions, Miss Colmer; but, judging from your readiness to afford me information, I fancy that you do know something of the matter."

"You are right, I do know something of the matter; but I cannot promise to tell you who killed Sir Gregory. I know that he was murdered—no more; and even that information I gained from the newspapers."

Fanks made no reply to this remark; whereupon Miss Colmer continued: "Why do you think that I know anything about the crime? I never met Sir Gregory."

"Why did you come to the rooms of Sir Gregory?" replied Fanks. "I connect you with the murder because of that visit."

"If you know the story of my poor sister, you know why I came to Half-Moon Street," said Anne, coldly. "It was to ask the servant, Robert, for a portrait of Emma, that had been taken from her by Sir Gregory."
"I have seen that photograph, Miss Colmer. Did you want it back for the picture, or because it had some writing on the back?"

"What writing do you mean?" asked the girl, sharply.

Fanks produced the celebrated envelope from his pocket. "That is the writing," he said; "whosoever wrote that, also wrote on the back of the photograph of your sister. Perhaps you can tell me who is the scribe."

Miss Colmer looked earnestly at the envelope, and shook her head. "I never saw that writing before," she said, decisively.

"Yet you can see that the post mark is of this village."

"So it appears; nevertheless, I cannot name the writer; and I cannot understand why you show it to me."

"Well, Miss Colmer," said Fanks, disappointed with this answer, "when I find out who wrote this envelope I shall know who killed Sir Gregory."

"I am sorry I cannot help you, Mr. Fanks. I see that you think the envelope came from this house, but I assure you that you are wrong. Both my mother and myself considered Sir Gregory a villain because of his treatment of poor Emma; but we did not wish his death. If you came here to find the assassin you have wasted your time. I know nothing about the matter."

"Then what is it that Hersham did not wish you to reveal?"

"Nothing; he wished me to deny that I had been at the chambers of Sir Gregory on that day, lest you should think I had something to do with the murder."

"Oh!" said Fanks, disbelievingly. "And did Her-
sham wish you to deny also that you had been in Too­ley’s Alley on the night of the murder?"

Anne became pale at the directness of this attack, and took refuge in a plain denial. “I was not there,” she said, obstinately. “Neither on that night nor at any time.”

“Pardon me, I saw you myself.”

“You must have been mistaken.”

“I think not. Yours is not a face I could easily forget.”

“Thank you for the compliment,” said Anne, lightly, “but in this case I am afraid it is unmerited. I was not at Tooley’s Alley on that night. If you doubt me, you can ask my mother.”

“No!” said Fanks, after a moment’s reflection, “I shall not ask your mother—yet.” As a matter of fact, the detective was well assured that mother and daughter had prepared an alibi in case of discovery. Not being ready to analyse the matter, by reason of lack of information, and certain that Anne would persist in her denial, he wisely postponed all discussion until a more fitting occasion. He, therefore, on the face of it, accepted Anne’s assertion, and merely remarked that Her­sham was foolish to induce her to conceal what had better have been told.

To this, Anne replied, promptly: “You must for­give him, Mr. Fanks,” she said. “He knows that I hated Sir Gregory for his treatment of my sister; and he fancies that my unlucky visit might implicate me in this matter. But I have told you the reason I went there; so you must blame or excuse me as you see fit.”

“I shall do neither, at present,” said Fanks, signi­ficantly. “But I shall ask you why you ran away from me on that day?”
"I was afraid of you."

"Why, you did not know me; you never saw me before."

"I saw your portrait," said Miss Colmer, frankly. "You gave one to Ted—Mr. Hersham—and he told me that you were a detective. When I saw you in those chambers I guessed that you had the case in hand; and I was seized with a panic fear lest you should suspect me to be mixed up in the crime. For that reason I fled. How did you trace me?"

"It was wrong of you to go, Miss Colmer," said Fanks, not replying directly, "and I was naturally suspicious of your flight."

"But you don't suspect me now?"

"Not since you have explained your visit. You ask me how I traced you. First, from your marvellous resemblance to your dead sister; and, secondly, from the post mark on this envelope. As I told you, the writing on envelope and portrait are the same. You see the connection?"

"Yes. I see the connection. And now, Mr. Fanks, I have told you all I know; is there any other question you wish to ask me?"

"Yes. Where was this photograph taken you wanted?"

"In this village."

"Was it your sister's possession?"

"It was; it was the only photograph we had of her. The negative was broken and there was no picture of my sister in existence. After the death, my mother wanted this picture; and, as I guessed that it might be at Sir Gregory's chambers, I went up for it."

"Did you see it in your sister's possession before she went away with Sir Gregory?"
"Yes. She took it from here when she went to London."

"Was there any writing on the back then?"

Anne reflected a moment. "No," she said. "There was no writing on it then."

"Do you think your sister wrote on the back of the portrait before she committed suicide?"

"If the writing on the back of the photograph is the same as that on this letter—or rather, envelope—I do not think she wrote it. This is not my sister's handwriting."

"You cannot think who wrote it?"

"No, Mr. Fanks; I am entirely ignorant of that."

Needless to say, Fanks took his departure from Briar Cottage in a very puzzled frame of mind. Before leaving, he told Miss Colmer that he would call again the next day. When he got back to his hotel he asked himself how much of her story he could believe; and he came to the conclusion that not one word of it was true. He was as far off discovery as ever.
CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE TWENTY-FIRST OF JUNE.

Up to the present time the visit of Fanks to Taxton-on-Thames had been a complete failure. He had been thwarted by Hersham; he more than suspected that he had been tricked by Anne; and he saw no means of obtaining any information likely to lead to the elucidation of the mystery which enveloped the death of Sir Gregory Fellenger. It was in very low spirits that the detective returned to the Royal Arms, and after a good dinner, which somewhat cheered him, he sat down with a pipe to consider what he should do next.

He had no hope of obtaining any information from Hersham or Anne Colmer, as for some reason or another each of them declined to speak. Fanks thought they could put him on the right track if they pleased; but he saw no means by which he could force them to speak openly. In spite of his threats he could arrest neither of them, as he had not sufficient evidence to do so. Unable, therefore, to force or to flatter them into plain speaking, he was completely baffled in his efforts to solve the enigma in this direction. For the time being he was at a standstill.

In this dilemma he left the decision regarding his future movements to "chance," and, in the expectation
of hearing something of value to his plans, he strolled into the tap-room of the hotel. Here he hoped to find the village gossips, and to gather from their idle talk information concerning Sir Louis Fellenger, Dr. Binjoy, and the negro servant. However, there was no one in the room save a bent and crooked old man, with a pair of keen eyes. He was seated in a corner of the settle, with a tankard of beer before him; and with garrulous complacency he introduced himself as Simeon Wagg, the parish clerk of Taxton-on-Thames. He had a long tongue and a fund of gossip at his disposal; and he was ready to afford Fanks all the information in his power about the parish and its inhabitants.

"I hev more edication than the most folk about here," piped this ancient. "Theer ain't much as I don't know if I do so choose. Thirty year, sir, hev I bin official in this yer church an' village; and I've buried an' married an' christened wi' five passons. They come, they go; but old Simeon he staay like t' church itself. He! he! he!"

"I suppose you know Sir Louis Fellenger?"

"I know Mr. Louis Fellenger," corrected the aged gossip. "He warn't no barrownit when I seed him. Now he hev gone inter th' 'Ouse of Lors, es I hev heard. But he was in the third 'ouse es you go down by Fox's Farm. Aw, yis, I knaws him; sold hisself to Ould Scratch, he did."

"What do you mean, Mr. Wagg?"

"Whoy, this ere Mister Fellenger he was a-pothicary an' a chimist, an' he raised the 'nemy of mankin', as the saaying goes. An' they do saay es the black maan wor a devil, from all of which Good Loord deliv'r us, es I ses i' t' church."
"Did you know Dr. Binjoy?"

"Aye! He were laarge an' beer-baarel like; aw, yis, an' the woords he sid, passon culdn't spake like he. He wint awaay wi' Mister Fellenger t' be a barrownit, es I hev heaard tell."

"Did the negro servant go with them?"

"Aw, no. T' blaack devil he was turned out o' doors on t' twenty first, he was. I know t' toime, I do, 'cause blaack maan he nearly run me over on his bikikle, he did."

Fanks pricked up his ears at this. It was on the twenty-first that the murder had been committed in London. He addressed himself with renewed attention to the task of extracting information from this piece of antiquity.

"How was it that the negro nearly ran over you on his bicycle?"

"Naow, I'll jes' tell ye, I will," said Simeon, settling himself for a long story. "This yere blaack maan—Caesar is his name—he worn a grean coat wi' brass buttons, he did. I knawed him in t' dark by that coat, I did."

"Was it in the dark that he ran over you?" asked Fanks.

"Aye; it jes' were, Mister. I was on t' Lunon Roaad, I was; about nine, es I cud tell by t' striking clock fro' t' church. An' this yere blaack maan he coom along, he did, on t' divil machine, an' he laaid me flat on my back, he did; an' I bean't so yooung es I was, Mister. I shoated to he, but he niver saaid nothing, he didn't. He run on an' left me lying on my baack in t' durt, he did. I were main aangry, I were."

"I don't wonder at it, Mr. Wagg," said Fanks,
amiably. "But how did you know it was the negro Caesar?"

"I seed his grean coaat, I tell 'ee; his face were muffled oop-like, but his coaat were plaain in t' gaas lamp, it were I hev seen t' coaat heaps of times, I hev. An' t' nex' day he were sent away, he were."

This story made Fanks wonder if Caesar had been up to town on the twenty-first. A negro had committed the murder in Tooley's Alley between six and seven. So if he returned to Taxton-on-Thames on a bicycle there was plenty of time for him to come down before nine o'clock, or, as the old man said, after nine o'clock. A good wheelman could easily cover the distance between London and Taxton-on-Thames in two hours. Again, Mrs. Boazoph had sworn that the murderer had been arrayed in a green coat with brass buttons; and this description matched that of the negro who had so nearly run over Wagg on the London Road. Time and date corresponded; and then the negro had been dismissed the next day—he had been smuggled out of the way by his master. On the whole, Fanks thought that matters looked rather black against the stout doctor. He proceeded with his enquiries.

"Did Dr. Binjoy discharge his servant, or did Sir Louis?"

"Weel theer naow," said the aged one, taking the pipe out of his mouth, "blamed if I knaw who did give him t' kickout. Muster Fellenger, he were ill, he were, an' hed bin fur weeks; t' docter he was wi' him, he was, an' I niver saaw one of 'en—an' naw one else es I heerd of did, fur daays an' daays. But Missus Jerusalem, she es is t' housekeeper t' Muster Fellenger, she said es haow Caesar hed bin turned awaay. He got off fro'
t' village, he did; an' I niver see'd him since, I didn't. Then t' cousin of Muster Louis died, he did; an' Muster Fellenger he went awaay wi' doctor to be barrownit, he did."

"You don't think that Dr. Binjoy was up in London on the night you met Caesar on the bicycle?"

"Noa, sir, I doan't. Whoy Muster Fellenger he were ill, he were; an't' doctor he kep in t' sick room, he did. No one iver saaw him for daays, they didn't."

From this information, it seemed to Fanks as though there were an understanding between Sir Louis and the doctor. This old creature who represented the village opinion was quite sure that Dr. Binjoy had been in attendance on Fellenger on the night of the twenty-first. Yet Fanks knew by personal observation that Binjoy, under the name of Renshaw, had been in Tooley's Alley. He would not have returned to Taxton-on-Thames on that night, as the house in Great Auk Street had been watched. And yet Fanks had proved beyond all doubt that Renshaw and Binjoy were one and the same person. Was it possible that Sir Louis was telling a lie to screen Binjoy from the consequences of his being in town; and was it possible that the two had employed the negro, Caesar, to commit the crime, and then had smuggled him out of the way—say to Bombay—so that he should not betray them. In a word, were Fellenger and Binjoy guilty of the murder of the cousin of the former? It seemed impossible; and yet, as Sir Louis was employing Fanks to hunt down the assassin, it was hard to believe. The conversation of Simeon Wagg only introduced a new perplexity into this perplexing case.

There was nothing more to be got out of the old clerk; so Fanks retired to bed in a very melancholy
frame of mind. He did not know which way to move in the midst of such contradictory information. The night brought counsel; and the next morning Fanks arose with a definite object. He would return to town and advertise for the negro. Caesar must have left his bicycle somewhere, so if he advertised for a negro in a green coat with brass buttons, he might find out something. Those with whom the bicycle had been left would be able to give a description of the negro who had arrived and departed with it; and so Fanks hoped to learn if the black murderer of Tooley's Alley was the same as the servant Caesar of Dr. Binjoy. Regarding the shielding of the doctor by Louis Fellenger, the detective resolved to leave that question until he went to Mere Hall and saw the two men together.

"I am afraid that Crate will have to go to Bombay, after all," said Fanks to himself as he left the hotel.

He did not go at once to town, as he wished to see both Hersham and Anne Colmer; also he was desirous of having an interview with the mother. Half-way down the street he met with the journalist, who saluted him in rather a sullen fashion.

"I was just about to call on you," said Hersham. "I wish to go to town by the mid-day train, if you have no objection."

"You can go as soon as you please," retorted Fanks, "you are not so much good to me that I care to keep you here."

"You need not make yourself so infernally disagreeable, Fanks," said the young man, tartly. "I have told you all I know, and so has Miss Colmer."

"As to that, I have my own opinion, Hersham. I certainly think that you and she have a secret between you which you will not share with me."

"It does not concern you."
"Ah, you have a secret, then?"
"Yes, I have, but it is private business, and has nothing to do with the death of that titled scoundrel."
"I should like to judge of that for myself," said Fanks, coldly. "However, I daresay I'll find out all I wish to know without your assistance."

Hersham came forward, and laid his hand on the arm of the detective. "I say, Fanks," he observed, earnestly, "I know I'm not treating you well, but you must make allowances for the natural fear I feel at being brought into contact with the law. I know something; and I should like to tell it to you, but I can't make up my mind to do so—yet. Still, I give you my word of honour that if you ask me again next week I shall tell you all; I shall place my life and liberty in your hands."

"Good heavens, man!" cried the startled Fanks. "You don't mean to say that you are concerned in the murder?"

"No, I am not, but when I tell you all, you will see why I did not speak before. Give me a week to make up my mind."

"I'll give you the week," said the detective, briefly, and without further speech, Hersham took his leave in an abrupt manner, evidently relieved to be so dismissed.

On presenting himself at Briar Cottage, Fanks was at once admitted, and was shown by the servant—a neat-handed Phyllis—into a different sitting-room from the one he had seen before. In a large chair by the window which looked out on the garden, an old lady was seated. She was dressed completely in white; and the lower part
of her body was swathed in a shawl of Chinese crape. Her face was pale and careworn, and her eyes were red-rimmed as from constant crying. An open Bible lay on her lap, and from this she raised her eyes as Fanks entered. He had little hesitation in guessing that this was Mrs. Colmer, the paralytic mother of the living Anne and the dead Emma.

“You must excuse my rising to receive you,” she said in a low and sweet voice, “but I am unable to move hand or foot. Doubtless, my daughter has told you of my affliction. My daughter will see you presently.”

Fanks bowed, and there was a silence between them for a few moments. He glanced round the neatly furnished room; at the pictures and photographs; but among them all he could not see one of the dead Emma. At the elbow of Mrs. Colmer, on a small table, stood a pile of photographs, at which she had evidently been looking prior to his entrance, and Fanks surmised that a portrait of Emma might be there. He was anxious to discover one, if possible, as Anne had denied that there was a photograph of her sister in existence save the one which she had sought at Sir Gregory’s chambers. Fanks thought that if he could find another in the pile at Mrs. Colmer’s elbow he would be able to convict Anne out of her own mouth, and expose the falsity of the motive she gave for her visit. He cast about for some means whereby to accomplish his purpose.

“You will excuse me, Mrs. Colmer,” he said, rising from his seat, “but that is an excellent picture of the Bay of Naples.”

He had crossed over to the other side of the room to look at the picture, and so found himself standing by the small table which held the sundry pictures. In
turning away he pretended to stumble, and so knocked over the table and photographs.

"Thousand apologies," said Fanks, in confusion, stooping to pick them up.

He looked in vain for the face he sought; but he made a discovery which startled him not a little. The last photograph which he picked up off the carpet was one of—Mrs. Boazoph.
CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEFIANCE OF ANNE COLMER.

Before Fanks could remark on the strangeness of this discovery, the door opened and Anne entered the room. With characteristic quickness she recognised the photograph in the hand of the detective. At once she came forward, and signed to him to be silent. At the same time she spoke to her mother.

"Mr. Fanks has been shown into this room by mistake," she said, hurriedly; "so with your permission, mother, I shall conduct him into the next room."

"As you please, Anne; you know best."

Accepting this permission Anne drew Fanks quickly into the passage, and led him into the apartment he had seen on the occasion of his last visit. He still held the photograph in his hand; and at this she looked anxiously as she signed to him that he should take a seat. Fanks placed himself in a comfortable armchair; Miss Colmer took up her position opposite to him, and both prepared for a difficult conversation. As was natural from her late action, she made an observation on the picture of Mrs. Boazoph.

"I see that you recognise that face," said Anne, coolly; "no doubt you wonder how that photograph came to be in this house?"
"I do wonder. Am I to hear the truth from you, Miss Colmer?"

"Certainly; there is no reason why I should tell you a lie."

Man and woman looked directly into one another's eyes, and a look of mutual distrust passed between them. It was Fanks who first took up the unspoken challenge.

"I think you would tell me a lie if there was anything to be gained or concealed by it," said the detective, dryly.

"You are not far out there," returned Anne, coolly.

"I am above petty moral doubts in such circumstances. But in this instance, Mr. Fanks, I have nothing to gain or to lose by telling a falsehood. You saw Mr. Hersham this morning," she added abruptly and irrelevantly.

"Yes. Have I you to thank for the alteration in his demeanour?"

"You have; I persuaded him to tell you all. Has he done so?"

"No; he has postponed the confession for a week." "What foolish weakness," muttered Anne, with a sigh. "I wish he had told you this morning."

"Do you? Why?"

"Because you may find out that which he wished to hide before he can brace his mind to a confession. I love Edward Hersham dearly, Mr. Fanks; but I can see his faults and weakness of character as plainly as you can. I entreated him to tell you all at once. He consented; yet you see when it comes to the point his feebleness makes him shrink from the ordeal."

"You hint at danger to Hersham. May I ask if it is connected with the committal of this crime?"
"No, you may not, Mr. Fanks. Edward can tell you the truth for himself in a week; he is foolish but he is not guilty."

Fanks was at once piqued and delighted with this woman. She was so clever and so inscrutable that he could not help respecting her. For the first time for many days he had met with a woman with the mind of a man; and he felt that he would need all his intelligence to beat her. On the other hand, he was not unprepared to expect defeat in place of victory.

"What would you say, Miss Colmer, if I told you that I had found the assassin of Sir Gregory?" he asked, craftily.

"I should at once congratulate you, and doubt you," was the quick response. "No, Mr. Fanks, you are not yet successful, else you would not come to see me, nor would you be astonished at seeing the photograph of Mrs. Boazoph."

"You know her, it seems?"

"I do; but my mother does not know her under that name."

"What do you mean?"

Miss Colmer made no immediate reply. She compressed her beautiful lips tightly together, and looked out of the window.

"I see that I shall have to make a confidant of you, sir," she said, slowly, "although I do not recognise your claim to demand an explanation."

"Pardon me, Miss Colmer," said Fanks, with the utmost politeness, "the law gives me every right. By your visit to Half-Moon Street where the murdered man lived you implicated yourself in the matter. I can see by the hints of yourself and Hersham that you both know more than you choose to tell; and as I am
deputed to search out the truth, I can call on you to reveal all you know."

"I made my confession yesterday."

"Was it the truth?"

"It was the truth so far as it went."

"Ah! then there is more to tell?"

"Yes," said Anne, after a pause; "there is more to tell; but not yet, not yet."

Fanks leaned forward and looked into her eyes. "Miss Colmer," he said in a low tone, "tell me who killed Sir Gregory?"

"I do not know; I swear I do not know. See here, Mr. Fanks," she cried, suddenly, "I do not know the truth, but I have an inkling of the truth; I may be wrong; I fervently trust that I am wrong; still I am doubtful; very, very doubtful. I can't tell you of my suspicions: they might get an innocent person into trouble."

"Are you alluding to Hersham?"

"I decline to say; by my advice Mr. Hersham is about to tell you all he knows; I cannot take the words out of his mouth; he would never forgive me; and I do not wish to lose his love."

"Then you mean Mrs. Boazoph?"

"I refuse to speak; I shall leave you if you ask further questions," she said, almost fiercely. "You nearly discovered what I think is the truth in those chambers; I did not know that you were there, but I went up to Half-Moon Street to prevent the truth being discovered, if I could. I failed because you were present."

Fanks sat up alertly. She had given him a clue. "Is the truth to be discovered in Half-Moon Street?" he asked, eagerly.

Anne moistened her dry lips, and turned away her
face. "Yes! I believe it is," she murmured, "and I hope you will never discover it."

She was so moved that Fanks thought she was about to faint. With considerable dexterity he left the question alone for a time and turned the conversation toward the subject of Mrs. Boazoph.

"You have not yet told me about this portrait," he said, gently.

"I will do so now," said Anne, recovering her nerve, "Mrs. Boazoph is my mother’s sister; she is my aunt."

"Oh!" said Fanks, considerably astonished, "then how is it that your mother does not know the name of Boazoph?"

"Because she only knows her sister as Mrs. Bryant."

"But I do not understand," said Fanks, rather bewildered.

"The matter is easy of explanation. My mother is a gentlewoman, although we keep a shop; and she is very proud of her birth and blood. The behaviour of my sister nearly killed her. You can, therefore, guess what she would think of my aunt, Mrs. Boazoph, did she know that she kept a notorious hotel in Tooley’s Alley; and was so well known to the police as she is."

Fanks looked at this woman in astonishment. It was so strange to hear her speak in this manner of her own flesh and blood. Anne noticed his astonishment; and a faint blush crept over her cheek. "I see what you are thinking of, Mr. Fanks. But I know my aunt; she has told me all about her unhappy life. Believe me, she is more to be pitied than blamed."

"Like Hersham?" said Fanks, dryly.

"Yes, like Mr. Hersham," she retorted, defiantly. "My aunt made an unhappy marriage with a man far beneath her. His name was Bryant, not Boazoph, so
my mother only knows her sister by that name. Bryant lost all his money, and was set up by some of his friends in the Red Star, in Tooley's Alley. There, from some shame at his fall, he called himself Boazoph. When he died, my aunt carried on the business; and I dare-say you know all the rest of her life."

Fanks nodded. "I suppose Mrs. Boazoph visits you occasionally, as Mrs. Bryant?" he said, inquisitively. "She comes once or twice in the year; and, for my mother's sake, I see her; but I do not approve of Mrs. Boazoph's misguided life, and I am not what you would call friendly with her."

"Yours is indeed an unfortunate family," said Fanks, bluntly, and with less of his usual courtesy. "Your sister driven to her death by that dead scoundrel; your aunt one of the most notorious women in London; your mother paralysed; your lover mixed up in this murder."

Anne lost her temper at this brutal speech, which was just what Fanks wished her to do, and why he had made it. Inherently a gentleman, he would never have thought of taunting the poor girl with the crime and follies of her family had he not desired to get the better of her; but in this instance he desired to make her angry; and took this way—an unworthy way it must be confessed. With a burst of indignation, Anne rose to her feet.

"I always understood that you were a gentleman, Mr. Fanks," she said bitterly, "but I see I am mistaken. If you think to trap me into helping you by insulting my family, you are mistaken. I shall tell you nothing—now."

"Perhaps I may force you to help me," said Fanks, looking very wicked.
"I am afraid not. In what way do you hope to accomplish so impossible a task?"

"Why," said Fanks, keeping his eyes fixed on her face, "by arresting your lover."

"You dare not."

"I dare! I dare anything. Look you here, Miss Colmer, I am growing tired of being in the dark; and rather than remain in it any longer, I shall resort to strong measures. In some way—of which you know—Hersham is mixed up in this crime. If you won't be persuaded to tell, you must be forced to speak out, if only to save Hersham from being tried for the crime. I shall arrest him."

"Do so; and you will only be the loser by so rash an action."

Fanks walked to the door. "Good day, Miss Colmer, I shall do as I say; and the blame will lie at your door."

Anne said nothing; but, very pale and very determined, she stood looking at Fanks. He admired her for the way in which she was fighting, and he privately considered that if the way to the truth lay through Anne Colmer, there was small chance of it being discovered. He made one more attempt to induce her to speak.

"Come," he said, pleadingly, "be advised; save yourself and Hersham, by telling the truth."

"I don't know the truth, I only guess it."

"Your guess may be the correct one; let me know what it is?"

"No, no, no!"

"You won't speak?"

"No. Not for worlds."

It was plain that whatever she knew she would not
reveal, so Fanks, shaking his head, left the room. When he was out of the door, Anne broke down, and, falling into a chair, she burst into tears. Yet she had no idea of yielding: for better or worse the die was cast, and if Hersham was arrested, at her door would lie the ruin and disgrace of his life. Truly, it was a powerful reason which made Anne conceal the truth at the expense of her lover's liberty, and—it might be—of his life.

As for Fanks, he went off to the station, and caught the train to town. He had gone to Taxton-on-Thames full of hope of success; he left it beaten on every point—and by a woman. His sole chance of learning anything further lay in advertising for the negro; and in the chance that Hersham would confess next week. Anne Colmer was as silent as the Sphinx; all the same, Fanks had not done with that young lady.
CHAPTER XX.

THE GREEN OVERCOAT.

It may be here mentioned that Fanks had no intention of arresting Hersham at the present time. He had threatened to do so in order to induce Anne to speak out; but this having failed, he thought no more about the matter. The journalist was being watched, and he could be arrested at any moment; so Fanks was quite at his ease on that score. The slightest false step, and Hersham would find himself within the walls of a jail; but up to the present time Fanks had not collected sufficient evidence against him to warrant any magistrate authorising his imprisonment. The confession of the next week might bring about the intervention of the law, but till then Fanks left Hersham under the eye of the watching detective, and devoted himself to searching for the mysterious negro who had worn the green coat with brass buttons.

It may seem strange to the reader that so astute a man as Mr. Fanks should advertise for a negro, when he was confident that the only negro connected with the matter was in Bombay. But this apparent riddle will be explained when Mr. Fanks receives the expected answer to his paragraph in the "Morning
Planet.” This appeared two days after he left Taxton-on-Thames, and read as follows:—

“Ten pounds reward will be given to any person who can inform advertiser of the whereabouts of a black man dressed in a green coat with brass buttons. Twenty pounds will be given to anyone who can give information as to the movements of the said black man on the night of the twenty-first of June last, between the hours of six and nine. Apply Messrs. Vaud and Vaud, Lincoln’s Inn Fields.”

It cannot be said that this advertisement was a masterpiece of composition, but the clumsy wording was due to Crate, and Crate not being a scholar had written it in such a fashion. Fanks commented on its prolixity to the author himself on the morning of its appearance.

“You could have shortened that advertisement considerably,” he said, smiling. “I never saw so round-about a request for information.”

“What does it matter?” replied Crate, growing rather red. “I ain’t no scholar, Mr. Fanks, and I did the best I could. If the fish bites, sir, that is all you want.”

“I hope the fish will bite, Crate,” said Fanks, fretfully; “if not, I do not know what I shall do. Never have I been so unlucky as over this case. Everything seems to go wrong with me. But if I can find anyone who saw this negro on the night of the murder we may hear strange things.”

“About Mrs. Boazoph and Dr. Binjoy?”

“About Miss Colmer and Hersham. Though to be sure such information may run me into a blind alley. By the way, did Mr. Garth call to see me in my absence?”
“Twice, sir.”
“The deuce!” muttered Fanks, with a frown. “I wonder why he is so anxious over this case?”
“I think I can tell you that, sir.”
“And I think I can guess what you are about to say,” retorted Fanks. “However, let me hear your theory.”
“Well, I may be wrong,” said Crate, modestly, “but it seems to me that this Mr. Garth is anxious to find out that Sir Louis Fellenger is concerned in the murder of his cousin, because——”
“Because he wants to inherit the Fellenger title and property as next heir,” finished Fanks, smartly.
“Exactly, sir; what do you think of my theory?”
“There may be something in it, Crate,” replied Fanks, thoughtfully; “of course, Mr. Garth comes into the Fellenger estates on the death of the present baronet. But,” he added, emphatically, “we know that this negro actually killed Sir Gregory, so Louis could only be associated with the case as an accessory before the fact. Therefore he could not be hanged, even if the case were proved against him. Where would Mr. Garth be then? In such an event the estates would probably be thrown into Chancery while Sir Louis was undergoing imprisonment, and would not come to Garth for years. Your idea is a good one, Crate, but I do not see how it would benefit our friend.”
Crate scratched his chin. “I suppose that Mr. Garth is lawyer enough to know all that,” he said, grudgingly, “and wouldn’t risk his neck for the mere chance of such a thing. He——”
“Ah! now you are on another track. Mr. Garth may be anxious to prove the case against Sir Louis, but I do not think he killed Sir Gregory himself.”
"Oh, I know who you think is guilty, Mr. Fanks. All the same, I do not agree with you; and I should not be surprised if this Garth turned out to be the real criminal."

"Garth isn't a negro."

"I guess you have your own ideas about that negro, Mr. Fanks."

The detective smiled and rose from his seat. "I guess I have, Mr. Crate. You are improving, my friend; and you are beginning to see further than your nose. I should not wonder if I made something of you yet. So you suspect Garth?"

With becoming modesty, but a good deal of emphasis, Crate asserted that he did, and moreover said that if permitted by his superior officer he would have great pleasure in proving his case against the barrister. To this Fanks assented readily enough.

"Prove your case by all means, Crate," he said, dryly. "I do not agree with you in the least; all the same I am always open to correction. One thing only I ask. You must tell me all you do, all you discover, as I do not wish you to cross my trail."

This Crate assented to without demur, and Fanks departed to Duke Street, where he changed his clothes for the more stylish ones of Rixton. Thence he went to the Athenian Club, and, as he expected, found Garth in the smoking-room. The lean lawyer looked so haggard and worn out that Fanks wondered if there might not be more in Crate's theory than appeared at first sight. But he rejected this idea almost as soon as it crossed his mind; he was confident that the true assassin of Sir Gregory was—but that revelation comes later. In the meantime he greeted Garth with his customary coolness, and sat down beside him with
a view to learning all that had transpired during his absence.

"Were you waiting for me here?" he asked, lighting a cigarette.

"Not exactly," replied Garth, with some hesitation. "I hoped that you would come in here sooner or later, and I wished to see you. But at present I am waiting for Herbert Vaud."

"Really! Do you expect him shortly?"

Garth looked at his watch. "He ought to be here now."

"What do you wish to see him about?" asked Fanks, eyeing his companion keenly; "anything about this case?"

Garth nodded. "Yes; young Vaud knew Emma Calvert, and I wish to learn if she is really dead."

"You can set your mind at rest on that point," said Fanks, coolly. "Emma Calvert is six feet below the soil of Pere la Chaise."

"But the woman who appeared at my cousin's chambers; the woman whom Robert said was she."

"That is Anne Colmer, the twin sister of the dead woman."

"Anne Colmer! She is engaged to Ted Hersham."

"She is. I have been down to Taxton-on-Thames, and I have found out all the family history."

"Have you found out who wrote on the back of the photograph; who directed that envelope?"

"No," said Fanks, gloomily, "I have not discovered anything yet about that."

"Do you think that Anne Colmer wrote it?"

"I am certain from personal observation that Anne Colmer did not."

"Did her mother?"
"Impossible. Mrs. Colmer is a hopeless paralytic."

"Then who wrote it?"

"That is just what I have to learn. I am no further in the case than I was when I saw you last. Have you discovered anything?"

"No; but I had hoped to have learned about Emma from Herbert."

"Well," said Fanks, with a sigh, "we know all about Herbert Vaud; we are aware of the identity of Emma Calvert. It is not in that direction we must search. Our only chance of finding out the truth, lies in discovering this negro."

"I saw your advertisement in the 'Morning Planet.' Anybody who can give information is to call at the office of Vaud and Vaud, I see."

"I thought it best that they should receive the information," said Fanks, "seeing that they are the solicitors of Sir Louis. I hope that something will turn up; but I am doubtful; I am very doubtful."

At this moment the waiter brought in a telegram to Mr. Garth. The barrister opened it, and uttered an ejaculation of surprise. After a pause, he handed the telegram to Fanks. "Queer, isn't it?" he said.

Fanks looked at the message, which ran as follows: "Cannot see you to-day; have to wait in to see Fanks about advertisement. H. Vaud."

"Humph!" said Fanks, rising briskly to his feet, "it is strange that I should be here with you; and stranger still that the advertisement should be answered so promptly. I told Vaud to write to Scotland Yard should anything turn up; but this will save me a journey."

"Can I come with you?"

"If you like; I must call at my room first," said
"By the way, my friend," he added, turning sharply on Garth, "you don't know anything about this very apropos telegram?"

"Good Lord, no! How should I? You don't think that I sent it?"

"No, I don't. But it is—no matter. Let us get on; there is no time to lose."

As a matter of fact, Fanks did not like the look of things at all. He was naturally suspicious of this telegram, fitted in so very neatly with the subject of their conversation, that he thought Garth might know more of it than he had chosen to say. But a moment's reflection convinced him that he suspected the lawyer wrongly. Garth did not know that he was coming to the Athenian Club; therefore, he could not have made such an arrangement. Fanks dismissed the matter from his mind; and allowed Garth to come with him to his room.

In Duke Street he picked up a photograph, and placed it in his pocket. Garth saw the face of the picture, and whistled. "You don't think that person has anything to do with it?" he asked, anxiously.

"This person has to do with the present matter," said Fanks, smartly, "but I can't say if the person has anything to do with the death in Tooley's Alley. I am only taking this portrait on chance; I may be wrong. However, we shall see," and not another word would Fanks say, until he arrived at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Here they found Herbert in his father's room with an apology. "I have to take the place of my father to-day, Mr. Fanks," said the young lawyer, who looked ill, "he is not well, and deputed me to see after this matter."

"Touching the advertisement?" said Fanks, eagerly.
"Yes. A man turned up this morning in answer to it. He is waiting in the next room; and he says that he knows all about the negro you are in search of."

"Good. Let us have him in. You do not mind my friend, Mr. Garth, being present, I hope?"

"Not at all," replied Herbert, coldly; "that lies more in your hands than mine. Show in that man who came about the advertisement," he added to a clerk who entered.

The gentleman in question entered. A dried-up little man, brisk and keen-eyed, with a horsey look about him. He glanced sharply at the three men, pulled his forelock, and proceeded to ask about the reward.

"I want thirty punds," he said, calmly.

"Oh, no, you don't," retorted Fanks, "you want ten or twenty. The two rewards are separate; you must not add them together."

"But I can tell of the whereabouts of this negro; and I can tell his movements. I know all about him, so I ought to get both rewards."

"You'll get either the ten or the twenty," said Fanks. "Now no more talk; what is your name?"

"Berry Jawkins; I am barman at the Eight Bells public on the Richmond Road."

"Ho; Ho!" muttered Fanks, "I thought as much."

"On the twenty-first a nigger came riding a bicycle about eight o'clock; he came into the bar; and had a drink. He wore a green coat with brass buttons. After he had his drink, he asked if he might wash his face. I sent him out to the pump in the back yard; he washed and came in. Then gents," said the little man, with emphasis, "I got a surprise, I can tell you."
“What kind of surprise?” demanded Garth, with an astonished look.

“Why, sir; that nigger weren’t no nigger at all; he were a white man; as white as you make ’em.”

“A white man,” said Fanks, producing the portrait from his pocket.

“A white man with a smile and a moustache; a very good-looking sort of feller,” added the barman, “he explained how it was he—”

“Wait a moment,” said Fanks, “is that the man you saw?”

Berry Jawkins started back in surprise, the moment he set eyes on the photograph which Fanks had thrust under his nose. “My gum, here’s a start,” said Mr. Berry Jawkins. “That’s the very identical person who washed himself at the Eight Bells. How did you come to know of him, sir?”

“I suspected it for some time,” said Fanks, “do you recognise the face, Mr. Vaud?”

Herbert looked at the face, and his countenance reflected the astonishment of Berry Jawkins and of Garth.

“Why!” exclaimed the young solicitor, starting back, “it is Ted Hersham.”
CHAPTER XXI.

THE EIGHT BELLS ENIGMA.

Although Fanks quite expected this revelation, he was, nevertheless, rather astonished at its unexpected confirmation. From that bicycle ride of Hersham's to Taxton-on-Thames to thwart his designs on Anne Colmer, Fanks had deduced certain suspicions; the hesitation of the journalist had confirmed those suspicions. Frankly speaking, he had no reason to connect Hersham with the negro; but he had been satisfied from the evidence of Simeon Wagg that Caesar—Dr. Binjoy's servant—had not been away from the Surrey village on that fatal night. Failing the real negro someone must have personated the black man; from the behaviour of Hersham, Fanks thought he might be the person in question. His random shot had hit the bull's-eye; it was quite an accident that it had done so.

"I expected as much," said Fanks, again restoring the photograph to his pocket-book. "I told you, Garth, that I was right to trust to my instincts. This discovery explains the extraordinary conduct of Hersham."

"In what way?"
"I shall tell you later on. In the meantime let us hear what this man has to say."

He turned towards Berry Jawkins as he spoke, and waited for him to speak. The barman looked rather downcast, and when he did open his mouth it was to revert to the subject of the reward.

"I'm a poor man, gentlemen," he said, in a whining tone, "and I hope you mean fair about this thirty puns."

"We mean fair about the twenty pounds, man," said Vaud, sternly. "You heard what Mr. Fanks said."

"Oh, yes, I heard fast enough," retorted Berry Jawkins, "and I don't hold with him; the rewards added together make thirty puns."

"No doubt they do; but then the rewards are not to be added together," said Fanks. "You had better tell all you know, Mr. Berry Jawkins, or I'll look into the matter myself, and then you'll get no reward."

"Ah! you'd go back on me. Well, d'ye see, I shan't tell anything."

Fanks shrugged his shoulders. He had no desire to quarrel with the man or to waste time in arguing. The only way to induce speech from this obstinate creature was to pay him the money, which, after all, he had earned fairly enough. The detective therefore advised Herbert Vaud to fulfil the terms of the advertisement, which was accordingly done, and Mr. Jawkins found himself the richer by twenty pounds.

"Though it should have been thirty puns," said the obstinate creature; "but there ain't no chance of getting what's fair out of the aristocracy. I am a Radical, I am, and I goes——"

"We don't want to have your political opinions, man," said Fanks, sharply. "Come to the point."
"I'm coming to it," grumbled Berry Jawkins. "On the night of the twenty-first I was in the bar. Business was bad that evening, gentlemen, and there was not a blessed soul in the bar but myself. Just about eight o'clock I thought as how I might shut up, when the door opened and in came a black man. He said, 'I've left my bike outside: I want a drink of Scotch cold,' he ses. And, mind you, I twigged that he wasn't a nigger when he spoke, and I saw as he was a gent by the peculiar refinement of his jawing. But as it wasn't my business, I said nothing till he asked to wash his face. Then I told him to go round to the pump in the back yard, 'tho' ses I, 'a gent like you will want hot water.' 'I ain't a gent,' ses he, 'I'm only a poor strolling Christy Minstrel,' he ses. Then I laughs, seein' as he was lying; but he scowls and bolts out to the back. When he comes back his face was white—as white as you or me—and he had a moustached like the feller in that photo. In fact, gents, he is the feller in that photo, as I can swear to in any court of law. Well, he comes back clean, and finishes his Scotch cold, and goes out. I thinks his manner queer-like, and goes to the door. He gets on his bike, and goes off down the road like a house on fire."

"Which way did he go? To London or down the country?"

"Oh, down the country, for sure, gents. Well, I didn't say anything about all this, for I thought as he might be a gent doing a bolt in disguise; but it wasn't any of my business to split, perticular as he had given me two shilling, just for fun like. But, all the same, I keeps my eye on the papers to see if there was anyone wanted. Then I comes to this Tooley Alley murder, and a description of the negro in a green
coat and brass buttons. 'That's my man,' I ses, 'but hold hard, Berry Jawkins, and don't say nothing till you see as there is a reward.' So I waits and waits, till in this morning's paper I sees a reward of thirty puns—"

"Twenty pounds!"

"Very well, gents all, we'll say twenty, tho' to my mind it ought to be another tenner. But, as I ses, I sees this reward, and comes up to get it. I have got it," said Jawkins, slapping his pocket, "tho' not the amount I did expect; now, having told all, I goes, hoping you'll catch that black-white nigger and hang him, for I think he is a aristocrat, and I hates them, they being my natural enemies."

Having heard this history, Fanks let Berry Jawkins go, as there was no reason why he should be detained. First, however, he found out that Mr. Jawkins was always to be heard of at the Eight Bells in his capacity of barman. The man having left the room, Fanks turned towards Garth and Herbert to see what they thought of the revelation which had been so unexpectedly made. They returned his gaze, and Garth was the first to break the silence.

"Well," he said, in a low tone, "so Hersham is the culprit after all?"

"Pardon me, Garth; but I do not think that we have proved that yet. What do you say, Mr. Vaud?"

"I can say nothing," replied Herbert, coldly. "I have no opinion in the matter. As my father is absent I am attending to the case by his desire; but, personally speaking, I would not lift one finger to discover the assassin—or rather, the punisher of Gregory Fellenger."

"You hated him then?" said Fanks, quietly.
"I hated him; I still hate him; even though he is
dead. You wonder at my speaking in this way, Mr.
Fanks, but—"

"No!" replied Fanks, with a certain pity in his
tone. "I do not wonder; your father told Mr. Garth
here the story of Emma Calvert; and Mr. Garth re­
peated it to me. I know you hate the very memory of
that dead scoundrel."

"Can you wonder at it?" said Herbert again. "I
loved her; she did not love but she might have grown
to do so in time. But he came with his lies and money
to drag her away from me. He married her certainly,
but he drove her to suicide; and if he had not met with
his death by this unknown hand, he would have had to
reckon with me for his baseness."

"You would have killed him yourself, perhaps?"
Herbert Vaud opened and shut his hand convulsively.
"I don't know what I should have done," he said, in
a thick voice. "But he is dead, so what does it matter.
But if I had my way, the assassin of Gregory Fellenger
should go free."

"He may go free after all," said Fanks, quietly, "we
have not yet solved the problem of his death."

"We have proved that Hersham was disguised as the
negro," said Garth, impetuously.

"We have proved that Hersham was disguised as a
negro," replied Fanks, making the correction with
point, "but we have not proved that he was—that he is
—the negro who killed your cousin in Tooley's Alley."

"If he did not, why was he blacked up on the very
night the murder was committed. He must have had
some reason for so masquerading."

"I have no doubt he had a reason; and I have no
doubt that he will explain his reason to me when I see
him. But, on the face of it, I do not think that he is the negro of Tooley's Alley."

"Why not?" said Garth, impatiently. "Look here, Fanks. The skein runs out as clean as a whistle. Hersham has a cross tattooed on his arm. The death of my cousin was caused by a similar cross being pricked on his arm. Hersham is engaged to Anne Colmer; you tell me that she is the sister of the girl, Emma Calvert, who committed suicide in Paris, as the victim of Sir Gregory. The envelope, making the appointment comes from Taxton-on-Thames; Anne Colmer comes from the same place; she lives there. Hersham was disguised as a negro on the very night of the murder—at the very time the murder was committed. What is more reasonable than to suppose that Hersham was inspired by Anne Colmer to kill the man who had deceived her sister. There, in a few words you have the motive of the crime; and the way in which it was carried out. Oh, there is no doubt in my mind that we have the real man at last. Were I you, I should arrest Hersham without delay."

"If you were in my place, you would do what I intend to do," said Fanks, quietly, "and take time to consider the matter. I admit that you have made a very strong case out against Hersham, but there is one important particular which you have overlooked."

"What is that?" asked Garth, "it seems to me that there is not a link missing."

"That comes of being too confident. Can you see the missing link, Mr. Vaud?"

The young lawyer reflected for a few moments in a composed and careless manner, then looked up, and professed his inability to amend the case as set out against Hersham. Fanks shrugged his shoulders at
their lack of penetration, and explained his theory.

"The negro who was in Tooley's Alley had no moustache," he said, slowly, "as was proved by the evidence of Mrs. Boazoph. Hersham, on the contrary, both as negro and white man, had a moustache; as has been proved by the story of Berry Jawkins."

"It might have been a false moustache," said Garth, still sticking to his point.

"It was not a false moustache," retorted Fanks, shaking his head, "if Hersham intended a disguise he would have worn a beard. A moustache would disguise him little. But for the sake of argument, we will grant that the moustache was intended as a disguise. If so, why did he retain it when he washed the black off his face; or, if it was part of his disguise, why did he wear it both as the black and the white man. No, no. I am sure that Hersham wore his own moustache; and not a false one. And again," added Fanks, with an afterthought, "I saw Hersham shortly after the murder—within two or three days in fact—he then wore a heavy moustache; and you can trust me when I say it was not a false one. If then Hersham was the Tooley Alley negro, who we have agreed committed the murder, how did he manage to grow his moustache in so short a period. The thing is impossible," finished the detective, "that one point alone assures me that Hersham is guiltless of the crime."

"Mrs. Boazoph may have made a mistake," suggested Garth, "remember she did not see the negro go out."

"She saw him go in, however. Mrs. Boazoph is too clever a woman to make a mistake of that sort. The black man who committed the murder had no moustache; our friend, masquerading as a Christy
Minstrel, had one. Against the evidence of Mrs. Banzoph we can place the evidence of Berry Jawkins; the one contradicts the other; and both evidences conclusively prove that Hersham had no hand in the commission of the mysterious tragedy.

"And another thing," said Herbert, suddenly. "Mr. Garth couples the fact of the murder with the name of Miss Colmer. As a friend of the family, I protest against that. I know Mrs. Colmer, I know her daughter; and I am certain that neither of these unfortunate people have anything to do with the death of that scoundrel."

"Nevertheless the envelope which contained the appointment of the Red Star in Tooley's Alley as the rendezvous bore the Taxton-on-Thames post-mark. Mrs. Colmer and her daughter live at Taxton-on-Thames."

"What of that? Sir Louis Fellenger and his medical friend lived at the same place. You might as well say that the new baronet committed the crime so as to succeed to the title and estates. The one theory is as feasible as the other."

"Very true," said Fanks, in a desponding tone; "I am as much in the dark as ever. At the present moment we can build up a theory on anything. For instance, I might say that our friend Garth here killed his cousin."

"The deuce!" cried Garth, aghast.

"You are startled," said Fanks, keenly watching the effect of his speech on the young man. "I don't wonder at it. I merely say this to show how slow you should be in condemning Hersham."

"But I don't see how you could bring me in," stammered Garth.
"It is easy enough. You are the heir, failing Sir Louis; you know the purport of that tattooed cross. You might have killed your cousin, and have sent the appointment from Taxton-on-Thames to implicate Sir Louis in the matter, and so have removed the two people between you and the title at one sweep."

"But I don't want the title."

"Possibly not; but you want money. But do not look so afraid, Garth. I don't think you committed the crime; you are no doubt as innocent as Mr. Herbert here."

"If I had committed the crime I should not deny it," said Herbert, gloomily. "I should glory in causing the death of such a scoundrel. If Fellenger had not been killed by the negro in Tooley's Alley, Mr. Fanks, you might have had to arrest me as the cause of his death. As it is, my revenge has been taken out of my hands. But the same end has been arrived at. I am glad the blackguard is dead."

Here the argument ended, and Fanks went out arm in arm with Garth. Both of them were sorry for the unhappy Herbert Vaud, and both of them were more puzzled than ever over the case. As yet all evidence had failed to throw the least gleam of light on the subject.
CHAPTER XXII.

MRS. BOAZOPH RECEIVES A SHOCK.

Shortly after the conversation at Lincoln’s Inn Fields Fanks took his leave of Garth. He was rather weary of the lawyer’s company, and, moreover, he found such third person a hindrance to the free speech he wished to induce from those with whom he conversed. In his own heart he was perfectly satisfied that Garth was connected in no way with the crime, for the test which he applied in the office of Vaud and Vaud entirely satisfied him. Nevertheless, he was not so certain that Garth would not be pleased to learn that his cousin—the sole person who stood between him and the Fellenger estate—was implicated in the affair.

On these grounds he therefore excused himself to the barrister, and walked off by himself, intent on his own business. Garth, who was suffering from a bad attack of detective fever, was not over pleased at being thus dismissed; still he thought it best to obey his friend, and so he departed, to think over the aspect the case had now assumed. In fact, he intended to do a little detective business on his own account, and, if possible, he wished to surprise Fanks by an unexpected discovery. There were now three different people following three different lines of action with respect to the
case, so it was to be hoped that one of them at least would run down the assassin of Sir Gregory Fellenger, unless indeed all failed on the principle that too many cooks spoil the broth.

On leaving the barrister, Fanks took his way towards Toole's Alley. It was his intention to see Mrs. Boazoph and to try an experiment on that astute lady. From her demeanour Fanks believed that the landlady of the Red Star knew more about the case than she choose to confess, and that she was anxious to screen the man or woman who had done the deed. Of this belief he wished to make certain.

Mrs. Boazoph received the detective with her customary composure. She was quite prepared for his visit, as she knew that her connection with the case was too patent to escape his vigilant eye. Anticipating a trying conversation, she directed Fanks to be shown into her private sitting-room, and she braced herself up to confuse and baffle him.

No one would have guessed the landlady's thoughts from the amiable manner in which she received her almost declared enemy. She was positively genial in her conversation and demeanour, and Fanks augured ill from this.

"Well, Mrs. Boazoph," said he, mildly, "I suppose you are wondering what brings me here?"

"Indeed I am doing no such thing, Mr. Fanks. You came to find out what I know about this crime."

"I congratulate you on your perspicuity, Mrs. Boazoph. And what do you know about it?"

The woman raised her eyebrows and shrugged her shoulders.

"I know nothing at all," she replied. "I gave my evidence at the inquest; you heard it."
"Well?"
"Well, there is nothing more to be said."
"I beg to differ with you, Mrs. Boazoph; there is a great deal more to be said."
"Not by me," said Mrs. Boazoph, obstinately, closing her mouth. "If you think that I am going to assist you to find out who killed this wretched man, you are very much mistaken."
"Strange," said Fanks, in a musing tone, meant to reach her ear, "the same thing was said in almost the same words by Anne Colmer."
"What do you know about Anne Colmer?"
"More than you can guess. For instance, I know that she is the niece of—Mrs. Bryant."

With a start, instantly repressed, she looked to him in a hard and fixed manner, a disbelieving smile on her lips. "Mrs. Bryant," she repeated, "and who is Mrs. Bryant?"
"If you don't know, I am sure I do not."
"Speak plainly. I hate epigrams."
"So do I. They are such a bar to intelligent conversation. Well, Mrs. Bryant is a lady of birth, who married beneath her. Mr. Bryant was a bully, a sot, a spendthrift, and he lost all his money by fast living. When he became poor, his friends—for strange to say, this unpleasant person had some friends—set him up in an hotel. He was ashamed to stick his own name over his door; so he cast about for another. Perhaps you can tell me what that other name was?"
"No."
"What a singularly obstinate person you are," said Fanks, shaking his head. "Believe me, it is no use our wasting time in discussing facts. Be sensible, Mrs. Boazoph, and admit that you are Mrs. Bryant."
"No."

"Mrs. Bryant, the sister of Mrs. Colmer, of Taxton-on-Thames, dressmaker, and decayed gentlewoman."

"I don't know her; I never heard her name."

"Really!" said Fanks, with gentle pity, "then I must inquire of Mrs. Colmer, of Taxton-on-Thames, how is it that her sister, Mrs. Bryant, is the notorious Mrs. Boazoph, of London."

"You are a fiend!"

"And what is Mrs. Bryant, alias Boazoph?"

"She is a most unhappy woman; a woman rather to be pitied than blamed."

"Ah!" said Fanks, drawing a long breath of satisfaction. "So you admit your identity at last."

"I can do nothing else. I do not wish my poor sister to know that I am Mrs. Boazoph. She thinks that I live on the money left to me by my late husband; she does not know that I keep this hotel; that I am the woman who has been mentioned so often in the papers, in connection with thieves, rogues, and detectives. Yes. I admit that I am Mrs. Bryant, the sister of Mrs. Colmer. Who told you?"

"Your niece, Anne."

"She had no business to do so."

"Very probably; but she could not help herself. I forced her to speak; how, it does not matter; but I extracted the truth out of her, Mrs. Bryant."

"Call me Mrs. Boazoph," flashed out the woman, "and relieve me of your presence as speedily as possible. What do you wish to know?"

"I wish to know the agreement you made with Dr. Binjoy, regarding this crime."

"Who is Dr. Binjoy?"

"Come now, Mrs. Boazoph, do not let us have another
argument. I have neither the time nor the patience to endure one, I assure you. I know more than you think; and I can force you to speak if I so choose. I would rather not choose, if it is all the same to you. Let us conduct this conversation pleasantly, if possible. You know that Dr. Binjoy is the same as Dr. Renshaw?"

"Indeed, I do not. How can you prove it?"

"Very easily. I followed Dr. Renshaw on his presumed journey to Bombay, and tracked him to Mere Hall at Bournemouth."

Mrs. Boazoph quailed, and shrank back. This man knew so much, that she did not know where she stood. For the moment, she did not know what to do; but, unable to deny the identity of Renshaw with Binjoy, she admitted it.

"Good!" said Fanks, in a satisfied tone, "we are getting on. And the agreement you made with this man?"

"I made no agreement with him."

"Then why was he here on the night of the murder?"

"It was an accident. For some reason of his own, Dr. Binjoy, whom I met at Taxton-on-Thames, was in the habit of changing his name when in London. He usually stayed with Dr. Turnor, who is an old friend of his; and did his work when Turnor was absent. When I found out the murder, I sent for Dr. Turnor, he was away, and Dr. Binjoy came under his name of Renshaw. I was astonished to see him. I did not know that he was in town."

"Oh! Had you any reason to go to Mere Hall to see him?"

"Mere Hall!" stammered Mrs. Boazoph, "you saw me at Mere Hall?"

"I saw you with my own eyes; you cannot deny that."
"I have no wish to deny it," retorted Mrs. Boazoph, with asperity, "yes I was at Mere Hall. I went there to warn Binjoy against you."

"Indeed; and no doubt Binjoy assured you that he had baffled me by the pretended journey to Bombay."

"Yes, he said that."

"And did he say that he had sent his negro, Caesar, to Bombay, in his place?"

Mrs. Boazoph drew back and gasped, holding tightly on to the arms of her chair. "You know that?" she said, in alarm.

"I know that, and a great deal more," said Fanks, grimly. "In fact, I more than suspect that I know the assassin."

"Then you know that Caesar killed Sir Gregory?"

"You jump to conclusions, Mrs. Boazoph," said Fanks, noting the tone of relief in which she made this remark. "I do not know that Caesar killed Sir Gregory Fellenger. But I know that both you and Dr. Binjoy would like me to think so."

"Man! Man!" cried Mrs. Boazoph, with an hysterical laugh, "do you think that I had anything to do with this crime?"

"Why not; the man was killed in your house; you called in a doctor, who is the dearest friend of the present baronet; it was to Binjoy’s interest that Sir Gregory should be got out of the way."

Again Mrs. Boazoph seemed relieved. "Then you suppose that Binjoy instructed Caesar to kill Sir Gregory?"

"No, I do not; Caesar had nothing to do with the commission of the crime."

"Then who was the black man who killed the baronet?"
"It was no black man."

"But it was," said Mrs. Boazoph, angrily. "I saw him myself enter the room."

"You saw a white man disguised as a negro enter the room."

Mrs. Boazoph bounded to her feet. "What!" she cried, "do you mean to say that the black man was a disguised white man?"

"Yes, I do say so; although I daresay it is no news to you."

Mrs. Boazoph stamped her foot. "It is news to me, I tell you. I thought that Caesar killed Sir Gregory at the behest of Dr. Binjoy. When you entered the room I hoped to keep the fact from you; because I did not wish Binjoy to get into trouble. But you say that Caesar did not commit the crime, and so you have upset my ideas altogether. Now, Mr. Fanks, I tell you truly, that if this negro did not kill Sir Gregory, I do not know the name of the assassin."

Fanks looked puzzled. She evidently spoke in all good faith, and he could not but believe her. He wondered if she was right, and whether the negro of Dr. Binjoy had killed the baronet after all. "Did you recognise as Caesar the black man who came here on that night?" he asked.

"No; how could I? I never saw Caesar in my life. But I know that Binjoy had a negro servant; that he smuggled him off to Bombay; and that he was the friend of Sir Louis Fellenger. Therefore I thought this negro was the instrument Binjoy made use of to kill Sir Gregory."

"Do you know anything about a tattooed cross, Mrs. Boazoph?" asked Fanks, going on another tack.

The woman fell into her chair as pale as a sheet of
The mention of the tattooed cross had a most powerful effect on her mind, and she stared thunderstruck at the detective. Not a word could she utter for at least two minutes. When she spoke her voice was thick and unsteady. "What do you know of the tattooed cross?" she muttered.

"I know that Sir Gregory let this disguised man tattoo a cross on his left arm, and that the needle used was poisoned. Now, can you tell me why Sir Gregory let a cross be pricked on his arm?"

"No! no! I—I—can't tell you that."

"Does that mean that you won't tell me?"

"It—means that I—I—can't tell you," gasped Mrs. Boazoph. "I did not know Sir Gregory Fellenger."

"Do you know anyone else who has a cross tattooed on his left arm?" asked Fanks, preparing for his great stroke.

"No! Why do you ask me?" she muttered, in a terrified tone.

"Because the man who has that cross tattooed on his left arm was the disguised negro; he was the man who killed Sir Gregory."

"Ah Heavens! Oh, Edward Hersham?" moaned Mrs. Boazoph, and fell upon the floor in a faint.
CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CONFESSION OF HERSHAM.

When Fanks saw Mrs. Boazoph lying at his feet his first intention was to wait until she recovered. Later on he changed his mind, and when he had placed her in the hands of the servant he went home full of thought and dark surmises. It seemed to him that the case was centring in Ted Hersham; that the whole situation depended on the right reading of the tattooed cross riddle. Mrs. Boazoph knew something about the cross, she knew something about Hersham; but what it was Fanks could by no means make up his mind. It seemed to him that in exploring the depths of Mrs. Boazoph's mind he had found a still lower deep; and he was puzzled what to think.

"Confound the woman," he thought, meditating over a pipe; "I said that we should find her at the end of the path which leads to the discovery of the mystery, and it seems that I was right. She screened Binjoy for some reason which I cannot discover; she will now attempt to save Hersham, lest he should fall into my clutches. Why should she take all this trouble for those two men? And what does she know about the tattooed cross? Does Binjoy know about it
also? And was it he who made the obliterating mark? I can’t think Hersham guilty, and yet things look black against him. But no,” said Fanks, rising; “the disguised man who slew in Tooley’s Alley and Hersham are two different people; I proved that conclusively to Garth. What’s to be done now?”

It was difficult to decide. At first he almost resolved to return to Mrs. Boazoph and urge her confession; again, he thought it best to wait until he heard what Hersham had to say. It might be, he thought, that Hersham’s confession would throw some light on his relation to Mrs. Boazoph. The hints of Anne Colmer, the terror of Hersham, the fainting of Mrs. Boazoph were all of a piece, and Fanks felt confident that beneath these perplexities lay the key to the riddle. It was not that he had no clue; he was in reality quite bewildered by the multiplicity of clues, so bewildered that he did not know which clue to seize first. At length he came to the conclusion that it would be best to wait till he saw Hersham and heard what he had to say, and afterwards to follow up the clue placed in his hands by the fainting of Mrs. Boazoph.

“I’ll write to Hersham, and remind him that he promised to see me in a few days and tell the truth,” said Fanks, going to his desk; “and if he reveals all I am certain that his confession will contain the information that Mrs. Boazoph wrote and warned him against me.”

He was confident, as he said, that she would do this. If she tried to save Binjoy, she would certainly try to help Hersham; but her reason for doing the one was as inscrutable as her reason had been for acting in the way she did towards Binjoy. The further he went
into the case the darker it grew; and in sheer despair Fanks wrote his reminder to Hersham, and did nothing more for the next few days but meditate over the tangle in which he found himself involved. His meditations led to no result, and when Hersham called on him at the Duke Street chambers in three days, the detective was at his wit's end how to proceed.

However, he was delighted to see Hersham, as he had doubted whether the young man would fulfil his promise. Now that he had come to do so there might be some chance of seeing a gleam of light. Fanks did not tell the journalist what he had discovered concerning his movements on the night of the twenty-first, as he wanted to see if Hersham would confess as much. If he did so, such frankness would confirm his belief that the young fellow had nothing to do with the commission of the crime. If, on the other hand, Hersham concealed the proven facts Fanks intended to force him into confession by revealing what he had heard from Berry Jawkins. By the result he would be guided in his future movements. The ensuing conversation was likely to prove as interesting and important as that which he had held with Mrs. Boazoph.

"I am glad to see you, Hersham," he said, in a gentle tone, "as I hope what you have to tell me may throw some light on the darkness of this Tooley Alley crime."

"I can throw no light on the cursed thing," said Hersham, gloomily. "I am only here to exonerate myself."

"From what? What do you mean?"

"Why should you ask me that?" said Hersham, angrily. "Is it not you who suspect me of killing this man?"
"Decidedly not. I do not think you killed Fellen­ger. As I told you before I do not believe you had anything to do with it."

"Then why did you have me watched?" demanded the young man.

"Ask that of yourself," said Fanks, coolly. "You roused my suspicions; you hinted that you knew some­thing; you thwarted me with regard to Anne Colmer. Cast your mind back to our first conversation, man; you will say that I had every reason for acting as I did. If you had told me the truth at first; had you become my ally instead of my enemy, you would not have had all this trouble. But, for all that, I do not suspect you of being a murderer. Had I done so," finished Fanks, grimly, "you would have been in a cell long e'er this."

"I held my tongue because I was afraid of you," said Hersham, sullenly.

"If you are innocent, there is no reason to be afraid of me."

"I am innocent; and yet I am afraid of you. Yes. I am dreading to tell you what I am about to reveal."

"Why so?"

"Circumstances may so close round an innocent man," continued Hersham, not heeding the interrup­tion, "that it would seem as though he were guilty. Think yourself, Fanks. Innocent men have been hanged e'er now, because circumstantial evidence was strong against them."

"True enough," replied Fanks. "I suppose it is natural that you should be afraid. No man would run the risk of putting his head into the noose if he could help it. You say that circumstances are strong against you. What are these circumstances?"
Hersham bit his lip, and turned a wan face on his friend. "I place my life in your hands, mind you," he said, hoarsely.

"It will be safe there," replied Fanks, getting up and fetching a decanter of brandy from the sideboard. "Nothing will induce me to believe that you had anything to do with the commission of this crime."

"Will you swear to that?" cried Hersham, stretching out a shaking hand.

"Certainly if it will comfort you. Here, my friend, drink this, and tell me what you know. It may help me to nab the person I have my eye on."

Hersham drank the brandy. "Have you found out who killed Fellenger?"

Fanks shrugged his shoulders. "I think so," he said, "but who can tell; I may be wrong."

"Is it a man or woman?" asked Hersham, quickly.

"I shan't tell you."

"Is it—"

"I shan't tell you, my friend. But I shall tell you this for the quieting of your fears, that it is not you whom I suspect. Now sit down again, and let me hear what you have to say."

Hersham resumed his seat obediently, and began his recital. He confessed exactly what Fanks expected he would confess; what Fanks already knew, but the detective listened to this twice-told tale with the keenest attention. Thereby he hoped to learn some new detail which had been overlooked by the zealous Berry Jawkins.

"About the beginning of June," said Hersham, in a hesitating voice, "I was engaged on a series of papers for the 'Morning Planet' on Street Music. To gain
the information I required, I thought it would be an excellent plan to go about the streets of London in disguise, and to get at the root of the matter. I told my editor that I would burnt-cork my face and go with some street minstrels. He approved of the idea, and I did so.

"And how were you dressed?"

"In a great coat with brass buttons. I also wore brown boots. Now, you can see why I was afraid to tell you. That is the dress the negro you are looking for wore."

"Yes!" said Fanks, perplexedly, "I know that; but I do not see why you should have been afraid to tell me. You can explain your movements on that night."

"That is exactly what I can't do," said Hersham, his face growing dark.

"I don't understand."

"I shall explain. On the night of the twenty-first I intended to go out in the streets in disguise. Before doing so, I told the office boy that if a telegram came for me he was to bring it at once to me; I expected a wire about six o'clock; and I told the boy that I would be in the Strand near St. Clement's Church."

"From whom did you expect the telegram?"

"From Anne Colmer. That day I had received a letter from her, saying that she was greatly worried about something; what it was she did not tell me; but she said that if she wanted me she would wire, and that I was then to come down at once to Taxton-on-Thames."

"Go on," said Fanks, greatly interested in the introduction of Anne's name.
"Well, I blacked my face, and went out with the genuine niggers to sing and play. About six, or a little after, I was near St. Clement's Church, and there the office boy came to me with a telegram."

"Why did you expect the telegram at six?"

"Because I was in the office about five, and it had not come then. I thought it might come after I left, so I appointed St. Clement's Church as the meeting-place where the boy might find me."

"And you obeyed?"

"What was in the telegram?"

"A request that I should come down to Taxton-on-Thames at once."

"Yes, there was no reason why I should not. I thought that Anne was in trouble; I went down at once on my bicycle."

"Why did not you go by train? It would have been easier."

"Not for me. I was in the habit of running down to Taxton-on-Thames on my machine; it is only two hours' run."

"Had you your machine in town?"

"Yes; I had left it at a shop in the Strand where I usually leave it; though sometimes I ride it on to the office in Fleet Street. On this occasion it was in the Strand. As soon as I got the telegram I left my troupe and went off on my bicycle."

"Didn't you wash your face?"

"Not at that time; I was in such a hurry and so anxious to learn what was the matter with Anne, that I did not think of doing so. I rode along until I was recalled to the spectacle I must have presented, by the laughing, and the guys of the boys. Then I thought
that I might startle Anne, and I determined to wash myself."

"And did you?"

"Not immediately. On the way to Richmond I had an accident, and the tyre of my back wheel was punctured. The air escaped, and I was over an hour mending it. Then I had to go slowly, and did not get to Richmond till after eight o'clock. I went into the hotel called the Eight Bells, and had a drink and a wash. Then I came out a white man to the astonishment of the barman, and went on down to Taxton-on-Thames. I got there shortly after nine o'clock."

"Didn't you nearly run over a man as you neared the village?"

"Yes, I did," said Hersham, in some astonishment. "But how do you know that?"

"I'll tell you later on," replied Fanks, smiling. "But about the result of your trip to Taxton-on-Thames?"

Hersham's face fell. "There was no result," he said, in a low voice. "When I arrived I went at once to Briar Cottage and asked for Anne. I was told that she had gone up to town by the five o'clock train."

"Gone up to town!" repeated Fanks. "That is curious. Why did she go up to town after sending you a wire to bring you down?"

"I can't say. She returned by the night train, and I was at the station to meet her. I asked her why she had gone to town, and she refused to tell me. She merely said that she had sent the wire shortly before five o'clock, and that she had found occasion to go up by the five train."
"Can you conjecture what took her to town?"
"No; and she will not tell me."

Fanks said nothing. He was meditating on the strange story told to him by Hersham, and on the stranger conduct of Anne Colmer. The mystery concerning this young lady, which had begun in the chambers of Sir Gregory, seemed to be thickening. Fanks was puzzled and gloomy.