

"Now let us recapitulate the Appearances of Fraser. Check me as I go, please.

"One. At the bank at nine on Saturday. Anything suspicious?"

"Well, yes, now you say so. I can imagine a personation, aided by the neuralgia. But I had no suspicion at the time. And if it were not Fraser, why did he come?"

"To prepare the minds of the others for his visit number two."

"But they were surprised to see him."

"Just what he wanted, perhaps. Yet I'm not sure. He may have done it merely because that it was unlikely that he should do it. The man's prime intention was to confuse and bewilder your mind."

"He did that!"

"Number Two. Sure that was the real Fraser?"

"No; but Fisher didn't doubt it."

"Fisher's mind was prepared by your recognition of him earlier in the day. Or—wait a minute. That may be merely what clever Mr. Some One wants us to think. Wait a moment."

There was a long pause.

"If that were so," continued Simon Iff, "it would look as if Mr. Some One were trying to make things easier for Fisher. Has Fisher acted naturally throughout?"

"Perfectly. He's an exemplary man for a subordinate position."

"Yet he grows roses. That's a suspicious trait. Rose gardening is a devilish pursuit!"

"Ye're joking, man."

"Oh, a Scotsman can see a joke when there isn't one there! However, to go on to Number Three. Vision of Fraser at Euston. Now that was certainly not Fraser."

"Why not?"

"He didn't count his change. You tell me he's the most accurate man you ever had."

"Never made an error or so much as an erasure in ten years."

"You see! If that man were walking in his sleep he'd still get his figures right. It's part of his being."

"I think you're right."

"Note too that he does everything, not too unusual, to get the clerk to remember him. In fact, we might think that he took the short change on purpose to attract notice. It would strike Fraser to do such a thing. So he may have been Fraser after all."

"Number Four. Brighton. Again the identification is very doubtful."

"Number Five. Ilfracombe. Here the corpse is certainly not Fraser's; yet all pains are taken to make us think that it is his."

"But that's so silly, when he is going to bob up again a few hours later."

"All done to keep you happy during the weekend!"

"Number Six. The first telephone call."

"That was his voice. He spoke as if in pain, as on the Saturday."

"Still doubtful, then. Number Seven. The second telephone call."

"It's most improbable that anyone else could have got the information. He could have no idea that I would ask."

"But he might have got it from Fraser in the intervals between the calls."

"And why should Fraser give it, if he's not in the game?"

"Ah!"

"But I'm dead sure of his voice. On the Saturday I might have doubted; I was not paying attention. But this time I was concentrating my whole mind on the question of identity. And, ye ken, identity's a question of constant and primary importance to a banker."

"I agree with you. Number Eight. Fraser at Tooting. Here we have only Fisher's identification, which we suspected once before, though there's no reason to do so in either case. Yet we note that Fraser makes an appointment which he does not keep; nor does he refer to it in his telephone call. Number Nine. Fraser's corpse again, this time the real thing. No doubt possible?"

"None. The face was quite uninjured. I knew every freckle by heart."

"And no disguise possible, of course. It would have been easy to blow away the head; so Mr. Some One Clever wanted you to find him. Yet the doctors say the man had been dead twelve hours?"

"Nearly that; an hour more or less."

"I wonder if Mr. Clever thought that might have been overlooked. You see, I'm sure it wasn't suicide, though it was made to look like it. I'm sure this last scene—for I shall dismiss Number Ten, this morning's telegram, as an obvious fake; the wire was written out long beforehand—this last scene was most carefully stage-managed. And what is the significant article, the one thing to attract our attention? The picture of Miss Clavering!"

"I can't see the bearing of that, on any theory."

"Luckily, I've got no theory, so far. Let's boil down these facts. The only visions you are sure of are not visions at all. You heard Fraser on Sunday morning; but so far as you can be absolutely certain, he has not been seen alive since Friday night."

"That's so, by heaven!"

"Did he ever meet Miss Clavering that night?"

"No; she had made the appointment with him, as it chanced, in the bank itself, where she called on Friday morning to draw a hundred pounds. She looked ill, and I remarked on it. She replied that she had drawn the money for the very purpose of resting over Easter at Ostend. But she did not go. That afternoon, shopping in Bond street, she slipped on a banana skin, and twisted her ankle. A doctor took her to her house in John street. Her servants had been given a holiday from Saturday to correspond with her own, and she allowed them to go as if nothing had happened; a nurse is with her, and prepares her food. The doctor calls twice daily. Of course she was the first person whom we questioned. It is extraordinary that Fraser should not have called there that evening."

"Perhaps he was prevented. No; no one has seen him, to be positive, since the dramatic features began. later than Friday evening, or perhaps possibly after he left the bank."

"That's so; and there's nae doot o' it."

"But he was seen after leaving the bank on Friday; a man answering to his description hired the big touring car in which his body was found this morning, at an hour very shortly after he left me. Otherwise he has not been seen, as you say."

"Yet infinite pains have been taken to show you the man, dead or alive, here, there, and everywhere."

"But some of those are unreasonable. This morning, for instance, and the corpse at Ilfracombe."