

brief you! Observe, O man of motives, the analysis. Man is no longer killed for food, except in distant countries, or in rare emergencies such as shipwreck."

"He is only killed nowadays for one of two motives, gain or revenge."

"Add love."

"That's psychopathic."

"Well, we're all psychopaths; it's only a term of endearment in common use among doctors."

"Get on!"

"But there's the greatest motive of all—adventure. We've standardized life too much; and those of us who love life are more and more driven to seek adventure in crime."

"Or journalism."

"Which is only one of the meaner crimes. But you needn't talk; the practice of law is the nearest thing we have to man-hunting."

"I suppose that's true."

"Of course it's true. But it's a mere pheasant-shoot, with all your police for beaters. The game hasn't a chance. No. The motiveless murderer has the true spirit of sport; to kill a man is more dangerous than to follow a wounded gaur into the jungle. The anarchist goes after the biggest game of all; but he's not a sportsman; he has a genuine grievance."

"Your essay on murder will make some very pleasant reading."

"But doesn't it attract you too, with your passion to prove your mental superiority to others? Think of the joy of baffling the stupid police, fooling the detectives with false clues, triumphantly proving yourself innocent when you know you are guilty!"

"Are you tempting me? You always did, you know."

"Anyhow, you always fell!"

"Cher ami, for that alone I could forgive you everything!"

"Sarcastic to the last!"

"You have me to thank that we usually escaped the consequences!"

"Pride, my poor friend!"

"Truth, comrade in misfortune!"

"No. Seriously. I'm crazy to-night, and I really am going to tempt you. Don't prove it's my fault, blame your own good port, and also certain qualities in your own story of the Marsden case. One or two little remarks of yours on the subject of Miss Maud Duval—"

"I knew something would come of that."

"Yes, that's my weak point. I'm absurdly feminine in vanity and love of power over—a friend."

"Now I'm warned; so fire ahead. What's the proposal?"

"Oh, I haven't thought of that yet!"

"You big baby!"

"Yes, it's my bedtime; I'll roll home, I think."

"No, don't go. Let's sober up on coffee, and the '48 brandy."

"It's a damned extraordinary thing that a little brandy makes you drunk, and a lot of it straightens you out again."

"It's Providence!"

"Then call upon it in the time of trouble!"

Ffoulkes went in search of the apparatus. Jack rose lazily and went to the window; he threw it open, and the cold damp air came in with a rush. It was

infinitely pleasurable, the touch on his heated, wine-flushed face.

He stood there for perhaps ten minutes. A voice recalled him to himself.

"Café noir, Gamiani!"

He started as if he had been shot. Ffoulkes, in an embroidered dressing gown of black silk, was seated on cushions on the floor, gravely pouring Turkish coffee from a shining pot of hammered brass.

At one side of him was a great silver hookah, its bowl already covered by a coal from the fire.

Jack took a second dressing-gown that had been thrown across his chair, and rapidly made himself at ease. Then he seated himself opposite to his friend; bowed deeply, with joined hands upon his forehead, and said with mock solemnity: "Be pleased to say thy pleasure, O most puissant king!"

"Let Scherezade recount the mirific tale of the Two Thousand and Second Night, wherein it is narrated how the wicked journalist tempted the good lawyer in the matter of murder regarded as a pastime and as a debating society!"

"Hearing and obedience! But I must have oh! such a lot of this coffee before I get wound up!"

As it happened, it was two hours before Jack deigned to speak. "To use the phrase of Abdullah El Haji i-Shiraz," he began, "I remove the silken tube of the rose-perfumed huqqa from my mouth. When King Brahmadatta reigned in Benares, there were two brothers named Chuckerbutty Lal and Hari Ramkrishna. For short we shall call them Pork and Beans. Now Pork, who was a poet and a devil of a fine fellow, was tempted by the reprobate Beans, a lawyer, whose only quality was low cunning, to join him in a wager. And these were the terms thereof. During the season of the monsoon each was to go away from Benares to a far country, and there he was, feloniously and of his malice aforethought, to kill and murder a liege of the Sultan of that land. And when they returned, they were to compare their stories. It was agreed that such murder should be a real murder in the legal sense—an act for which they would be assuredly hanged if they were caught; and also that it would be contrary to the spirit of sport to lay false trails deliberately, and so put in peril the life of some innocent person, not being the game desired to fill the bag. But it must be an undoubted murder, with no possibility of suicide or accident. The murder, moreover, must be of a purely adventurous nature, not a crime inspired by greed or animosity. The idea was to prove that it would be perfectly safe, since there would be no motive to draw suspicion upon them. Yet if either were suspected of the mamelukes, the Sbirri, the janissaries, or the prog-gins, he should take refuge with the other; but—mark this, O king!—for being so clumsy he should pay to him a camel-load of gold, which in our money is one thousand pounds. Is it a bet?"

Ffoulkes extended his hand. "It's a bet."

"You're really game?"

"Dying oath."

"Dying oath. And now, O king, for I perceive that thou art weary, hie thee to thy chaste couch, and thy faithful slave shall doss it on the sofa."

In the morning Ffoulkes said, over the breakfast-table, "About that bet." "It's on?" cried Flynn in alarm. "Oh, yes! Only—er—I suppose I need about another seven or eight years of law; I stipulate that—what is thrown away—shall be as worthless as