Not Good Enough

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"It seems a very interesting case," interrupted Simon Iff. "Well, sir," replied the Assistant Commissioner, "not at all, from your standpoint; there's no psychology in it. There seems little doubt that Haramzada Swamy killed the girl; he may have had one of fifty reasons, though robbery was evidently one of them. There are certainly some curious features in the affair, but none that would be of any interest to you." "You make me feel so fiery and martial," returned Iff, "that I shall certainly order some brandy. I hope you will join me. I originally interrupted your remarks in the hope that you would tell me all about the case. I have theories of my own." "If I may adopt your theory of drinking — which it gave me much pleasure to hear at the Hemlock Club — I am feeling narrative, and a pot of beer and a church-warden is about my style."

It was a summer afternoon. The place was the lawn of Skindle's at Maidenhead. The Assistant Commissioner of Police, Roger Broughton, had motored over to lunch with a friend, Jack Flynn, Editor of the "Emerald Tablet," an advanced high class review. They had found "Simple Simon," who had rowed up the river in a skiff outrigger from his summer cottage at Henley, lunching on the lawn in a peculiarly naive, yet sumptuous, manner. "In summer," he explained to them, after the first greetings, "meat heats the blood. I am therefore compelled to restrict my diet to foie gras and peaches."

"But Foie Gras is meat."

"The animal kingdom," said the mystic, "is distinguished, roughly speaking, from the vegetable, by

the fact that animals have power to move freely in all directions. When therefore a goose is nailed to a board, as I understand is necessary to the production of foie gras, it becomes ipso facto a vegetable; as a strict vegetarian, I will therefore have some more." And he heaped his plate.

The new-comers laughed; no one ever knew when to take the magician seriously. "What's the drink?" asked Flynn; "it's a new one on me." "This is a Crowley Cup No. 3," he said. "So named after its discoverer. Take a large jug, the larger the better; half fill with selected strawberries; cover the fruit with Grand Marnier Cordon Rouge; ice carefully; fill up with iced champagne, the best obtainable. Stir the mixture; drink it; order more, and repeat. A simple, harmless, and wholesome beverage."

"A temperance drink, I suppose?" queried Broughton, laughingly.

"Certainly," replied the magician; "in my recent journey to America I was careful to obtain an exact definition of what was and what was not alcoholic. Drinks which contain less than 40 percent alcohol come under the general heading of the Demon Rum; their sale is restricted in every possible way, and in many States prohibited altogether. Drinks containing more than 40 percent of alcohol are medicines, and are sold in the drug stores without restriction of any kind."

"But that champagne reduces the percentage, surely?"

"Champagne forms no part of the drink; it is used merely to dilute the medicine itself."

Broughton, who knew Iff but slightly, looked bewildered, and appealed mutely to Flynn, who knew him well. "You mustn't laugh or cry," said he; "you must just let your brain expand, and try to get the point of view."

"You mustn't think I'm laughing at you, Mr. Iff," apologized Broughton; "we don't forget your masterly work in the case of Professor Briggs."

So lunch proceeded; it was only at the end, as it were by accident, that Broughton had mentioned the murder which had stirred London a few days earlier.

Broughton, having been accommodated with the primitive refreshment indicated as harmonious to narrative, began his story.

"Ananda Haramzada Swamy is a Doctor of Philosophy of the University of London. He is 33 years old, and has a wife, to whom two children have been born ——"

"By a previous marriage? I asked because of your phrasing."

"It's a long story, and has nothing to do with the case. Haramzada Swamy — let us call him the Swamy for short — is an Eurasian; and curiously enough, it is his father that was black, a Tamil. The mother was an Englishwoman."

Simon Iff pursed his lips. "He is a man of loose morals," continued the Commissioner, puffing at his long pipe, "and rents an apartment, or rather a bedroom with bathroom attached, on the fifth floor of St. Noc's Mansions, near Hyde Park. This room is a mere assignation chamber. It is furnished only with a divan, a wardrobe, and a small cupboard full of liquors and tobacco. The room is, however, sumptuous in the Oriental style, and the walls are covered with obscene pictures and photographs. He allowed no one to enter, naturally enough, but used to send his wife weekly to dust it."

Simon Iff could not restrain another gesture of disgust.

"The whole block of apartments is 'under the Rose,' as it were; but — please note this — although in a general way we ask no questions as to the doings of the inhabitants and their visitors, we maintain a correspondingly strict supervision of them, on the watch always for anything outside what I may call honest, straightforward immorality."

"I see," said Iff, thoughtfully.

"The last masked ball of the season took place at Covent Garden on the first Saturday in July. Haramzada was present, and won a prize for the magnificence of his costume, that of a Persian prince of the 15th century. I may mention that he was a critic of art, as well as of philosophy. He left on the arm of a masked lady, who had not competed; no one had seen her face. They went direct in a taxi to the Swamy's flat. This was about 3 A.M.; the time is uncertain. It may have been much earlier. A few minutes before five, however, and this time is accurate within ten minutes, Haramzada was seen, in his ordinary day costume, creeping down the stairs, stealthily and swiftly. The lift man only saw him by chance. He had gone up to the fifth floor on a ring, only to find no one there. Irritated, he left the lift, and looked over the stairs, just chancing to see the Swamy as he crossed the hall. He supposed, naturally, that the lady was with him.

"Now comes the hand of Providence. It was the custom of that wicked elevator attendant to search the rooms of the tenants, when he was sure of their absence, and not too likely to be caught off duty; his hope was to find what he has since described to us, in a burst of candor, as 'perks'; videlicet; any small objects of value which seemed to him unlikely to be missed. So he pulled his lever, and went up to the fifth floor, opened the Swamy's flat with his master key, and entered. The light was switched on.

"The body of a nearly naked woman lay before him. Blood was pouring from a wound in the head; but life was perhaps not extinct. Daniels, as the man was called, acted quickly and properly. He called a doctor on the telephone, describing the nature of the wound, and then notified us. He then had a messenger sent for the man who would normally have relieved him at seven o'clock, so that he might remain on guard.

"When our men arrived, a minute before the doctor, we found Daniels trying various primitive methods of first aid.

"Detective-Inspector Brown took in the situation at a glance. While the doctor attended the wounded woman, he telephoned headquarters, and a general alarm was sent out for the apprehension of the Swamy.

"At 5:45 the doctor, who had been working energetically to restore consciousness to the victim of the outrage, pronounced life extinct. Daniels was dismissed, but two minutes later he reappeared with the news that the Swamy was in the street outside.

"Brown flung open the window, and cautiously looked out. The Swamy, with his coat collar turned up, and his slouch hat pulled well over his face, was approaching the door in a very furtive manner. Brown determined to give him a free hand. He telephoned down to the other porter to go up to the ninth floor, so as to give the Eurasian his chance to enter unobserved. The door of his flat was closed, and the party awaited developments.

"Unfortunately there was no place where our men could hide. The wardrobe would only have concealed one man. In a few minutes the steps of the Swamy were heard coming up the stairs; a key was pushed into the lock; the door opened; our men seized him. The creature collapsed, mentally and physically, in their arms. It was actually found necessary to apply restoratives. The wretch had evidently counted upon ample leisure to dispose of the body."

"Why had he left the place at all?" This from Jack Flynn.

"Evidently in order to dispose of the proceeds of the robbery. Doubtless he has some safe cache. Well, to continue. When he came to, he was arrested and cautioned. He said, however, that he knew nothing about the matter at all; denied that he knew the woman, or of her presence. Charged at the police court with the murder, he reserved his defense, and was remanded for a week. The same day he wrote out a long rambling statement which I can only call fantastically

feeble. The following week he was committed for trial. He then issued another statement, entirely contradicting the former, and endeavoring to explain it away. It is, however, as contrary to ascertained fact as the earlier effort. I expect the truth is that the animal is almost mad with fear. He had probably arranged a safe way of disposing of the body, which was upset by the chance of the early discovery of the crime.

"The murdered woman was identified by her husband on the afternoon following the crime. As you know, it was old Sybil Lady Brooke-Hunter, a leader of the smart set, fast, alcoholic, a plague to her old husband, who should have divorced her ten years ago. She haunted every shady rendezvous in London in search of adventure ——"

"Well, she found one all right!" put in Jack Flynn.

"She did. That night she was wearing over ten thousand pounds worth of jewelry, like a fool, as she was. It has all disappeared. Daniels noticed that she was wearing it when she entered St. Noc's Mansions.

"The curious part of the case is her husband's attitude. He refuses to believe that she was ever guilty of an indiscretion in her life; insists that her wanderings in London were purely philanthropic, that she must have been drugged or chloroformed or hypnotized or what not. He is an old man of Puritan views; 'if I believed her guilty of so much as a flirtation,' he said to Brown; 'I would thank God that He had punished her!' And he's the only man in London who doesn't know what she was. She was a barmaid, you remember, as common as the bar she served, when he married her. Lord, but there are some fools about!"

"Is that the story?" asked Simple Simon, quietly.

"I think that's everything. We haven't found the jewelry. There's no reason to suspect any other man in the case. The facts are all against Haramzada Swamy, and his six-cylinder double-action lying doesn't help him."

"How was she killed?"

"There is a large open fireplace in the room. He had caught up the poker, and brained her. It was lying by the body, with blood on it."

"So you rest your case there?"

"All right, my lord!"

"Oh no! I'm for the defense," said Simon Iff. "Here are some facts quite incompatible with the theory that Haramzada Swamy committed the murder. Only last month I happened to be reading his book on Buddhism." Jack Flynn threw a laughing glance at the Police Commissioner, as much as to say, "now the fun begins."

"In this book," pursued the mystic, "he conclusively proves himself innocent of this murder. I will not distress you with the details, but the main argument of the book is that the Buddha was a hedonist, that he called pleasure the greatest good. This argument is based on one fact only; this, that the Buddha declared everything to partake of the nature of sorrow (which is just one-third of the truth) and that his whole system is therefore devoted to the escape from this Everything.

"But pleasure has nothing to do with this. Sensation is only the second of the 'Skandhas' in Buddhist psychology; at the very second gate on the path, pleasure and pain must be recognized as illusions, and rooted out of the mind. Why, desire in any form is the very cause of all sorrow and evil in the Buddhist system.

"Now, gentlemen, we are none of us Buddhists; we may dislike Buddhism very much; and we may call it too abstract, too remote, too barren, too bitter, too ascetic, too formal, too metaphysical, too almost anything you please. We may abuse the Buddha as an Atheist, as a nominalist, as a rationalist, as a skeptic; no one can do more than argue the contrary. But if we represent the Buddha as a high-priest of pleasure, and his religion as a religion of pleasure, we should be shut up in an asylum — or, if not, realize that we have given ourselves away. For there is only one type of sane man who can fail to

recognize the elevated morality, the self-abnegation and nobility, the lofty compassion, the almost unthinkable passion for renunciation, which mark Buddhism. To this day the Bhikkhus, or rather Poonggis, of Burma, where alone the true canonical doctrine has been preserved free from corruption, are men of the most exalted virtue. They are often ignorant by our standards; but of their sincerity, their purity, their general morality, there is only one opinion. Even the missionaries, whose one chief task is to slander the people among whom they live, have failed to destroy the reputation of these noble men. I lived among them myself for three years; I might have joined their ranks, had I felt myself worthy to do so. My lord and gentlemen of the jury, I confidently leave the fate of my unfortunate client in your hands."

"Heaven help me!" cried Broughton, "he's never mentioned the murder at all!"

"Ah that's what you think — and what I think"; laughed Flynn; "but in reality he has torn your case to pieces!"

"If you're not convinced of his innocence," retorted Simple Simon, "I really despair of human reason. However, let us get a few fresh facts. What, besides this book on Buddhism, which I have dealt with so effectively, do we know of his antecedents?"

"As it happens," said Jack Flynn, "I can tell you a lot. It's an ugly story, too, and I'd hang him on that alone, if I were judge and jury. It's not evidence — like what the soldier said — but this being a psychological investigation, it is pertinent. Broughton has told us how he might have done the murder; I will prove to you that he was just the sort of man who would have done it. And I am assuming that the little lecture on Buddhism was intended to prove that he was the sort of man who would not."

"Precisely," said the mystic.

"Well, he had a side to his nature which he did not put in his book."

"Impossible," said Iff. "Men's books are always artistic images of themselves. Of course, this thing has no creative genius at all, and he's a hopelessly bad critic, absolutely incapable of discerning greatness, just as a fly, whose time-sense is extremely rapid compared to ours, cannot perceive movement in a body which travels more slowly than about a yard a minute, or as an amoeba could not understand generation or even gemmation. But, such as his mind is, he must put it into every page he writes."

"I'm going to show you he has a criminal mind."

"We're listening," acquiesced the old magician.

"When he was at the University of London, there was a small scandal, which rather shows the man's quality. He made friends with a man, who confided to him the secret of a love affair with a woman of the streets. Haramzada Swamy tracked the girl, and tried to buy his friend's letters to her, to blackmail him. The girl was loyal and told her lover, who horsewhipped the Eurasian soundly. Shortly after taking his degree he married an Englishwoman. I should like here to make the point that she was a sex-degenerate, like his mother; for all white women who marry colored men must be classed as such."

"I agree."

"I agree."

"She was quite crazy about him — 'too fond of her most filthy bargain' — and they were happy for awhile. Then the snake entered Eden in the shape of a little music-teacher, another degenerate, again a case of heredity, for she was marked with Hutchinson's Teeth. You know what that means?"

Both men nodded gravely.

"The Swamy and his wife were great on preaching Free Love. The snake — and she had the temper of a Russell's Viper! — agreed entirely. A few weeks later

she became Haramzada Swamy's mistress. She was so passionate and jealous that she resolved to upset the marriage; this decision was confirmed by necessity, for she became enceinte, and the Swamy, who hated the idea of children, showed every sign of throwing her off. She actually had the nerve to go to his wife with her story! After various violent scenes, a divorce was decided upon. The Swamy, who has no will of his own, was seized upon by the music-teacher, and never allowed to stir a foot, under penalty of other tempests, until the divorce was granted, and she dragged him to the registrar's. With amazing cynicism, they had a wedding breakfast, with cake complete, and the baby playing on the floor!

"The Eurasian now had more freedom; he got an appointment in India, and on one excuse or another managed to leave his wife and child behind. Arrived in Hindustan, he set up a harem of dancing-girls, and was happy. But the necessity of a periodical remittance to the fair Florrie soon began to prey upon his mind. He determined to bring her out; for one thing, an English wife might do him some good socially, for of course he was an outcast from both English and native society; for another, it would be cheaper to keep her in India than in England; for another, perhaps, the climate might kill both wife and child, and put an end once and for all to the expense. As it happened, one of his best friends, a full-blooded Indian who also had a taste for white women, and so did not mind mixed marriages and their results so much as his stricter countrymen, was returning to India. He put his wife in charge of this man. On the voyage she promptly seduced him. When the husband became aware of the fact, some six weeks after they landed, he made some mild protest, but did nothing. In fact, they traveled about together, all three, for some months. But the woman was absolutely shameless, caressing her lover even in front of the servants, and the contempt of these — all true Indians

are extremely moral and decent, even to prudishness, whether they are polygamists or not — the contempt of the servants became so marked that even the Swamy could not stand it any more. He insisted on a separation. In vain the wife implored her lover to take her with him; he had too much sense for that. It was ultimately agreed that his child — for she was again pregnant — should be treated by Haramzada as his own; and she was to go back to England with her husband.

"Two years later found them in New York. Florrie picked up another lover, greatly to the relief of the Swamy, who hated paying for her dinners. This man, however, insisted on her playing the game: a straight divorce: a straight marriage; and no more foolishness. Haramzada gladly agreed. But just at this moment it was discovered that Florrie was not so penniless as had been supposed; a rich uncle wrote, offering to make her his heir, his only son having been killed in France. The Swamy instantly altered his whole position. He went back to his wife, pleaded with her, begged her forgiveness, played on her pity — ultimately got her to waver. She was now again with child by the new lover. All this time, however, Haramzada was carrying on an intrigue with a German girl, the regular Broadway type. At this moment of sham reconciliation the uncle died. Haramzada resolved on a master-stroke. During her previous pregnancy the sea-voyage had come near to causing one, if not two deaths. He hated his wife most bitterly — of course, such a creature is utterly incapable of love for anybody — he was her heir, and besides, her life was heavily insured. So he insisted on her going to England to see her children, and attend to the estate left by her uncle. She became dangerously ill, and miscarried; but she lived. The Swamy then hurried over to join her. What was his chagrin to find that her uncle's money was left in trust for her children, so that he could not touch more than a small necessary income?

"He was in great financial straits; robbery and murder were certainly in his heart. Can we be surprised that his hand followed suit? It only needed the opportunity; and the other night he evidently had it."

"You have failed utterly," replied the mystic with some scorn, "to grasp the mind of the thing. All because you will not read his book on Buddhism! He had no opportunity to rob and kill. Any other, yes; but not he. Consider all his acts. We find extreme meanness, selfishness, cunning, the most ignoble attitudes throughout, never a glimpse of anything vertebrate. This is all in accordance with his view of Buddhism. He had a thousand 'opportunities' to kill his wife in India. But not what he, Ananda Haramzada Swamy, calls opportunities. He won't put his neck in a noose; not he! He hopes that the Indian climate may kill her; he hopes that the sea voyage may kill her. But he won't do more in the way of murder than say: 'Darling, do come out; I'm so lonesome,' or 'Darling, do go to England; I'm so anxious about the sweet babies.' He's cold as a fish, but he's never brutal, and he's a coward to the bone."

"That's rather cute," said Flynn. "Now you mention it, I'll do another lap. I got this story from Florrie's lover No. 3, by the same token. You wouldn't blame him for talking. I've known him twenty years, and he was all broken up — just in that state when one has to tell someone or burst. He told me how he left her. When she went back to the Swamy he cut off short, and she's been plaguing him ever since to take her back. He won't. Well, one day he had slapped her gently for impudence. She was going to try to make a slave of him, as she had of her yellow and black men. She said to him: 'If only Ananda had beaten me I would have loved him always.' So evidently he never had."

"What was your friend doing in that galley?" asked Broughton.

"Oh, he's a crank. Saw good in her and wanted to save her. Damned fool! But of course he knew that the

only way was to be like a rock — never to yield an inch to any of her gusts of passion. If the Swamy had not murdered their baby I think he might have won."

"I agree with your estimate. Your friend's Quixotic," said Simon Iff. "My interest is in schools, not in hospitals. To let the degenerates drop out is the true kindness — certainly to the race, perhaps even to them."

"To get back to the point," said Broughton. "You still hold the Swamy innocent?"

"I do. Buddhism is a religion of the most dauntless courage. The whole force of the universe from all eternity is challenged by him who would become an arahat, as they call what we call saints, only it's more than that. The saint has God on his side; the would-be arahat has nothing but himself and the memory that there was once a man who won in that incalculable struggle. Yet you suggest that the man who not only fails to appreciate this courage, but even to perceive it, is brave enough to kill a woman with a poker, and even to return to the house where her corpse lies. If he had killed her, by some chance, he would have fled — fled, fled to the darkest corner of the earth!

"No, sir, Dr. Haramzada Swamy did not kill that woman!"

A newsboy ran across the lawn. "Extry! Extry!" he shouted, "full confession by the Injun!"

Broughton and Flynn jumped for the paper; Simon Iff only poured himself another glass of brandy.

Flynn's professional eye first caught the paragraph. "Textual!" he exclaimed gleefully, and began to read aloud.

"As everyone knows," the confession began, "Lady Brooke Hunter was notorious for her immoralities." Iff chuckled, and rubbed his hands.

"She had become old and unattractive. I met her at the Covent Garden ball. She begged me to pass the night with her. I took pity on her, and consented. A little before five o'clock she said she must go home. I

remarked, as she rose, upon her obesity, and suggested, out of pure kindness, a way to remove it by practising Indian clubs. I illustrated some exercises with the poker. Suddenly I had a dizzy fit; the poker slipped out of my hand and struck her on the temple. Horrified, I rushed out to find a doctor; but in my bewilderment I could not do so. Then I bethought me of the telephone, and returned home to use it. To my surprise I found the police in the flat. Daniels must have stolen the jewels." Broughton gave a great shout of laughter. "I don't believe a word of it," he roared. "Nor will the jury."

"Nor do I," said Jack Flynn. "Disgusting! look how he throws all the blame on everyone else. All but the deathblow — and that's an accident. Dizziness! No, sir, he had that poker by the business end all right!"

"I don't altogether believe the story myself," murmured Simon Iff, in a rather deprecating manner. "He never struck that blow. I'm humbled over this thing, gentlemen; I can't see the truth. And what's more, I can't see why that Eurasian can't tell the truth; I'm sure he could save his neck if he did. I can only think of two possibilities; one, that to tell the truth would disclose some other crime, some meaner crime, some vileness possible for him; two, that, somehow or other, he doesn't know the truth himself. Or is it that he's incapable of truth as such? Confound it, I've been so keen to argue with you that I've not put on my thinking cap!"

"I tell you what," interjected Flynn. "Write me an article on the case; once the man's condemned, as he will be, I can print it. And see if you can get a reprieve on the strength of his book on Buddhism!"

"You shall have the copy tomorrow. It's time I paddled up to Henley. So long!"

The old man went down the lawn to his skiff. He was not as straight as usual; and as he pulled off, the others thought his figure an incarnate Note of Interrogation.

Not long afterwards the case was tried. Haramzada Swamy was found guilty, as the whole country had anticipated. The next day the article by Simon Iff appeared in the "Emerald Tablet."

"I am no orator, as Antony was," it began. "I come not to praise Caesar, but to postpone his burial"; and went on to recapitulate in a precise and logical form the arguments already advanced on the lawn at Skindle's. The wife of the condemned man had delightfully given permission for the publication of her nauseating story. In her own eyes she was a heroine. The article ended by saying that murder depended upon three things, will, capacity and opportunity; that in this case all three were apparently present, but that the type of murder was one of which Dr. Haramzada Swamy was incapable. "I'm not saying this to flatter him. But he is incapable of it. A snake may bite you as you walk unwarily in the jungle or across the jhil. (Simple Simon delighted in exotic words.) But a snake will never kick you. I would stake my life that Dr. Haramzada Swamy is innocent of the murder for which he has been condemned to death. HE IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH. If he is hanged, it will not be, perhaps, altogether a miscarriage of justice. But it will be an error of law."

The publication of this essay threw England into convulsions of merriment. Their beloved crank had surpassed all his previous efforts. Even the little clique of his admirers were compelled to represent this article as mere sublimity of paradox.

A week later came another explanatory confession from the Swamy, equally unavailing as it was unconvincing. A week before the date set for the execution he broke down altogether, made "true and full confession of deliberate murder," disclosed the place where he had hidden the jewels, which were duly recovered, and was received into the Roman Catholic Church.

Reconciled thus with his Maker, he strove to obtain the pardon of his fellows; but the Home Secretary "declined to interfere" in a voice that destroyed a reputation for suavity of manner that he had been forty and three years in building!

At the appointed moment Ananda Haramzada Swamy, Doctor of Philosophy, suffered the extreme penalty of the law.

Jack Flynn was playing billiards with Simon Iff in the Hemlock Club. "You must be pretty fed up," the editor remarked. "I don't want to rub it in; but that final confession must have made you feel pretty sore!"

"Not a bit!" replied the mystic cheerfully, "it's all of a piece with the rest of his life. He never touched that woman; and, now, I'm quite sure he was not only innocent but ignorant. Oh, I know what you want to quote: 'A fool is more wise in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.' Don't mind my seniority!"

"Hang it," said Flynn, "I don't mean that; but — you — well, you are a bit obstinate, you know. By the way, here's a letter for you. I brought it in from the office. More abuse, I suppose!"

Simple Simon put the letter in his pocket, and they finished their game.

"I'll read the abuse," said the mystic, taking a chair by the fire, "it may be amusing. Qui m' abuse m' amuse! to alter one of Wilde's remarks a trifle." But as he read his face did not lighten; and at the end he put the letter away carefully in his pocket. Flynn watched him in silence. For ten minutes Simon Iff remained as still as an Egyptian God. Then he rose.

"I want you to come to my house," he said, "I have something particular to discuss." The other fell in with his mood; they walked in silence across the park to Carlton House Terrace. The footman must have been trained to expect his master, for the door opened as the old magician and his friend reached it. Simon Iff led the

way up the old marble staircase, with its satyrs and fauns at every corner, until they came to a small door of brass, on which was a relief, a curious pattern of geometry, with Greek capitals. This door opened at the touch of a secret spring. The room within was draped in black; it was lighted by a plain lamp of silver, such as one sees in churches in Italy, with a red glass and a wick floating in olive oil. At one end was a great chair of carved ebony, above which was a single blue ostrich feather. Below the lamp stood a small square altar, painted white, on which were a golden cross and a rose of scarlet enamel. On a small desk before the chair was a great book, on one side of it a naked sword, on the other a pair of balances.

"I want you to sit in that chair," said the magician to Flynn. "This is my House of Judgment. But I want to ask you to judge in this case; I am not qualified to judge the matter that I am about to put before you; for I have already recorded my opinion." Flynn, a little awed, obeyed with a certain diffidence.

Simon Iff stood before the altar, drew the letter from his pocket, and began to read:

"My dear sir:

"This letter is due to you, for you understand the nature of Truth.

"In your article upon the recent murder, that of my wife Sybil, you had no knowledge of what happened, for you had no facts on which to base your judgment; nor indeed was the discovery of the murderer the object of your inquiry; you confined yourself to proving not what did happen, but what could not have happened. In this limited investigation you were extraordinarily accurate.

"I have adored my wife since the day I met her; more, I have revered her with a passionate devotion as of a man to a goddess. For this exaggeration of proper feeling I am punished.

"I have always believed in her purity and fidelity, despite numerous rumors which reached my ears. But

in July last I allowed myself to be tempted by an old friend, who was importunate, and justifiably so, since the honor of his own wife was involved in a way to which I need not refer more precisely.

"I therefore purchased a disguise and presented myself at the Costume Ball at Covent Garden on the 3d of July last. I soon recognized my wife, and observed her conduct closely. She danced several times with Dr. Haramzada Swamy, and they left the ball together. I followed them; I still hoped that no serious wrong was contemplated. They went up in the lift; I took the opportunity to slip upstairs, unobserved. I was just able to distinguish into which door they went. At this door I waited and listened. In ten minutes I had heard enough. The blow was crippling; I must have fainted; for the next thing I remember is that I was sitting on the floor, but alert and intent upon the dialogue. I heard first the whimpering voice of the Eurasian, punctuated with a nauseating giggle. 'It is a most unfortunate necessity, dear lady,' were his first words. She replied with a torrent of oaths and curses. She was apparently defying him, but I could not tell why. 'You see, I put the dainty little thing away,' he said, 'where you can't find it, dear lady; you surely wouldn't deprive your adorer of such an intimate souvenir. And you mustn't make a noise in the flat, must you, dear? We're so respectable here.' Again she cursed him, but in a lower voice. I had no idea she knew such words; some of them I did not know myself. 'Your husband will certainly kill you outright, or divorce you at the very least, if he finds you out; personally, I'm inclined to think he'll kill you, you know. He's such a severe type of man, not at all a ladies' man, dear, I'm afraid. So you'll give me all those pretty little toys, and you can make up a story about a robbery; I'm sure he'll believe you, you're so clever, rather like my wife in some ways.'

"I cannot describe the impression made by his little whining voice, but it made me screw up my face like one

who has bitten into a sour apple. I heard the noise of clattering; evidently Sybil had thrown her jewels on the floor. 'I'll take the rings, too,' he went on. 'It will be better for the story you'll tell him. I'm advising you in your own interests, you know.' Again the horrible little giggle. 'Such a sensible little lady!' he added, 'and now I'll get my hat and coat and leave you for an hour, so that you can dress and go home. I'm so sorry I haven't got a maid to help you.'

"By instinct, I suppose, I withdrew from the door and concealed myself beyond the elevator. Let him go out, jewels and all; my business was with my wife.

"He slipped hurriedly and stealthily out, as I could see through the gilded palings of the elevator shaft, ran down one flight of stairs and rang for the lift. The moment the machine started he began to run down the stairs again. At the same moment I strode across the landing and struck my fist upon the door. It yielded; he had left it unlatched.

"You, Mr. Iff, are probably the one person in England who can imagine — that is, in the proper sense of the word, make an image of — my state of mind. Coincident were, firstly, a blaze of wrath at her treachery of a life time; and, secondly, a habit of protection. She was an infamous woman who had destroyed the life of a good man; and she was also a helpless woman who had been blackmailed and robbed by a man more wretched and infamous than she.

"I honestly believe that my brain had become dull to the former of these impressions; that my main conscious idea was to comfort. But I had not counted on the effect of the scene itself. Some people, as you know better than anybody, visualize everything; some don't. Tell one man to shut his eyes; then whisper 'church'; he will see twenty familiar churches in a moment just as if they were in front of him. I am not one of these men. When my eyes are closed I see nothing. So, though I had the fact of adultery in my mind, I had nowise staged

the act in the theatre of my mind. Therefore the opening of the door was a new shock. Sybil was standing, clad only in a light garment, and that torn across; her hair disheveled, her eyes bloodshot; the paint and powder on her face — that was itself a revelation of infamy to me.

"The divan was in a state of disorder; everything testified with open mouth to the atrocity perpetrated against me. I believe that doctors would prove — I believe that you yourself would agree — that I became totally insane for the moment. This is probably then true; yet what I know of it is this, that I lost all sense of anger or distress. She said one word, a word of extreme filth, at seeing me. I simply stooped, picked up the poker, and struck her down. I had no idea that I was killing a woman; so far I will agree with you; my act was entirely reflex, like a knee-jerk, or as one brushes a fly from one's head without consciousness of its presence.

"Still without true volition, I went out and closed the door. The interview was at an end. I walked down the stairs; Daniels, preoccupied with predatory ideas, apparently failed to see me at all.

"Why did I not explain this a week or two ago? Sir, I was desirous that a certain half-breed cur should meet with his desert.

"This done, I am at your service. I shall not kill myself; you may hand my letter to the Public Prosecutor; I hope at least to go to the gallows like a man.

"REGINALD-BROOKE HUNTER."

Jack Flynn broke the long silence which followed the reading of the letter. But his voice, in that dim hall, sounded like the echo of some god's voice — some god who was speaking elsewhere, a great way off.

"I take this letter as true."

"I also."

"What am I to say?"

"What I am to do?"

There was a long pause. Finally Flynn's voice boomed, fainter and hollower than before.

"Nothing."

The mystic held the letter in the flame of the lamp. He blew the last ash lightly into the air, and led the way out of the House of Judgment.

In the study they found Lord Juventius Mellor, a young disciple of Simple Simon, who acted as his secretary. "Little Brother," said the magician, "I want you to ring up Sir Reginald Brooke-Hunter and ask him to spare me an evening as soon as he can to dine at the Hemlock Club. I want to persuade him to stand for Parliament. I think we can promise him the Presidency of the Board of Education; Willett-Smith is resigning, you know. Tell him, of course, that the Prime Minister has asked me to see him about it."

The young man went off, while Jack Flynn stared. "So that's how you do things?" he said. "Yes," said the old man, "we do things by the simple process of doing them. You remember the butcher in the Tao Teh Ching — no! in the writings of Chwantze! — who cut up oxen until he did it without knowing that he did it, so that his knife never needed sharpening, and his arm never tired? Which muscle of our body never tires? The heart, though it works all the time. Why? Because our silly muddled brains don't meddle with it. That is the art of government. So, having found the perfect man to educate our youth, we slip him in!"

"Good," said Flynn, laughing. "A double murderer! If I rob a bank will you make me Chancellor of the Exchequer?"

"Oh, no," said the magician with a sigh. "I must have a perfect robber. Our best thief is Lord Chief Justice, as you know; but for the Exchequer, we ought really to look on the other side of the Atlantic. Oh, dear! What a pity they threw that tea into Boston Harbor!"

"By the way," said Flynn, "to return. I still don't see why Haramzada confessed to a murder he knew he didn't do."

"As I said before — and you had ears, and heard not — it was all of a piece with the rest of his life. He did not know the truth about the murder, though in one of his numerous confessions he probably told all he did know. He wasn't believed; he knew there was no chance to cheat the gallows; so he thought he would cheat God. Splendid idea! to die for a crime one has not committed. One goes to heaven with colors flying, one of the noble army of martyrs. It's a cowardly idea, a liar's idea ——"

"An Eurasian's idea?"

"Yes; and that's the ghastly thing about it. His nature is not his own fault, any more than a toad's. But this I want you to understand, that as sex is the most sacred thing in life, so the sins of the fathers are visited on the children most of all in violations of eugenics.

"Whether it's tubercle, or alcoholism, or marriage between kin too close, or sub-race too distant, the penalty is fulminating and disastrous. Generation becomes degeneration."

"What's the remedy?"

"Oh, we might restore the worship of Dionysus and Priapus and Mithras, perhaps, for a beginning. Then there's the question of polygamy, we shall have that; and harems; and groves, with sacred men and women. You can read it up in Fraser if you're rusty."

But that was the worst of Simple Simon. He would constantly change the key of his discourse without warning; and unless you knew him as well as Jack Flynn, you could never be sure when he was joking.