

are, wherever they can be understood at all, perfectly correct. He is certainly not insane. With great shrewdness, on the contrary, he has chosen just the one chance of saving his neck."

Stanford paused.

"Is that all?" asked Simon Iff.

"All?" cried Holborne. "Could any case be more complete? Two strong motives for murder, one of them urgent. Expressed intention to commit it; caught in the act of endeavoring to set up a defence; confession of the crime immediately afterwards; a subsequent attitude compatible only with the simulation of insanity. There isn't a link missing."

"No, but I think there's a missing link!" snapped Simon Iff. "In heaven's name, where are your brains, all of you? Look here; let me repeat that story, word for word, only instead of 'Professor Briggs' let us say 'the cabbage,' or 'the antelope,' wherever his name occurs. You wouldn't suspect them, would you? And I assure you that Briggs is just as incapable of pulling a gun on a man as either of those! It simply would not occur to him to do it."

"My dear man," said Holborne, "we all appreciate your attitude, I assure you; but facts are chieftains that winna ding."

"Ah, facts!" cried the mystic, with as near a sneer as he ever allowed himself. "Now look out, Stanford, I'm going to pump lead into you! You promised me two things: to give me all the essential facts, and to give me nothing but the facts. You are doubly perjured, you lost wretch!"

"Come, come, I say! I think I've given you an absolutely full and fair account."

"No: Omission number one. You don't say why he resigned from Owens College."

"Yes, I do; he wanted to prosecute his experiments with less distraction."

"Just half the fact; I happen to know that he was forced to resign."

"What?"

"They simply could not get him to lecture. Either he would not go down to the classroom at all, or else he would forget all about the class, and start hieroglyphics on the blackboard!"

"What has that got to do with it?"

"Why, the problem is the man's mind. You say nothing about his mind. You don't even tell us the most important thing of all; which is, what is he thinking of at this moment?"

"Wondering if he'll dodge the noose," put in the young man who had previously laughed at Simon Iff.

"Oh, no!" flashed back the mystic, "with death so near him, he must be thinking of really important things—perhaps even of you!"

"That would at least explain his dejection," he added musingly. "Having crushed it, let us pass on to my next point. You actually permitted yourself to draw deductions which are quite unjustifiable. You say that he exchanged pistols with the corpse, evidently to set up a defence of suicide. Evident to whom? You see, you fatally neglect the calibre of Briggs' mind. To me, it seems much more likely that he was quite preoccupied with some other matter. You judge him by yourselves. You assume that he killed Clark, and then argue, 'But if I had killed Clark, I should be thinking solely of how to escape.' I say that if he did kill Clark, two seconds later his mind would have returned to the problems on which it had previously been at work. You men don't understand concentration: Briggs does. Be-

sides all this, if he was going to put up the suicide theory, why not do it? He did not know that they had seen him change the weapons."

"Hang it all, he confessed to the vicar."

"That was my next point; he did nothing of the sort. He told the parson, emphatically, that he realized what he had done. But what was that? No word of any murder! The question is what he did do, and what he is doing now."

"You're super-subtle," said the Judge. "I wish you were right, but there's nothing in it."

"Stick to the point! What does his whole attitude, from the very moment of discovery, indicate? Simply this, that he is busy."

"Busy!" It was a general shout of derision. "Busy! with his throat in a noose! Busy!"

"I ask your pardon, Stanford," said the magician quietly; "you are the historian here, and I beg you to correct me if I have my facts wrong. At the siege of Syracuse—" "The Siege of Syracuse?" The company became hilarious, despite themselves.

"I forget who conquered it; it doesn't matter; but whoever he was, he gave orders that the great geometer Archimedes should be spared. The soldiers found him drawing figures in the sand, and asked him who he was; but he only said: 'Get away! Get away! I'm busy!' And they killed him. Waiter! let me have another cigar and some more coffee!"

The Judge was a little impressed. "This is an amusing theory," he said, "though I'm damned if I can believe it. How do you propose to develop it?"

"Will you help me?"

"You bet I will."

"Well, I want a copy of that jargon of Stanford's about 'wings'; and I want five minutes alone with Briggs in the condemned cell."

"Here's the paper," said the historian.

"I'll get you an order from the home secretary this afternoon. I'll go now. If you can do anything, all England will have to thank you." This from 'Anging' Olborne.

"Oh, I can't do anything; but I think Briggs can."

"Ah, you think he's shielding some one!" put in the objectionable young man for the third time.

Simon Iff lit his cigar with deliberation. "I shall certainly be obliged to you," he replied with studied courtesy, "if you will recommend me some of the lighter types of sentimental detective fiction. Time often hangs heavy on one's hands in London, for one cannot always be certain" (he rose and bowed to the young man) "of enjoying such very entertaining and illuminative conversation."

"Look here, Iff," said Holborne; "come with me, and we'll see the Home Secretary right away." They left the room together.

Two hours later, Simon Iff, armed with authority, was in the condemned cell. The professor was seated on the floor, his head sunk deeply on his breast, his hands playing feverishly in his long sandy hair.

The old mystic went close up to him. "Briggs!" he cried aloud. "I'm Iff. You know me! I won't keep you a moment; but this is damned important."

The professor gave no sign that he had heard. "I thought not," said Simon.

The magician proceeded to insert his thumbs under the arm-pits of his old friend, and began to tickle him. Briggs wriggled violently, but only murmured: "Get away!"

"I knew he was innocent," said Simon gleefully to