

himself. "But I see there is only one way to get him to talk."

He sat down very positively in front of his victim, and began to recite from the paper in his hand, "Resolve!" "Gyre!" "Explode!" "Action and reaction!" "Balance!" "Soul!" "Wings!" Briggs looked up suddenly, savagely. "You'll never do it!" went on the magician. "You thought you did; but you didn't, and you never will. It's hopeless! Resolve—gyre—explode!"

"Damn you; get out!" said Briggs.

"Taking G as 31 point 2," continued the torturer, and Pi as 3 point 24156, and e as——" Briggs sprang to his feet. "You can't! You're getting it all wrong. Curse you! Curse you!" he yelled.

"You'll never do it! You'll never do it!" went on Simon implacably. "Sin Theta plus Cos Theta equals twice the root of minus eight! You'll never do it! You'll never do it!"

"Are you the devil come to torture me before my time?"

"Good. No. I'm Simon Iff. And all I want to know is—how long do you need to finish your problem?"

"Oh, get out! Get out!"

"Seven times six is forty-four, and——"

"Get out!"

"Log one plus X equals X, minus half X squared plus a third X cubed plus——"

"Minus, you dolt!" shrieked Briggs. "For God's sake, stop! You're putting me all out!"

"Some people are going to disturb you very soon by hanging you." He squeezed the professor's windpipe till he gasped.

"Tell me how long you need to finish the problem, and I'll go, and I'll see you have all you need, and no disturbance."

"A month, six weeks. Oh, go, there's a good fellow!"

Simon Iff went out without another word. He had an appointment to meet 'Anging 'Olborne for dinner.

"Well, I had to put him to the torture," said the magician; "but I got him to say one rational sentence. Now I want you to trust me in this. Get the execution postponed for a month. Don't disturb old Briggs. Let him have anything he calls for, in reason; he'll need little. As soon as he talks rationally again, you and I will go and see him in the cell. I can promise you this thing is going to clear up like a day in spring. April showers bring May flowers."

Just five weeks later Holborne telephoned to Simon Iff to come round to his house. "Briggs has woken up," he said; "for the last week he has been working with drawing materials which he had asked for. Suddenly he swept the whole thing aside and looked up at the warden. "Who the devil are you?" he said. "And where's the lab. gone?" They rang me up at once. Let's get down."

They found Briggs pacing his cell in a rage. "This is an outrage!" he cried when he saw his friends. "a damned outrage! I shall write to the Times!"

"You'd better talk to us first," said Holborne. "I may say that all England has been waiting to hear from you for some months."

"I should say so," retorted Briggs; "and you may go and tell them that I did it! Alone I did it!" "Are we not talking at cross purposes?" suggested the mystic mildly. "Our mundane minds are pre-

occupied with the small matter of the murder of Peter Clark. And I don't think you did that."

"Who? I. Of course not. Don't be so silly!"

"Well, you were there. We should really be grateful if you would tell us who did do it."

"That fool Marshall, of course."

"Marshall?" said the mystic.

"The farmer down by Saffield. Peter had seduced his wife. He tracked the boy up here—I mean up there; I can't realize this isn't my lab., you know, just yet. Followed him into the lab. Peter drew an automatic. Marshall got my Webley, and fired while the boy was hesitating. Then he threw down the gun, and went out."

"Don't you think you might have explained this before?" said Holborne. "Do you realize that you've been convicted for murder; if it hadn't been for Iff here, we'd have hanged you a fortnight ago."

"How could I?" said Briggs irritably. "You don't understand."

"Well, explain later. We'll get you a free pardon as soon as possible. I may tell you that Marshall fell down a quarry the same night as the murder. He must have been half insane. But we never connected his death with your case. Anyhow, I'll see to it that you get out by to-morrow, and we'll celebrate it at the club. Perhaps you would make us a little speech, and tell us what you've been doing all these months."

"All right. But I've got to see Williams right away."

"Williams!" said Simon Iff. "So that is what it was, was it? I'll tell him to-day to come right down and see you; and we'll have him up to the dinner to-morrow, and we'll all live happy ever after!"

Two days later Briggs was on his feet at a great and special gathering of the Hemlock Club. Simon Iff was on his best behavior, except that he would drink only tea, saying that his mood was exquisite and aesthetic like a Ming Vase. Briggs, as the guest of honor, was seated on the right of the president of the club, on whose other hand sat Rear-Admiral Williams, a trusted member of the Secret Committee of Public Defense, which is known to just a few people in London as a liaison between Navy and Army, and a background to both.

The professor was no orator, but he did not lack encouragement. "I want to thank you all very much," he said. "Of course we can't tell you just what this thing is, but Admiral Williams has been good enough to say that it's all right as far as he can see, and that ought to be good enough for us all. He's a jolly good fellow, Williams, and I wish we had a few more like him. I mean I'm glad we've got a lot more like him. Oh hang it! that's not what I mean either. I'm no speaker, you know; but anyhow I thought you'd like to hear just how I came to think of this damned thing. You see I was working that morning—just finished verifying Mersenne's statement for p equals 167, rather a tricky proof, but awfully jolly, so my mind was absolutely clear and empty. Well, here comes the Watts and the Kettle business. That poor devil Marshall runs in after Peter, right on his heels. Peter draws; I didn't notice particularly, Marshall gets my Webley and fires. I see it revolve and explode. See! Two ideas, revolve and explode. Nothing in that. Well, then Peter stays on his feet, quite a while, though he was dead. So I thought of reflex balance; you know, the automatic dodge in our soles; it goes wrong when you get locomotor ataxia. Then he gives a gasp, and puts his arms out, like wings; and then I thought of his soul flying away. Nothing in that. Well, then, Plummer throws down my Webley by the