

tual!" he exclaimed gleefully, and began to read aloud.

"As every one 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 every one 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 to-morrow. 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