

THE HOLDING UP OF LADY GLANEDALE

HERBERT JENKINS

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I

"MORE trouble, Tommy," remarked Gladys Norman one morning as James Thompson entered her room. He looked across at her quickly, a keen flash of interest in his somnolent brown eyes.

"Somebody's pinched Lady Glanedale's jewels. Just had a telephone message. What a happy place the world would without drink and crime

"And women," added Thompson, alert of eye, and prepared to dodge anything that was coming.

"Tommy, you're a beast. Get thee hence!" and, bending over her typewriter, she became absorbed in rattling words on to paper.

Thompson had just reached the third line of "I'm Sorry Made You Cry," when his quick eye detected Malcolm as he entered the outer office.

With a brief "Good morning," Malcolm Sage passed into his room, and a minute later Gladys Norman was reading from her note-book the message that had come over the telephone to the effect that early that morning a burglar had entered Lady Glanedale's bedroom at the Home Park, Hyston, the country house of Sir Roger Glanedale, and, under threat from a pistol, had demanded her jewel-case which she had accordingly handed to him. I

As the jewels were insured with the Twentieth Century Insurance Corporation, Ltd., Malcolm Sage had been immediately communicated with, that he might take up the enquiry with a view to tracing the missing property.

One of Malcolm Sage's first cases had been undertaken for this company in connection with a burglary. He had been successful in restoring the whole of the missing property. In consequence he had been personally thanked by the Chairman at a fully attended Board Meeting, and at the same time presented with a gold-mounted walking-stick, which, as he remarked to Sir John Dene, no one but a drum-major in full dress would dare to carry.

Having listened carefully as he read her notes, Malcolm Sage dismissed Gladys Norman with a nod and for some minutes sat at his table drawing the inevitable diagrams upon his blotting pad. Presently he rose, and walked over to a row of shelves filled with red-backed volumes, lettered on the back "Records," with a number and a date.

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Every crime or curious occurrence that came under Malcolm Sage's notice was duly chronicled in the pages of these volumes, which contained miles of press-cuttings. They were rendered additionally valuable by an elaborate system of cross-reference indexing.

After referring to an index-volume, Malcolm Sage selected one of the folios, and returned with it to his table. Rapidly turning over the pages he came to a newspaper-cutting, which was dated some five weeks previously. This he read and pondered over for some time. It ran:

DARING BURGLARY COUNTRY MANSION ENTERED

BURGLAR'S SANG-FROID

In the early hours of yesterday morning a daring burglary was committed at the Dower House, near Hyston, the residence of Mr. Gerald Comminge, who was away from home at the time, by which the burglar was able to make a rich haul of jewels.

In the early hours of the morning Mrs. Comminge was awakened by the presence of a man in her room. As she sat up in bed, the man turned an electric torch upon her and, pointing a revolver in her direction, warned her that if she cried out he would shoot. He then demanded to know where she kept her jewels, and Mrs. Comminge, too terrified to do anything else, indicated a drawer in which lay her jewel-case.

Taking the jewel-case and putting it under his arm, the man threatened that if she moved or called out within a quarter of an hour he would return and shoot her. He then got out of the window on to a small balcony and disappeared.

It seems that he gained admittance by clambering up some ivy and thus on to the narrow balcony that runs the length of one side of the house.

Immediately on the man's disappearance, Mrs. Comminge fainted. On coming to she gave the alarm, and the police were immediately telephoned for. Although the man's footprints are easily discernible upon the mould and the soft turf, the culprit seems to have left no other clue.

The description that Mrs. Comminge is able to give of her assailant is rather lacking in detail, owing to the she experienced at his sudden appearance. It would appear that the man is of medium height and slight of build. He wore a cap and a black handkerchief tied across his face just beneath his eyes, which entirely masked features. With his very inadequate description of the ruffian the police have perforce to set to work upon the very difficult task of tracing him.

For some time Malcolm Sage pondered over the cutting, then rising he replaced the volume and rang for Thompson.

An hour later Tims was carrying him along in the direction of Sir Roger Glanedale's house at a good thirty-five miles an hour.

The Home Park was an Elizabethan mansion that had been acquired by Sir Roger Glanedale out of enormous profits made upon the sale of margarine. As Tims brought the car up before the front entrance with an impressive sweep, the hall-door was thrown open by the butler, who habitually strove by an excessive dignity of demeanour to remove from his mental palate the humiliating flavour of margarine.

Malcolm Sage's card considerably mitigated the impression made upon Mr. Hibbs's mind by the swing with which Tims had brought the car up to the door.

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Malcolm Sage was shown into the morning-room and told that her ladyship would see him in a few minutes. He was busy in the contemplation of the garden when the door opened and Lady Glanedale entered.

He bowed and then, as Lady Glanedale seated herself at a small table, he took the nearest chair.

She was a little woman, some eight inches too short for the air she assumed, fair, good-looking; but with a hard, set mouth. No one had ever permitted her to forget that she had married margarine.

"You have called about the burglary?" she enquired, in a tone she might have adopted to a plumber who had come to see to a leak in the bath.

Malcolm Sage bowed.

"Perhaps you will give me the details," he said. "Kindly be as brief as possible," his "incipient Bolshevism" manifesting itself in his manner.

Lady Glanedale elevated her eyebrows; but, as Malcolm Sage's eyes were not upon her, she proceeded to tell her story.

"About one o'clock this morning I was awakened to find a man in my bedroom," she began. "He was standing between the bedstead and the farther window, his face masked. He had a pistol in one hand, which he pointed towards me, and an electric torch in the other. I sat up in bed and stared at him. 'If you call out I shall kill you,' he said. I asked him what he wanted. He replied that if I gave him my jewel-case and did not call for help, he would not do me any harm.

"Realising that I was helpless, I got out of bed, put on a wrapper, opened a small safe I have set in the wall, and handed him one of the two jewel-cases I possess.

"He then made me promise that I would not ring or call out for a quarter of an hour, and he disappeared out of the window.

"At the end of a quarter of an hour I summoned help, and my stepson, the butler, and several other servants came to my room. We telephoned for the police, and after breakfast we telephoned to the insurance company."

For fully a minute there was silence. Malcolm Sage decided that Lady Glanedale certainly possessed the faculty of telling a story with all the events in their proper sequence. He found himself with very few questions to put to her.

"Can you describe the man?" he asked as he mechanically turned over the leaves of a book on a table beside him.

"Not very well," she replied. "I saw little more than a silhouette against the window. He was of medium height slight of build and I should say young."

"That seems to agree with the description of the man who robbed Mrs. Comminge," he said as if to himself.

"That is what the inspector said," remarked Lady Glanedale.

"His voice?"

"Was rather husky, as if he were trying to disguise it."

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"Was it the voice of a man of refinement or otherwise?"

"I should describe it as middle-class," was the snobbish response.

"The mask?"

"It looked like a silk handkerchief tied across his nose. It was dark in tone; but I could get only a dim impression."

"Malcolm Sage inclined his head comprehendingly.

"You know Mrs. Cumminge?"

"Intimately."

"You mentioned two jewel-cases," he said.

"The one stolen contained those I mostly wear," replied Lady Glanedale; "in the other I keep some very valuable family jewels."

"What was the value of those stolen?"

"About £8,000," she replied, "possibly more. I should explain, perhaps, that Sir Roger was staying in town last night, and so far I have not been able to get him on the telephone. He was to have stayed at the Ritzton; but apparently he found them full and went elsewhere."

"You have no suspicion as to who it was that entered your room?"

"None whatever," said Lady Glanedale.

"The police have already been?" he enquired, as he examined with great intentness a rose he had taken from a bowl beside him.

"Yes, they came shortly after we telephoned. They gave instructions that nothing was to be touched in the room, and no one was to go near the ground beneath the windows."

Malcolm Sage nodded approvingly, and returned the rose to the bowl.

"And now," he said, "I think I should like to see the room. By the way, I take it that you keep your safe locked?"

"Always," said Lady Glanedale.

"Where do you keep the key?"

"In the bottom right-hand drawer of my dressing-table, under a pile of handkerchiefs."

"As soon as you can I should like to see a list of the jewels," said Malcolm Sage, as he followed Lady Glanedale towards the door.

"My maid is copying it out now," she replied, and led the way up the staircase, along a heavily-carpeted corridor, at the end of which she threw open a door giving access to a bedroom.

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Malcolm Sage entered and gave a swift look about him, seeming to note and catalogue every detail. It was a large room, with two windows looking out on to a lawn. On the right was a door, which, Lady Glanedale explained, led to Sir Roger's dressing-room.

He walked over to the window near the dressing-room and looked out.

"That is the window he must have entered by; he went out that way," explained Lady Glanedale.

"You spoke of a stepson," said Malcolm Sage. "He is a man, I presume?"

"He is twenty-three." Lady Glanedale elevated her eyebrows as if surprised at the question.

"Can you send for him?"

"Certainly, if you wish it." She rang the bell, and a moment later requested the maid who answered it to ask Mr. Robert to come immediately.

"Do you sleep with lowered blinds?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

"The one nearest my bed I always keep down; the other I pull up after putting out my light."

"Did you awaken suddenly, or gradually as if it were your usual time to awaken?"

"It was gradual," said Lady Glanedale, after a pause for thought. "I remember having the feeling that someone was looking at me."

"Was the light from the torch shining on your face?"

"No, it was turned to the opposite side of the room, on my right as I lay in bed."

At that moment a young man in tweeds entered.

"You want me, Mater?" he enquired; then, looking across at Malcolm Sage with a slightly troubled shadow in his eyes, he bowed.

"This is Mr. Sage from the insurance company," said Lady Glanedale coldly. "He wishes to see you."

Again there was the slightly troubled look in young Glanedale's eyes.

"Perhaps you will place Mr. Glanedale in the exact position in which the man was standing when you first saw him," said Malcolm Sage.

Without a word Lady Glanedale walked over to the spot she had indicated, young Glanedale following. When she had got him into the desired position she turned interrogatingly to Malcolm Sage.

"Now," he said, "will you be so kind as to lie on your bed the same position in which you were when you awakened."

For a moment Lady Glanedale's eyebrows indicated surprise. She used her eyebrows more than any other feature for the purpose of expressing emotion. Without comment, however, she lay down upon the bed on her right side, closed her eyes, then a moment later sat up and gazed in the direction where Glanedale stood looking awkward

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and self-conscious.

"Perhaps you will repeat every movement you made," said Malcolm Sage. "Try to open the safe door exactly as you did then, and leave it at the same angle. Every detail is important."

Lady Glanedale rose, picked up a wrapper that was lying over a chair-back, put it on and, walking over to the safe, turned the key that was in the lock, and opened it. Then, standing between the safe and Glanedale, she took out a jewel-case and closed the door. Finally she walked over to where her stepson stood, and handed him the jewel-case.

"Thank you," said Malcolm Sage. "I wanted to see whether or not the man had the opportunity of seeing into the safe."

"I took care to stand in front of it," she said.

"So I observed. You allowed the quarter of an hour to elapse before you raised the alarm?"

"Certainly, I had promised," was the response.

"But a promise extorted by threats of violence is not binding," he suggested as he pulled meditatively at his right ear.

"It is with me," was the cold retort.

He inclined his head slightly.

"I notice that the ground beneath the windows has been roped off."

"The inspector thought it had better be done, as there were footprints."

"I will not trouble you further for the present, Lady Glanedale," said Malcolm Sage, moving towards the door. "I should like to spend a little time in the grounds. Later I may require to interrogate the servants."

Young Glanedale opened the door and his stepmother, followed by Malcolm Sage, passed out. They descended the stairs together.

"Please don't trouble to come out," said Malcolm Sage. "I shall probably be some little time," this as Lady Glanedale moved towards the hall door. "By the way," he said, as she turned towards the morning-room where she had received him, "did you happen to notice if the man was wearing boots, or was he in stockinged feet?"

"I think he wore boots," she said, after a momentary pause.

"Thank you," and Malcolm Sage turned towards the door, which was held open by the butler.

Passing down the steps and to the left, he walked round to the side of the house, where the space immediately beneath Lady Glanedale's windows had been roped off.

Stepping over the protecting rope, he examined the ground beneath the window through which the burglar had entered.

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Running along the side of the house was a flower-bed some two feet six inches wide, and on its surface was clearly indicated a series of footprints. On the side of the painted water-pipe were scratches such as might have been made by someone climbing up to the window above.

Drawing a spring metal-rule from his pocket, he proceeded to take a series of measurements, which he jotted down in a note book.

He next examined the water-pipe up which the man presumably had climbed, and presently passed on to a similar pipe farther to the left. Every inch of ground he subjected to a careful and elaborate examination, lifting the lower branches of some evergreens and gazing beneath them.

Finally, closing his notebook with a snap, Malcolm Sage seated himself upon a garden-seat and, carefully filling and lighting his pipe, he became absorbed in the pinkness of the third fingernail of his left hand.

A quarter of an hour later he was joined by young Glanedale.

"Found anything?" he enquired.

"There are some footprints," said Malcolm Sage, looking at him keenly. "By the way, what did you do when you heard of the robbery?"

"I went to the Mater's room."

"And after that?"

"I rushed downstairs and started looking about."

"You didn't happen to come anywhere near this spot, or walk upon the mould there?" He nodded at the place he had just been examining.

"No; as a matter of fact, I avoided it. The Mater warned me to be careful."

Malcolm Sage nodded his head.

"Did the butler join you in your search?" he enquired.

"About five minutes later he did. He had to go back and put on some things; he was rather sketchy when he turned up in the Mater's room," Glanedale grinned at the recollection.

"And you?" Malcolm Sage flashed on him that steel grey look of interrogation. For a moment the young man seemed embarrassed, and he hesitated before replying.

"As a matter of fact, I hadn't turned in," he said at length.

"I see," said Malcolm Sage, and there was something in his tone that caused Glanedale to look at him quickly.

"It was such a rippin' night that I sat at my bedroom window smoking," he explained a little nervously.

"Which is your bedroom window?"

Glanedale nodded in the direction of the farther end of the house.

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"That's the governor's dressing-room," he said, indicating the window on the left of that through which the burglar had escaped, "and the next is mine."

"Did you see anything?" enquired Malcolm Sage, who, having unscrewed the mouthpiece of his pipe, proceeded to clean it with a blade of grass.

Again there was the slightest suggestion of hesitation before Glanedale replied.

"No, nothing. You see," he added hastily, "I was not looking out of the window, merely sitting at it. As a matter of fact, I was facing the other way."

"You heard no noise?"

Glanedale shook his head.

"So that the first intimation you had of anything being wrong was what?" he asked.

"I heard the Mater at her door calling for assistance, and I went immediately."

Malcolm Sage turned and regarded the water-pipe speculatively.

"I wonder if anyone really could climb up that," he said. "I'm sure I couldn't."

"Nothing easier," said Glanedale. "I could shin up in two ticks," and he made a movement towards the pipe.

"No," said Malcolm Sage, putting a detaining hand upon his arm. "If you want to demonstrate your agility, try the other. There are marks on this I want to preserve."

"Right-o," cried Glanedale with a laugh, and a moment later he was shinning up the further pipe with the agility of a South Sea islander after coconuts.

Malcolm Sage walked towards the pipe, glanced at it, and then at the footprints beneath.

"You were quite right," he remarked casually. Then a moment later he enquired:

"Do you usually sit up late?"

"We're not exactly early birds," Glanedale replied a little irrelevantly. "The Mater plays a lot of bridge, you know," he added.

"And that keeps you out of bed?"

"Yes and no," was the reply. "I can't afford to play with the Mater's crowd; but I have to hang about until after they've gone. The governor hates it. You see," he added confidentially, "when a man's had to make his money, he knows the value of it."

"True," said Malcolm Sage, but from the look in his eyes seemed elsewhere.

"By the way, what time was it that you had a shower here last night?"

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"A shower?" repeated Glanedale. "Oh! yes, I remember, it was just about twelve o'clock; it only lasted about ten minutes."

"I'll think things over," said Malcolm Sage, and Glanedale, taking the hint, strolled off towards the house.

Malcolm Sage walked over to where an old man was trimming a hedge.

"Could you lend me a trowel for half an hour?" he enquired.

"No, dang it, I can't," growled the old fellow. "I ain't a-going to lend no more trowels or anything else."

"Why?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

"There's my best trowel gone out of the tool-house," he grumbled, "and I ain't a-going to lend no others."

"How did it go?"

"How should I know?" he complained. "Walked out, I supposed, same as trowels is always doin'."

"When did you miss it?"

"It was there day 'fore yesterday I'll swear, and I ain't a-going to lend no more."

"Do you think the man who took the jewels stole it?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

"Dang the jools," he retorted, "I want my trowel," and, grumbling to himself, the old fellow shuffled off to the other end of the hedge.

Half an hour later Malcolm Sage was in Hyston, interviewing the inspector of police, who was incoherent with excitement. He learned that Scotland Yard was sending down a man that afternoon, furthermore that elaborate enquiries were being made in the neighbourhood as to any suspicious characters having recently been seen.

Malcolm Sage asked a number of questions, to which he received more or less impatient replies. The inspector was convinced that the robbery was the work of the same man who had got away with Mrs. Comminge's jewels, and he was impatient with anyone who did not share this view.

From the police station Malcolm Sage went to The Painted Flag, where, having ordered lunch, he got through to the Twentieth Century Insurance Corporation, and made an appointment to meet one of the assessors at Home Park at three o'clock.

II

Mr. Grimwood, of the firm of Grimwood, Galton Davy, insurance assessors, looked up from the list in his hand. He was a shrewd little man, with side-whiskers, pince-nez; that would never sit straight upon his aquiline nose and an impressive cough.

He glanced from Malcolm Sage to young Glanedale, then back again to Malcolm Sage; finally he coughed.

The three men were seated in Sir Roger Glanedale's library awaiting the coming of Lady Glanedale.

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And yet Mr. Glanedale heard nothing," remarked Mr. Grimwood musingly. "Strange, very strange."

"Are you in the habit of sitting smoking at your bedroom window?" enquired Malcolm Sage of Glanedale, his eyes averted.

"Er no not exactly," was the hesitating response.

"Can you remember when last you did such a thing?" was the next question.

"I'm afraid I can't," said Glanedale, with an uneasy laugh.

"Perhaps you had seen something that puzzled you," continued Malcolm Sage, his restless fingers tracing an imaginary design upon the polished surface of the table before him.

Glanedale was silent. He fingered his moustache with a nervous hand Mr. Grimwood looked across at Malcolm Sage curiously.

"And you were watching in the hope of seeing something more," continued Malcolm Sage.

"I " began Glanedale, starting violently, then he stopped.

"Don't you think you had better tell us exactly what it was you saw?" said Malcolm Sage, raising a pair of gold-rimmed eyes that mercilessly beat down the uneasy gaze of the young man.

"I I didn't say I saw anything."

"It is for you to decide, Mr. Glanedale," said Malcolm Sage, with an almost imperceptible shrug of his shoulders, "whether it is better to tell your story now, or under cross-examination in the witness-box. There you will be under oath, and the proceedings will be public."

At that moment Lady Glanedale entered, and the three men rose.

"I am sorry to interrupt you," she said coldly, "but Sir Roger has just telephoned and wishes to speak to Mr. Glanedale."

"I fear we shall have to keep Sir Roger waiting," said Malcolm Sage, walking over to the door and closing it.

Lady Glanedale looked at him in surprise.

"I do not understand," she began.

"You will immediately," said Malcolm Sage quietly. "We were just discussing the robbery." He slightly stressed the word "robbery."

"Really " began Lady Glanedale.

"Mr. Glanedale was sitting at his window smoking," continued Malcolm Sage evenly. "He cannot remember ever having done such a thing before. I suggested that something unusual had attracted his attention, and that he was waiting to see what would follow. I was just about to tell him what had attracted his attention when you entered, Lady Glanedale."

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Glanedale looked across at his step-mother and then at Malcolm Sage. His misery was obvious.

"Last night, soon after twelve," continued Malcolm Sage, "Mr. Glanedale happened to look out of his window and was surprised to see a figure moving along towards the left. It was not the figure of a man with a handkerchief tied across his face as a mask; but a woman. He watched. He saw it pause beneath the second window of your bedroom, Lady Glanedale, not the one by which the burglar entered. Then it stooped down."

Malcolm Sage's fingers seemed to be tracing each movement of the mysterious figure upon the surface of the table. Lady Glanedale gazed at his long, shapely hands as if hypnotised.

"Presently," he continued, "it returned to the first window, where it was occupied for some minutes. Mr. Glanedale could not see this; but the figure was engaged in making footprints and marking the sides of the water-pipe with a shoe or boot as high up as it could reach. It "

"How dare you make such an accusation!" cried Lady Glanedale, making an effort to rise; but she sank back again in her chair, her face plaster-white.

"I have made no accusation," said Malcolm Sage quietly. "I am telling what Mr. Glanedale saw."

A hunted look sprang to Lady Glanedale's eyes. She tore her eyes from those magnetic fingers and gazed about her wildly as if meditating flight. Her throat seemed as if made of leather.

"Would you be prepared to deny all this in the witness-box under oath, Mr. Glanedale?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

Glanedale looked at him with unseeing eyes, then across at his step-mother.

"The woman had put on a pair of men's boots that the footprints might be masculine. They were so much too large for her that she had to drag her feet along the ground. The boots were those of a man weighing, say, about eleven and a half stone; the weight inside those boots shown by the impression in the mould was little more than seven stone."

Lady Glanedale put out her hand as if to ward off a blow; but Malcolm Sage continued mercilessly, addressing Glanedale.

"The length of a man's stride is thirty inches; between steps the space was less than fifteen inches. Skirts are worn very narrow."

He paused, then, as Lady Glanedale made no reply, he turned to Glanedale.

"I asked you this morning," he said, "to climb the other pipe for the double purpose of examining the impress of your boots on the mould as you left the ground and when you dropped back again on to the mould. Also to see what sort of marks a pair of leather boots would upon the weather-worn paint of the pipe.

"As you sprang from the ground and clutched the pipe, there was a deep impress on the mould of the soles of both boots, deep at the toes and tapering off towards the heel. On your return you made distinct heel-marks as well."

Lady Glanedale had buried her face in her hands. She must blot out the sight of those terrible hands! Glanedale sat with his eyes upon Malcolm Sage as if hypnotised.

"There was a shower of rain last night about twelve, an hour before the alleged burglar arrived; yet the footprints were made before the rain fell. In two cases leaves had been trodden into the footprints; yet on these leaves were

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drops of rain just as they had fallen."

The hands seemed to draw the leaves and indicate the spots of water as if they had been blood. Glanedale shuddered involuntarily.

"In the centre—part of the pipe there were no marks, although there were light scratches for as high up as the arm of a short person could reach, and as far down from the bedroom window as a similar arm could stretch. These scratches were quite dissimilar from those made on the other pipe."

Lady Glanedale moaned something unintelligible.

"Although there had been a shower and the mould was wet," proceeded Malcolm Sage, "there were no marks of mud or mould on the pipe, on the window—sill, or in Lady Glanedale's bedroom, which, I understand, had purposely not been swept. A man had slid down that water—pipe; yet he had done so without so much as removing the surface dust from the paint.

"He had reached the ground as lightly as a fairy, without making any mark upon the mould; the footprints were merely those of someone approaching and walking from the pipe."

Glanedale drew a cigarette case from his pocket; opened it, took out a cigarette, then, hesitating a moment, replaced it, and returned the case to his pocket, his eyes all the time on Malcolm Sage.

"I think," continued Malcolm Sage, "we shall find that the burglar has buried the jewel—case a few yards to the right of the pipe he is supposed to have climbed." His forefinger touched a spot on the extreme right of the table. "There are indications that the mould has been disturbed. Incidentally a trowel is missing "

Glanedale suddenly sprang to his feet, just as Lady Glanedale fell forward in her chair she had fainted.

III

"It's a very unpleasant business," remarked Mr. Goodge, the General Manager of the Twentieth Century Insurance Company, as he looked up from reading a paper that Malcolm Sage had just handed to him. In it Lady Glanedale confessed the fraud she had sought to practise upon the Corporation. "A very unpleasant business," he repeated.

Malcolm Sage gazed down at his finger—nails, as if the matter had no further interest for him. When his brain was inactive, his hands were at rest.

"I don't know what view the Board will take," continued Mr. Goodge, as Malcolm Sage made no comment.

"They will probably present me with another walking—stick," he remarked indifferently.

Mr. Goodge laughed. Malcolm Sage's walking—stick had been a standing joke between them.

"What made you first suspect Lady Glanedale?" he enquired.

"She had omitted to rehearse the episode of the burglary, and consequently when it came to reconstructing the incident she failed in a very important particular." Malcolm Sage paused.

"What was that?" enquired Mr. Goodge with interest, as he pushed a box of cigars towards Malcolm Sage, who, however, shaking his head, proceeded to fill his pipe.

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"She had already told me that the key of the safe was always kept beneath a pile of handkerchiefs in one of the drawers of her dressing-table; yet when I asked her to go through exactly the same movements and actions as when the burglar entered her room, she rose direct from the bed and went to the safe. The dressing-table was at the other end of the room, and to get to it she would have had to pass the spot where she said the man was standing."

Mr. Goodge nodded his head appreciatively.

"The next point was that I discovered it was Lady Glanedale who suggested to the police inspector that means should be taken to prevent anyone approaching the water-pipe by which the man was supposed to have climbed. She was anxious that the footprints should be preserved.

"Another point was that young Glanedale happened to remark that his step-mother was much addicted to bridge, and that the stakes were too high to admit of his joining in. Also that men who have themselves accumulated their wealth know the value of money. Sir Roger disliked bridge and probably kept his lady short."

"Most likely," agreed Mr. Goodge. "He has the reputation of being a bit shrewd in money matters. When did you begin to suspect Lady Glanedale?"

"From the first," was the reply. "Everything rang false. Lady Glanedale's story suggested that it had been rehearsed until she had it by heart," continued Malcolm Sage. "It was too straightforward, too clearly expressed for the story of a woman who had just lost eight thousand pounds' worth of jewels. When I put questions to her she hesitated before replying, as if mentally comparing her intended answer with what she had already told.

"Then she was so practical in preparing a list of the lost jewels at once, and in warning her stepson not to go near the spot, beneath her window, as there might be footprints; this at a time when she was supposed to be in a state of great excitement."

"Did you suspect young Glanedale at all?" queried Mr. Grimwood.

"No," said Malcolm Sage, "but to make quite sure I cast doubt upon the possibility of anyone climbing the pipe. If he had been concerned he would not have volunteered to prove I was wrong."

"True," said Mr. Goodge as he examined critically the glowing end of his cigar. "Lady Glanedale seems to have done the job very clumsily, now that you have explained everything."

"Even the professional criminal frequently underrates the intelligence of those whose business it is to frustrate him; but Lady Glanedale's efforts in marking the water-pipe would not have deceived a child. A powerful magnifying-glass will show that on all such exterior pipes there is an accumulation of dust, which would be removed from a large portion of the surface by anyone climbing either up or down. Lady Glanedale had thought marks made by a boot or a shoe would be sufficient confirmation of her story. She is rather a stupid woman," he added, as he rose to go.

"I suppose she got the idea from the Comminge affair?"

"Undoubtedly," was the response; "but as I say, she is a stupid woman. Vanity in crime is fatal; it leads the criminal to underrate the intelligence of others. Lady Glanedale is intensely vain."

"The Board will probably want to thank you personally," said Mr. Goodge as he shook hands; "but I'll try and prevent them from giving you another walking-stick," he laughed as he opened the door.