himself for days at a time, nobody knew where or why. I used to look him up about once a year and take him a bottle of whisky.'

'Had he any money?'

'Nobody knew. He ought to have had—he was a rich man when he retired. But, when we came to look into it, it turned out he only had a balance of about five hundred pounds in the Glasgow Bank. Apparently he drew out almost everything he had about twenty years ago. There were one or two big bank failures round about that time, and they thought he must have got the wind up. But what he did with it, goodness only knows.'

'Kept it in an old stocking, I expect.'

'I should think Cousin Robert devoutly hopes so.'

'Cousin Robert?'

'He's the residuary legatee. Distant connection of mine, and the only remaining Ferguson. He was awfully wild when he found he'd only got five hundred. He's rather a bright lad, is Robert, and a few thousands would have come in handy.'

'I see. Well, how about a bit of brekker? You might stick Great-Uncle Joseph out of the way somewhere. I don't care about the looks of him.'

'I thought you were rather partial to anatomical specimens.'

'So I am, but not on the breakfast-table. 'A place for everything and everything in its place,' as my grandmother used to say. Besides, it would give Maggie a shock if she saw it.'

Macpherson laughed, and transferred the jar to a cupboard.

'Maggie's shock-proof. I brought a few odd bones and things with me, by way of a holiday task. I'm getting near my final, you know. She'll just think this is another of them. Ring the bell, old man, would you? We'll see what the trout's like.'

The door opened to admit the housekeeper, with a dish of grilled trout and a plate of fried scones.

'These look good, Maggie,' said Wimsey, drawing his chair up and sniffing appreciatively.

'Aye, sir, they're gude, but they're awfu' wee fish.'

'Don't grumble at them,' said Macpherson. 'They're the sole result of a day's purgatory up on Loch Whyneon. What with the sun fit to roast you and an east wind, I'm pretty well flayed alive. I very nearly didn't shave at all

this morning.' He passed a reminiscent hand over his red and excoriated face. 'Ugh! It's a stiff pull up that hill, and the boat was going wallop, wallop all the time, like being in the Bay of Biscay.'

'Damnable, I should think. But there's a change coming. The glass is going back. We'll be having some rain before we're many days older.'

'Time, too,' said Macpherson. 'The burns are nearly dry, and there's not much water in the Fleet.' He glanced out of the window to where the little river ran tinkling and skinkling over the stones at the bottom of the garden. 'If only we get a few days' rain now, there'll be some grand fishing.'

'It *would* come just as I've got to go, naturally,' remarked Wimsey.

'Yes; can't you stay a bit longer? I want to have a try for some sea-trout.'

'Sorry, old man, can't be done. I must be in Town on Wednesday. Never mind. I've had a fine time in the fresh air and got in some good rounds of golf.'

'You must come up another time. I'm here for a month—getting my strength up for the exams and all that. If you can't get away before I go, we'll put it off till August and have a shot at the grouse. The cottage is always at your service, you know, Wimsey.'

'Many thanks. I may get my business over quicker than I think, and, if I do, I'll turn up here again. When did you say your great-uncle died?'

Macpherson stared at him.

'Some time in April, as far as I can remember. Why?'

'Oh, nothing—I just wondered. You were a favourite of his, didn't you say?'

'In a sense. I think the old boy liked my remembering him from time to time. Old people are pleased by little attentions, you know.'

'M'm. Well, it's a queer world. What did you say his name was?'

'Ferguson—Joseph Alexander Ferguson, to be exact. You seem extraordinarily interested in Great-Uncle Joseph.'

'I thought, while I was about it, I might look up a man I know in the shipbuilding line, and see if he knows anything about where the money went to.'

'If you can do that, Cousin Robert will give you a medal. But, if you really want to exercise your detective powers on the problem, you'd better have a hunt through the flat in Glasgow.'

'Yes—what is the address, by the way?'

Macpherson told him the address.

'I'll make a note of it, and, if anything occurs to me, I'll communicate with Cousin Robert. Where does he hang out?'

'Oh, he's in London, in a solicitor's office. Crosbie & Plump, somewhere in Bloomsbury. Robert was studying for the Scottish Bar, you know, but he made rather a mess of things, so they pushed him off among the Sassenachs. His father died a couple of years ago—he was a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh—and I fancy Robert has rather gone to the bow-wows since then. Got among a cheerful crowd down there, don't you know, and wasted his substance somewhat.'

'Terrible! Scotsmen shouldn't be allowed to leave home. What are you going to do with Great-Uncle?'

'Oh, I don't know. Keep him for a bit, I think. I liked the old fellow, and I don't want to throw him away. He'll look rather well in my consulting-room, don't you think, when I'm qualified and set up my brass plate. I'll say he was presented by a grateful patient on whom I performed a marvellous operation.'

'That's a good idea. Stomach-grafting. Miracle of surgery never before attempted. He'll bring sufferers to your door in flocks.'

'Good old Great-Uncle—he may be worth a fortune to me after all.'

'So he may. I don't suppose you've got such a thing as a photograph of him, have you?'

'A photograph?' Macpherson stared again. 'Great-Uncle seems to be becoming a passion with you. I don't suppose the old man had a photograph taken these thirty years. There was one done then—when he retired from business. I expect Robert's got that.'

'Och aye,' said Wimsey, in the language of the country.

Wimsey left Scotland that evening, and drove down through the night towards London, thinking hard as he went. He handled the wheel mechanically, swerving now and again to avoid the green eyes of rabbits as they bolted from the roadside to squat fascinated in the glare of his head-lamps. He was accustomed to say that his brain worked better when his immediate attention was occupied by the incidents of the road.

Monday morning found him in town with his business finished and his thinking done. A consultation with his ship-building friend had put him in

The Piscatorial Farce of the Stolen Stomach

'WHAT in the world,' said Lord Peter Wimsey, 'is that?'

Thomas Macpherson disengaged the tall jar from its final swathings of paper and straw and set it tenderly upright beside the coffee-pot.

'That,' he said, 'is Great-Uncle Joseph's legacy.'

'And who is Great-Uncle Joseph?'

'He was my mother's uncle. Name of Ferguson. Eccentric old boy. I was rather a favourite of his.'

'It looks like it. Was that all he left you?'

'Imph'm. He said a good digestion was the most precious thing a man could have.'

'Well, he was right there. Is this his? Was it a good one?'

'Good enough. He lived to be ninety-five, and never had a day's illness.'

Wimsey looked at the jar with increased respect.

'What did he die of?'

'Chucked himself out of a sixth-story window. He had a stroke, and the doctors told him—or he guessed for himself—that it was the beginning of the end. He left a letter. Said he had never been ill in his life and wasn't going to begin now. They brought it in temporary insanity, of course, but I think he was thoroughly sensible.'

'I should say so. What was he when he was functioning?'

'He used to be in business—something to do with ship-building, I believe, but he retired long ago. He was what the papers call a recluse. Lived all by himself in a little top flat in Glasgow, and saw nobody. Used to go off by

'Why, it's our faithful sleuths!' cried his lordship. 'What's the excitement?'

'We found this fellow sneaking round the boat-house,' said the man from Scotland Yard. 'He says he's the old gentleman's nephew. Do you know him, my lord?'

'I rather fancy I do,' said Wimsey. 'Mr Pope, I think. Good evening. Were you looking for anything? Not a treasure, by any chance? Because we've just found one. Oh! don't say that. *Maxima reverentia*, you know. Lord St George is of tender years. And, by the way, thank you so much for sending your delightful friends to call on me last night. Oh, yes, Thompson, I'll charge him all right. You there, doctor? Splendid. Now, if anybody's got a spanner or anything handy, we'll have a look at Great-grandpapa Cuthbert. And if he turns out to be old iron, Mr Pope, you'll have had an uncommonly good joke for your money.'

An iron bar was produced from the boat-house and thrust under the hasp of the chest. It creaked and burst. Dr Conyers knelt down tremulously and threw open the lid.

There was a little pause.

'The drinks are on you, Mr Pope,' said Lord Peter. 'I think, doctor, it ought to be a jolly good hospital when it's finished.'

possession of some facts about Great-Uncle Joseph's money, together with a copy of Great-Uncle Joseph's photograph, supplied by the London representative of the Glasgow firm to which he had belonged. It appeared that old Ferguson had been a man of mark in his day. The portrait showed a fine, dour old face, long-lipped and high in the cheek-bones—one of those faces which alter little in a lifetime. Wimsey looked at the photograph with satisfaction as he slipped it into his pocket and made a bee-line for Somerset House.

Here he wandered timidly about the wills department, till a uniformed official took pity on him and enquired what he wanted.

'Oh, thank you,' said Wimsey effusively, 'thank you so much. Always feel nervous in these places. All these big desks and things, don't you know, so awe-inspiring and business-like. Yes, I just wanted to have a squint at a will. I'm told you can see anybody's will for a shilling. Is that really so?'

'Yes, sir, certainly. Anybody's will in particular, sir?'

'Oh, yes, of course—how silly of me. Yes. Curious, isn't it, that when you're dead any stranger can come and snoop round your private affairs—see how much you cut up for and who your lady friends were, and all that. Yes. Not at all nice. Horrid lack of privacy, what?'

The attendant laughed.

'I expect it's all one when you're dead, sir.'

'That's awfully true. Yes, naturally, you're dead by then and it doesn't matter. May be a bit trying for your relations, of course, to learn what a bad boy you've been. Great fun annoyin' one's relations. Always do it myself. Now, what were we sayin'? Ah! yes—the will. (I'm always so absent-minded.) Whose will, you said? Well, it's an old Scots gentleman called Joseph Alexander Ferguson that died at Glasgow—you know Glasgow, where the accent's so strong that even Scotsmen faint when they hear it—in April, this last April as ever was. If it's not troubling you too much, may I have a bob's-worth of Joseph Alexander Ferguson?'

The attendant assured him that he might, adding the caution that he must memorise the contents of the will and not on any account take notes. Thus warned, Wimsey was conducted into a retired corner, where in a short time the will was placed before him.

It was a commendably brief document, written in holograph, and was dated the previous January. After the usual preamble and the bequest of a few small

sums and articles of personal ornament to friends, it proceeded somewhat as follows:

'And I direct that, after my death, the alimentary organs be removed entire with their contents from my body, commencing with the œsophagus and ending with the anal canal, and that they be properly secured at both ends with a suitable ligature, and be enclosed in a proper preservative medium in a glass vessel and given to my great-nephew Thomas Macpherson of the Stone Cottage, Gatehouse-of-the-Fleet, in Kirkcudbrightshire, now studying medicine in Aberdeen. And I bequeath him these my alimentary organs with their contents for his study and edification, they having served me for ninety-five years without failure or defect, because I wish him to understand that no riches in the world are comparable to the riches of a good digestion. And I desire of him that he will, in the exercise of his medical profession, use his best endeavours to preserve to his patients the blessing of good digestion unimpaired, not needlessly filling their stomachs with drugs out of concern for his own pocket, but exhorting them to a sober and temperate life agreeably to the design of Almighty Providence.'

After this remarkable passage, the document went on to make Robert Ferguson residuary legatee without particular specification of any property, and to appoint a firm of lawyers in Glasgow executors of the will.

Wimsey considered the bequest for some time. From the phraseology he concluded that old Mr Ferguson had drawn up his own will without legal aid, and he was glad of it, for its wording thus afforded a valuable clue to the testator's mood and intention. He mentally noted three points: the 'alimentary organs with their contents' were mentioned twice over, with a certain emphasis; they were to be ligatured top and bottom; and the legacy was accompanied by the expression of a wish that the legatee should not allow his financial necessities to interfere with the conscientious exercise of his professional duties. Wimsey chuckled. He felt he rather liked Great-Uncle Joseph.

He got up, collected his hat, gloves, and stick, and advanced with the will in his hand to return it to the attendant. The latter was engaged in conversation with a young man, who seemed to be expostulating about something.

'I'm sorry, sir,' said the attendant, 'but I don't suppose the other gentleman will be very long. Ah!' He turned and saw Wimsey. 'Here is the gentleman.'

affectionately round the creature's neck for support, while he methodically pressed and pulled the various knobs and bumps of its anatomy. 'It seems beastly solid, but I'm sure there's a spring somewhere. You won't forget to bail, will you? I'd simply hate to turn round and find the boat gone. Pirate chief marooned on island and all that. Well, it isn't its back hair, anyhow. We'll try its eyes. I say, Gherkins, I'm sure I felt something move, only it's frightfully stiff. We might have thought to bring some oil. Never mind; it's dogged as does it. It's coming. It's coming. Booh! Pah!'

A fierce effort thrust the rusted knob inwards, releasing a huge spout of water into his face from the dragon's gaping throat. The fountain, dry for many years, soared rejoicingly heavenwards, drenching the treasure-hunters, and making rainbows in the moonlight.

'I suppose this is "Old Cut-throat's" idea of humour,' grumbled Wimsey, retreating cautiously round the dragon's neck. 'And now I can't turn it off again. Well, dash it all, let's try the other eye.'

He pressed for a few moments in vain. Then, with a grinding clang, the bronze wings of the monster clapped down to its sides, revealing a deep square hole, and the fountain ceased to play.

'Gherkins!' said Lord Peter, 'we've done it. (But don't neglect bailing on that account!) There's a box here. And it's beastly heavy. No; all right, I can manage. Gimme the boat-hook. Now I do hope the old sinner really did have a treasure. What a bore if it's only one of his little jokes. Never mind—hold the boat steady. There. Always remember, Gherkins, that you can make quite an effective crane with a boat-hook and a stout pair of braces. Got it? That's right. Now for home and beauty.... Hullo! what's all that?'

As he paddled the boat round, it was evident that something was happening down by the boat-house. Lights were moving about, and a sound of voices came across the lake.

'They think we're burglars, Gherkins. Always misunderstood. Give way, my hearties— '

> A-roving, a-roving, since roving's been my ru-i-in,
> I'll go no more a-roving with you, fair maid.

'Is that you, my lord?' said a man's voice as they drew in to the boat-house.

Wimsey rubbed his eyes. There was something strangely familiar about the lake; from moment to moment it assumed the queer unreality of a place which one recognises without having ever known it. It was like one's first sight of the Leaning Tower of Pisa—too like its picture to be quite believable. Surely, thought Wimsey, he knew that elongated island on the right, shaped rather like a winged monster, with its two little clumps of buildings. And the island to the left of it, like the British Isles, but warped out of shape. And the third island, between the others, and nearer. The three formed a triangle, with the Chinese fountain in the centre, the moon shining steadily upon its dragon head. '*Hic in capite draconis ardet perpetuo—* '

Lord Peter sprang up with a loud exclamation, and flung open the door into the dressing-room. A small figure wrapped in an eiderdown hurriedly uncoiled itself from the window-seat.

'I'm sorry, Uncle Peter,' said Gherkins. 'I was so *dreadfully* wide awake, it wasn't any good staying in bed.'

'Come here,' said Lord Peter, 'and tell me if I'm mad or dreaming. Look out of the window and compare it with the map—Old Cut-throat's "New Islands." He made 'em, Gherkins; he put 'em here. Aren't they laid out just like the Canaries? Those three islands in a triangle, and the fourth down here in the corner? And the boat-house where the big ship is in the picture? And the dragon fountain where the dragon's head is? Well, my son, that's where your hidden treasure's gone to. Get your things on, Gherkins, and damn the time when all good little boys should be in bed! We're going for a row on the lake, if there's a tub in that boat-house that'll float.'

'Oh, Uncle Peter! This is a *real* adventure!'

'All right,' said Wimsey. 'Fifteen men on the dead man's chest, and all that! Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of Johnny Walker! Pirate expedition fitted out in dead of night to seek hidden treasure and explore the Fortunate Isles! Come on, crew!'

Lord Peter hitched the leaky dinghy to the dragon's knobbly tail and climbed out carefully, for the base of the fountain was green and weedy.

'I'm afraid it's your job to sit there and bail, Gherkins,' he said. 'All the best captains bag the really interesting jobs for themselves. We'd better start with the head. If the old blighter said head, he probably meant it.' He passed an arm

The young man, whose reddish hair, long nose, and slightly sodden eyes gave him the appearance of a dissipated fox, greeted Wimsey with a disagreeable stare.

'What's up? Want me?' asked his lordship airily.

'Yes, sir. Very curious thing, sir; here's a gentleman enquiring for that very same document as you've been studying, sir. I've been in this department fifteen years, and I don't know as I ever remember such a thing happening before.'

'No,' said Wimsey, 'I don't suppose there's much of a run on any of your lines as a rule.'

'It's a very curious thing indeed,' said the stranger, with marked displeasure in his voice.

'Member of the family?' suggested Wimsey.

'I *am* a member of the family,' said the foxy-faced man. 'May I ask whether *you* have any connection with us?'

'By all means,' replied Wimsey graciously.

'I don't believe it. I don't know you.'

'No, no—I meant you might ask, by all means.'

The young man positively showed his teeth.

'Do you mind telling me who you are, anyhow, and why you're so damned inquisitive about my great-uncle's will?'

Wimsey extracted a card from his case and presented it with a smile. Mr Robert Ferguson changed colour.

'If you would like a reference as to my respectability,' went on Wimsey affably, 'Mr Thomas Macpherson will, I am sure, be happy to tell you about me. I am inquisitive,' said his lordship—'a student of humanity. Your cousin mentioned to me the curious clause relating to your esteemed great-uncle's—er—stomach and appurtenances. Curious clauses are a passion with me. I came to look it up and add it to my collection of curious wills. I am engaged in writing a book on the subject—*Clauses and Consequences*. My publishers tell me it should enjoy a ready sale. I regret that my random jottings should have encroached upon your doubtless far more serious studies. I wish you a very good morning.'

As he beamed his way out, Wimsey, who had quick ears, heard the attendant informing the indignant Mr Ferguson that he was 'a very funny gentle-

man—not quite all there, sir.' It seemed that his criminological fame had not penetrated to the quiet recesses of Somerset House. 'But,' said Wimsey to himself, 'I am sadly afraid that Cousin Robert has been given food for thought.'

Under the spur of this alarming idea, Wimsey wasted no time, but took a taxi down to Hatton Garden, to call upon a friend of his. This gentleman, rather curly in the nose and fleshy about the eyelids, nevertheless came under Mr Chesterton's definition of a nice Jew, for his name was neither Montagu nor McDonald, but Nathan Abrahams, and he greeted Lord Peter with a hospitality amounting to enthusiasm.

'So pleased to see you. Sit down and have a drink. You have come at last to select the diamonds for the future Lady Peter, eh?'

'Not yet,' said Wimsey.

'No? That's too bad. You should make haste and settle down. It is time you became a family man. Years ago we arranged I should have the privilege of decking the bride for the happy day. That is a promise, you know. I think of it when the fine stones pass through my hands. I say, 'That would be the very thing for my friend Lord Peter.' But I hear nothing, and I sell them to stupid Americans who think only of the price and not of the beauty.'

'Time enough to think of the diamonds when I've found the lady.'

Mr Abrahams threw up his hands.

'Oh, yes! And then everything will be done in a hurry! "Quick, Mr Abrahams! I have fallen in love yesterday and I am being married to-morrow." But it may take months—years—to find and match perfect stones. It can't be done between to-day and to-morrow. Your bride will be married in something ready-made from the jeweller's.'

'If three days are enough to choose a wife,' said Wimsey, laughing, 'one day should surely be enough for a necklace.'

'That is the way with Christians,' replied the diamond-merchant resignedly. 'You are so casual. You do not think of the future. Three days to choose a wife! No wonder the divorce-courts are busy. My son Moses is being married next week. It has been arranged in the family these ten years. Rachel Goldstein, it is. A good girl, and her father is in a very good position. We are all very pleased, I can tell you. Moses is a good son, a very good son, and I am taking him into partnership.'

hidden Treasure, you may conclude there is Gold, or some jewels." You know, sir, I think we may conclude it.'

'Dear me!' said Dr Conyers. 'I believe, indeed, you must be right. And I am ashamed to think that if anybody had suggested to me that it could ever be profitable to me to learn the terms of astrology, I should have replied in my vanity that my time was too valuable to waste on such foolishness. I am deeply indebted to you.'

'Yes,' said Gherkins, 'but where *is* the treasure, uncle?'

'That's just it,' said Lord Peter. 'The map is very vague; there is no latitude or longitude given; and the directions, such as they are, seem not even to refer to any spot on the islands, but to some place in the middle of the sea. Besides, it is nearly two hundred years since the treasure was hidden, and it may already have been found by somebody or other.'

Dr Conyers stood up.

'I am an old man,' he said, 'but I still have some strength. If I can by any means get together the money for an expedition, I will not rest till I have made every possible effort to find the treasure and to endow my clinic.'

'Then, sir, I hope you'll let me give a hand to the good work,' said Lord Peter.

Dr Conyers had invited his guests to stay the night, and, after the excited viscount had been packed off to bed, Wimsey and the old man sat late, consulting maps and diligently reading Munster's chapter '*De Novis Insulis*,' in the hope of discovering some further clue. At length, however, they separated, and Lord Peter went upstairs, the book under his arm. He was restless, however, and, instead of going to bed, sat for a long time at his window, which looked out upon the lake. The moon, a few days past the full, was riding high among small, windy clouds, and picked out the sharp eaves of the Chinese tea-houses and the straggling tops of the unpruned shrubs. 'Old Cut-throat' and his landscape-gardening! Wimsey could have fancied that the old pirate was sitting now beside his telescope in the preposterous pagoda, chuckling over his riddling testament and counting the craters of the moon. 'If *Luna*, there is silver.' The water of the lake was silver enough; there was a great smooth path across it, broken by the sinister wedge of the boat-house, the black shadows of the islands, and, almost in the middle of the lake, a decayed fountain, a writhing Celestial dragon-shape, spiny-backed and ridiculous.

'I'd be ready to lay a sporting bet it is. Look here, sir, you've been scouring round Münster in Germany and Munster in Ireland—but how about good old Sebastian Munster here in the library at home?'

'God bless my soul! Is it possible?'

'It's pretty nearly certain, sir. Here's what he says, written, you see, round the head of that sort of sea-dragon:

> Hic in capite draconis ardet perpetuo Sol.
> Here the sun shines perpetually upon the Dragon's Head.

,

The Dragon's Head
Liber V.
1099
De Novis Insvlis,
quomodo, quando, & per quem
illæ inuentæ sint.
Christophorus Columbus natione Genuensis, cùm diu in aula regis Hispanorum deuersarus fuisset, animum induxit, ut hactenus inacceslias orbis partes peragraret. Pet à rege, utuoto suo non deesset, futurum sibi & toti Hisp

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'Rather doggy Latin—sea-dog Latin, you might say, in fact.'

'I'm afraid,' said Dr Conyers, 'I must be very stupid, but I can't see where that leads us.'

'No; "Old Cut-throat" was rather clever. No doubt he thought that, if anybody read it, they'd think it was just an allusion to where it says, further down, that "the islands were called *Fortunatæ* because of the wonderful temperature of the air and the clemency of the skies." But the cunning old astrologer up in his pagoda had a meaning of his own. Here's a little book published in 1678—Middleton's *Practical Astrology*—just the sort of popular handbook an amateur like "Old Cut-throat" would use. Here you are: "If in your figure you find Jupiter or Venus or *Dragon's head*, you may be confident there is Treasure in the place supposed.... If you find *Sol* to be the significator of the

'I congratulate you,' said Wimsey heartily. 'I hope they will be very happy.'

'Thank you, Lord Peter. They will be happy, I am sure. Rachel is a sweet girl and very fond of children. And she is pretty, too. Prettiness is not everything, but it is an advantage for a young man in these days. It is easier for him to behave well to a pretty wife.'

'True,' said Wimsey. 'I will bear it in mind when my time comes. To the health of the happy pair, and may you soon be an ancestor. Talking of ancestors, I've got an old bird here that you may be able to tell me something about.'

'Ah, yes! Always delighted to help you in any way, Lord Peter.'

'This photograph was taken some thirty years ago, but you may possibly recognise it.'

Mr Abrahams put on a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, and examined the portrait of Great-Uncle Joseph with serious attention.

'Oh, yes, I know him quite well. What do you want to know about him, eh?' He shot a swift and cautious glance at Wimsey.

'Nothing to his disadvantage. He's dead, anyhow. I thought it just possible he had been buying precious stones lately.'

'It is not exactly business to give information about a customer,' said Mr Abrahams.

'I'll tell you what I want it for,' said Wimsey. He lightly sketched the career of Great-Uncle Joseph, and went on: 'You see, I looked at it this way. When a man gets a distrust of banks, what does he do with his money? He puts it into property of some kind. It may be land, it may be houses—but that means rent, and more money to put into banks. He is more likely to keep it in gold or notes, or to put it into precious stones. Gold and notes are comparatively bulky; stones are small. Circumstances in this case led me to think he might have chosen stones. Unless we can discover what he did with the money, there will be a great loss to his heirs.'

'I see. Well, if it is as you say, there is no harm in telling you. I know you to be an honourable man, and I will break my rule for you. This gentleman, Mr Wallace— '

'Wallace, did he call himself?'

'That was not his name? They are funny, these secretive old gentlemen. But that is nothing unusual. Often, when they buy stones, they are afraid of being

robbed, so they give another name. Yes, yes. Well, this Mr Wallace used to come to see me from time to time, and I had instructions to find diamonds for him. He was looking for twelve big stones, all matching perfectly and of superb quality. It took a long time to find them, you know.'

'Of course.'

'Yes. I supplied him with seven altogether, over a period of twenty years or so. And other dealers supplied him also. He is well known in this street. I found the last one for him—let me see—in last December, I think. A beautiful stone—beautiful! He paid seven thousand pounds for it.'

'Some stone. If they were all as good as that, the collection must be worth something.'

'Worth anything. It is difficult to tell how much. As you know, the twelve stones, all matched together, would be worth far more than the sum of the twelve separate prices paid for the individual diamonds.'

'Naturally they would. Do you mind telling me how he was accustomed to pay for them?'

'In Bank of England notes—always—cash on the nail. He insisted on discount for cash,' added Mr Abrahams, with a chuckle.

'He was a Scotsman,' replied Wimsey. 'Well, that's clear enough. He had a safe-deposit somewhere, no doubt. And, having collected the stones, he made his will. That's clear as daylight, too.'

'But what has become of the stones?' enquired Mr Abrahams, with professional anxiety.

'I think I know that too,' said Wimsey. 'I'm enormously obliged to you, and so, I fancy, will his heir be.'

'If they should come into the market again— ' suggested Mr Abrahams.

'I'll see you have the handling of them,' said Wimsey promptly.

'That is kind of you,' said Mr Abrahams. 'Business is business. Always delighted to oblige you. Beautiful stones—beautiful. If you thought of being the purchaser, I would charge you a special commission, as my friend.'

'Thank you,' said Wimsey, 'but as yet I have no occasion for diamonds, you know.'

'Pity, pity,' said Mr Abrahams. 'Well, very glad to have been of service to you. You are not interested in rubies? No? Because I have something very pretty here.'

'Everything you say fits into the puzzle,' went on Wimsey, 'and I think there's not the smallest doubt what Mr Wilberforce Pope was after, though how he knew that you had the *Cosmographia* here I couldn't say.'

'When I disposed of the library, I sent him a catalogue,' said Dr Conyers. 'As a relative, I thought he ought to have the right to buy anything he fancied. I can't think why he didn't secure the book then, instead of behaving in this most shocking fashion.'

Lord Peter hooted with laughter.

'Why, because he never tumbled to it till afterwards,' he said. 'And oh, dear, how wild he must have been! I forgive him everything. Although,' he added, 'I don't want to raise your hopes too high, sir, for, even when we've solved old Cuthbert's riddle, I don't know that we're very much nearer to the treasure.'

'To the *treasure*?'

'Well, now, sir. I want you first to look at this page, where there's a name scrawled in the margin. Our ancestors had an untidy way of signing their possessions higgledy-piggledy in margins instead of in a decent, Christian way in the fly-leaf. This is a handwriting of somewhere about Charles I's reign: "Jac: Coniers." I take it that goes to prove that the book was in the possession of your family at any rate as early as the first half of the seventeenth century, and has remained there ever since. Right. Now we turn to page 1099, where we find a description of the discoveries of Christopher Columbus. It's headed, you see, by a kind of map, with some of Mr Pope's monsters swimming about in it, and apparently representing the Canaries, or, as they used to be called, the Fortunate Isles. It doesn't look much more accurate than old maps usually are, but I take it the big island on the right is meant for Lanzarote, and the two nearest to it may be Teneriffe and Gran Canaria.'

'But what's that writing in the middle?'

'That's just the point. The writing is later than "Jac: Coniers's" signature; I should put it about 1700—but, of course, it may have been written a good deal later still. I mean, a man who was elderly in 1730 would still use the style of writing he adopted as a young man, especially if, like your ancestor the pirate, he had spent the early part of his life in outdoor pursuits and hadn't done much writing.'

'Do you mean to say, Uncle Peter,' broke in the viscount excitedly, 'that that's "Old Cut-throat's" writing?'