'as the glasses are here, I will not inquire too closely into the manner of their restoration. I am deeply obliged to you for your trouble.'

Lord Peter hesitated.

'Pray forgive my seeming inquisitiveness,' he said, 'but I must ask you another question. It sounds rather melodramatic, I'm afraid, but it's this. Are you aware that you have any enemy—anyone, I mean, who would profit by your—er—decease or disgrace?'

Mr Crimplesham sat frozen into stony surprise and disapproval.

'May I ask the meaning of this extraordinary question?' he inquired stiffly.

'Well,' said Lord Peter, 'the circumstances are a little unusual. You may recollect that my advertisement was addressed to the jeweller who sold the chain.'

'That surprised me at the time,' said Mr Crimplesham, 'but I begin to think your advertisement and your behaviour are all of a piece.'

'They are,' said Lord Peter. 'As a matter of fact I did not expect the owner of the glasses to answer my advertisement. Mr Crimplesham, you have no doubt read what the papers have to say about the Battersea Park mystery. Your glasses are the pair that was found on the body, and they are now in the possession of the police at Scotland Yard, as you may see by this.' He placed the specification of the glasses and the official note before Crimplesham.

'Good God!' exclaimed the lawyer. He glanced at the paper, and then looked narrowly at Lord Peter.

'Are you yourself connected with the police?' he inquired.

'Not officially,' said Lord Peter. 'I am investigating the matter privately, in the interests of one of the parties.'

Mr Crimplesham rose to his feet.

'My good man,' he said, 'this is a very impudent attempt, but blackmail is an indictable offence, and I advise you to leave my office before you commit yourself.' He rang the bell.

'I was afraid you'd take it like that,' said Lord Peter. 'It looks as though this ought to have been my friend Detective Parker's job, after all.' He laid Parker's card on the table beside the specification, and added: 'If you should wish to see me again, Mr Crimplesham, before tomorrow morning, you will find me at the Minster Hotel.'

Mr Crimplesham disdained to reply further than to direct the clerk who entered to 'show this person out.'

In the entrance Lord Peter brushed against a tall young man who was just coming in, and who stared at him with surprised recognition. His face, however, aroused no memories in Lord Peter's mind, and that baffled nobleman, calling out Bunter from the newspaper shop, departed to his hotel to get a trunk-call through to Parker.

Meanwhile, in the office, the meditations of the indignant Mr Crimplesham were interrupted by the entrance of his junior partner.

'I say,' said the latter gentleman, 'has somebody done something really wicked at last? Whatever brings such a distinguished amateur of crime on our sober doorstep?'

'I have been the victim of a vulgar attempt at blackmail,' said the lawyer; 'an individual passing himself off as Lord Peter Wimsey— '

'But that *is* Lord Peter Wimsey,' said Mr Wicks, 'there's no mistaking him. I saw him give evidence in the Attenbury emerald case. He's a big little pot in his way, you know, and goes fishing with the head of Scotland Yard.'

'Oh, dear,' said Mr Crimplesham.

Fate arranged that the nerves of Mr Crimplesham should be tried that afternoon. When, escorted by Mr Wicks, he arrived at the Minster Hotel, he was informed by the porter that Lord Peter Wimsey had strolled out, mentioning that he thought of attending Evensong. 'But his man is here, sir,' he added, 'if you'd like to leave a message.'

Mr Wicks thought that on the whole it would be well to leave a message. Mr Bunter, on inquiry, was found to be sitting by the telephone, waiting for a trunk-call. As Mr Wicks addressed him the bell rang, and Mr Bunter, politely excusing himself, took down the receiver.

'Hullo!' he said. 'Is that Mr Parker? Oh, thanks! Exchange! Exchange! Sorry, can you put me through to Scotland Yard? Excuse me, gentlemen, keeping you waiting.—Exchange! all right—Scotland Yard—Hullo! Is that Scotland Yard?—Is Detective Parker round there?—Can I speak to him?—I shall have done in a moment, gentlemen.—Hullo! is that you, Mr Parker? Lord Peter would be much obliged if you could find it convenient to step down to Salisbury, sir. Oh, no, sir, he's in excellent health, sir—just stepped

round to hear Evensong, sir—oh, no, I think tomorrow morning would do excellently, sir, thank you, sir.'

'My dear sir,' exclaimed the lawyer, 'how extremely good of you to come in person! Indeed, I am ashamed to have given you so much trouble. I trust you were passing this way, and that my glasses have not put you to any great inconvenience. Pray take a seat, Lord Peter.' He peered gratefully at the young man over a pince-nez obviously the fellow of that now adorning a dossier in Scotland Yard.

Lord Peter sat down. The lawyer sat down. Lord Peter picked up a glass paper-weight from the desk and weighed it thoughtfully in his hand. Subconsciously he noted what an admirable set of finger-prints he was leaving upon it. He replaced it with precision on the exact centre of a pile of letters.

'It's quite all right,' said Lord Peter. 'I was here on business. Very happy to be of service to you. Very awkward to lose one's glasses, Mr Crimplesham.'

'Yes,' said the lawyer, 'I assure you I feel quite lost without them. I have this pair, but they do not fit my nose so well—besides, that chain has a great sentimental value for me. I was terribly distressed on arriving at Balham to find that I had lost them. I made inquiries of the railway, but to no purpose. I feared they had been stolen. There were such crowds at Victoria, and the carriage was packed with people all the way to Balham. Did you come across them in the train?'

'Well, no,' said Lord Peter, 'I found them in rather an unexpected place. Do you mind telling me if you recognized any of your fellow-travellers on that occasion?'

The lawyer stared at him.

'Not a soul,' he answered. 'Why do you ask?'

'Well,' said Lord Peter, 'I thought perhaps the—the person with whom I found them might have taken them for a joke.'

The lawyer looked puzzled.

'Did the person claim to be an acquaintance of mine?' he inquired. 'I know practically nobody in London, except the friend with whom I was staying in Balham, Dr Philpots, and I should be very greatly surprised at his practising a jest upon me. He knew very well how distressed I was at the loss of the glasses. My business was to attend a meeting of shareholders in Medlicott's Bank, but the other gentlemen present were all personally unknown to me, and I cannot think that any of them would take so great a liberty. In any case,' he added,

'Is Mr Crimplesham really as old as that?' said Lord Peter. 'Dear me! He must be very active for his years. A friend of mine was doing business with him in town last week.'

'Wonderful active, sir,' agreed the waiter, 'and with his game leg, too, you'd be surprised. But there, sir, I often think when a man's once past a certain age, the older he grows the tougher he gets, and women the same or more so.'

'Very likely,' said Lord Peter, calling up and dismissing the mental picture of a gentleman of eighty with a game leg carrying a dead body over the roof of a Battersea flat at midnight. 'He's tough, sir, tough, is old Joey Bagstock, tough and devilish sly,' he added, thoughtlessly.

'Indeed, sir?' said the waiter. 'I couldn't say, I'm sure.'

'I beg your pardon,' said Lord Peter; 'I was quoting poetry. Very silly of me. I got the habit at my mother's knee and I can't break myself of it.'

'No, sir,' said the waiter, pocketing a liberal tip. 'Thank you very much, sir. You'll find the house easy. Just afore you come to Penny-farthing Street, sir, about two turnings off, on the right-hand side opposite.'

'Afraid that disposes of Crimplesham-X,' said Lord Peter. 'I'm rather sorry; he was a fine sinister figure as I had pictured him. Still, his may yet be the brain behind the hands—the aged spider sitting invisible in the centre of the vibrating web, you know, Bunter.'

'Yes, my lord,' said Bunter. They were walking up the street together.

'There is the office over the way,' pursued Lord Peter. 'I think, Bunter, you might step into this little shop and purchase a sporting paper, and if I do not emerge from the villain's lair—say within three-quarters of an hour, you may take such steps as your perspicuity may suggest.'

Mr Bunter turned into the shop as desired, and Lord Peter walked across and rang the lawyer's bell with decision.

'The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth is my long suit here, I fancy,' he murmured, and when the door was opened by a clerk he delivered over his card with an unflinching air.

He was ushered immediately into a confidential-looking office, obviously furnished in the early years of Queen Victoria's reign, and never altered since. A lean, frail-looking old gentleman rose briskly from his chair as he entered and limped forward to meet him.

Chapter 6

It was, in fact, inconvenient for Mr Parker to leave London. He had had to go and see Lady Levy towards the end of the morning, and subsequently his plans for the day had been thrown out of gear and his movements delayed by the discovery that the adjourned inquest of Mr Thipps's unknown visitor was to be held that afternoon, since nothing very definite seemed forthcoming from Inspector Sugg's inquiries. Jury and witnesses had been convened accordingly for three o'clock. Mr Parker might altogether have missed the event, had he not run against Sugg that morning at the Yard and extracted the information from him as one would a reluctant tooth. Inspector Sugg, indeed, considered Mr Parker rather interfering; moreover, he was hand-in-glove with Lord Peter Wimsey, and Inspector Sugg had no words for the interferingness of Lord Peter. He could not, however, when directly questioned, deny that there was to be an inquest that afternoon, nor could he prevent Mr Parker from enjoying the inalienable right of any interested British citizen to be present. At a little before three, therefore, Mr Parker was in his place, and amusing himself with watching the efforts of those persons who arrived after the room was packed to insinuate, bribe or bully themselves into a position of vantage. The Coroner, a medical man of precise habits and unimaginative aspect, arrived punctually, and looking peevishly round at the crowded assembly, directed all the windows to be opened, thus letting in a stream of drizzling fog upon the heads of the unfortunates on that side of the room. This caused a commotion and some expressions of disapproval, checked sternly by the Coroner, who said that with the influenza about again an unventilated room was a death-trap; that anybody who chose to object to open windows had the obvious remedy of leaving the court, and further, that if any disturbance was made he would clear the court. He then took a Formamint lozenge, and proceeded, after the usual preliminaries, to call up fourteen good and lawful persons and swear them diligently to inquire and a true presentment make of all matters touching the death of the gentleman with the pince-nez and to give a true verdict according to the evidence, so help

them God. When an expostulation by a woman juror—an elderly lady in spectacles who kept a sweet-shop, and appeared to wish she was back there—had been summarily quashed by the Coroner, the jury departed to view the body. Mr Parker gazed round again and identified the unhappy Mr Thipps and the girl Gladys led into an adjoining room under the grim guard of the police. They were soon followed by a gaunt old lady in a bonnet and mantle. With her, in a wonderful fur coat and a motor bonnet of fascinating construction, came the Dowager Duchess of Denver, her quick, dark eyes darting hither and thither about the crowd. The next moment they had lighted on Mr Parker, who had several times visited the Dower House, and she nodded to him, and spoke to a policeman. Before long, a way opened magically through the press, and Mr Parker found himself accommodated with a front seat just behind the Duchess, who greeted him charmingly, and said: 'What's happened to poor Peter?' Parker began to explain, and the Coroner glanced irritably in their direction. Somebody went up and whispered in his ear, at which he coughed, and took another Formamint.

'We came up by car,' said the Duchess—'so tiresome—such bad roads between Denver and Gunbury St Walters—and there were people coming to lunch—I had to put them off—I couldn't let the old lady go alone, could I? By the way, such an odd thing's happened about the Church Restoration Fund—the Vicar—oh, dear, here are these people coming back again; well, I'll tell you afterwards—do look at that woman looking shocked, and the girl in tweeds trying to look as if she sat on undraped gentlemen every day of her life—I don't mean that—corpses of course—but one finds oneself being so Elizabethan nowadays—what an awful little man the coroner is, isn't he? He's looking daggers at me—do you think he'll dare to clear me out of the court or commit me for what-you-may-call-it?'

The first part of the evidence was not of great interest to Mr Parker. The wretched Mr Thipps, who had caught cold in gaol, deposed in an unhappy croak to having discovered the body when he went in to take his bath at eight o'clock. He had had such a shock, he had to sit down and send the girl for brandy. He had never seen the deceased before. He had no idea how he came there.

ripple. Assigning a motive for the murder of a person without relations or antecedents or even clothes is like trying to visualize the fourth dimension—admirable exercise for the imagination, but arduous and inconclusive. Even if the day's interview should disclose black spots in the past or present of Mr Crimplesham, how were they to be brought into connection with a person apparently without a past, and whose present was confined to the narrow limits of a bath and a police mortuary?

'Bunter,' said Lord Peter, 'I beg that in the future you will restrain me from starting two hares at once. These cases are gettin' to be a strain on my constitution. One hare has nowhere to run from, and the other has nowhere to run to. It's a kind of mental D.T., Bunter. When this is over I shall turn pussyfoot, forswear the police news, and take to an emollient diet of the works of the late Charles Garvice.'

It was its comparative proximity to Milford Hill that induced Lord Peter to lunch at the Minster Hotel rather than at the White Hart or some other more picturesquely situated hostel. It was not a lunch calculated to cheer his mind; as in all Cathedral cities, the atmosphere of the Close pervades every nook and corner of Salisbury, and no food in that city but seems faintly flavoured with prayer-books. As he sat sadly consuming that impassive pale substance known to the English as 'cheese' unqualified (for there are cheeses which go openly by their names, as Stilton, Camembert, Gruyère, Wensleydale or Gorgonzola, but 'cheese' is cheese and everywhere the same), he inquired of the waiter the whereabouts of Mr Crimplesham's office.

The waiter directed him to a house rather further up the street on the opposite side, adding: 'But anybody'll tell you, sir; Mr Crimplesham's very well known hereabouts.'

'He's a good solicitor, I suppose?' said Lord Peter.

'Oh, yes, sir,' said the waiter, 'you couldn't do better than trust to Mr Crimplesham, sir. There's folk say he's old-fashioned, but I'd rather have my little bits of business done by Mr Crimplesham than by one of these fly-away young men. Not but what Mr Crimplesham'll be retiring soon, sir, I don't doubt, for he must be close on eighty, sir, if he's a day, but then there's young Mr Wicks to carry on the business, and he's a very nice, steady-like young gentleman.'

dear wife and advised complete rest and change of scene. She thinks of going abroad with Rachel.' The name of the famous nerve-specialist occurred as a diner or luncher about once a month, and it came into Lord Peter's mind that Freke would be a good person to consult about Levy himself. 'People sometimes tell things to the doctor,' he murmured to himself. 'And, by Jove! if Levy was simply going round to see Freke on Monday night, that rather disposes of the Battersea incident, doesn't it?' He made a note to look up Sir Julian and turned on further. On September 18th, Lady Levy and her daughter had left for the south of France. Then suddenly, under the date October 5th, Lord Peter found what he was looking for: 'Goldberg, Skriner and Milligan to dinner.'

There was the evidence that Milligan had been in that house. There had been a formal entertainment—a meeting as of two duellists shaking hands before the fight. Skriner was a well-known picture-dealer; Lord Peter imagined an after-dinner excursion upstairs to see the two Corots in the drawing-room, and the portrait of the oldest Levy girl, who had died at the age of sixteen. It was by Augustus John, and hung in the bedroom. The name of the red-haired secretary was nowhere mentioned, unless the initial S., occurring in another entry, referred to him. Throughout September and October, Anderson (of Wyndham's) had been a frequent visitor.

Lord Peter shook his head over the diary, and turned to the consideration of the Battersea Park mystery. Whereas in the Levy affair it was easy enough to supply a motive for the crime, if crime it were, and the difficulty was to discover the method of its carrying out and the whereabouts of the victim, in the other case the chief obstacle to inquiry was the entire absence of any imaginable motive. It was odd that, although the papers had carried news of the affair from one end of the country to the other and a description of the body had been sent to every police station in the country, nobody had as yet come forward to identify the mysterious occupant of Mr Thipps's bath. It was true that the description, which mentioned the clean-shaven chin, elegantly cut hair and the pince-nez, was rather misleading, but on the other hand, the police had managed to discover the number of molars missing, and the height, complexion and other data were correctly enough stated, as also the date at which death had presumably occurred. It seemed, however, as though the man had melted out of society without leaving a gap or so much as a

Yes, he had been in Manchester the day before. He had arrived at St Pancras at ten o'clock. He had cloak-roomed his bag. At this point Mr Thipps became very red, unhappy and confused, and glanced nervously about the court.

'Now, Mr Thipps,' said the Coroner, briskly, 'we must have your movements quite clear. You must appreciate the importance of the matter. You have chosen to give evidence, which you need not have done, but having done so, you will find it best to be perfectly explicit.'

'Yes,' said Mr Thipps faintly.

'Have you cautioned this witness, officer?' inquired the Coroner, turning sharply to Inspector Sugg.

The Inspector replied that he had told Mr Thipps that anything he said might be used agin' him at his trial. Mr Thipps became ashy, and said in a bleating voice that he 'adn't—hadn't meant to do anything that wasn't right.

This remark produced a mild sensation, and the Coroner became even more acidulated in manner than before.

'Is anybody representing Mr Thipps?' he asked, irritably. 'No? Did you not explain to him that he could—that he *ought* to be represented? You did not? Really, Inspector! Did you not know, Mr Thipps, that you had a right to be legally represented?'

Mr Thipps clung to a chair-back for support, and said, 'No,' in a voice barely audible.

'It is incredible,' said the Coroner, 'that so-called educated people should be so ignorant of the legal procedure of their own country. This places us in a very awkward position. I doubt, Inspector, whether I should permit the prisoner—Mr Thipps—to give evidence at all. It is a delicate position.'

The perspiration stood on Mr Thipps's forehead.

'Save us from our friends,' whispered the Duchess to Parker. 'If that cough-drop-devouring creature had openly instructed those fourteen people—and what unfinished-looking faces they have—so characteristic, I always think, of the lower middle-class, rather like sheep, or calves' head (boiled, I mean), to bring in wilful murder against the poor little man, he couldn't have made himself plainer.'

'He can't let him incriminate himself, you know,' said Parker.

'Stuff!' said the Duchess. 'How could the man incriminate himself when he never did anything in his life? You men never think of anything but your red tape.'

Meanwhile Mr Thipps, wiping his brow with a handkerchief, had summoned up courage. He stood up with a kind of weak dignity, like a small white rabbit brought to bay.

'I would rather tell you,' he said, 'though it's reelly very unpleasant for a man in my position. But I reelly couldn't have it thought for a moment that I'd committed this dreadful crime. I assure you, gentlemen, I *couldn't bear* that. No. I'd rather tell you the truth, though I'm afraid it places me in rather a—well, I'll tell you.'

'You fully understand the gravity of making such a statement, Mr Thipps,' said the Coroner.

'Quite,' said Mr Thipps. 'It's all right—I—might I have a drink of water?'

'Take your time,' said the Coroner, at the same time robbing his remark of all conviction by an impatient glance at his watch.

'Thank you, sir,' said Mr Thipps. 'Well, then, it's true I got to St Pancras at ten. But there was a man in the carriage with me. He'd got in at Leicester. I didn't recognise him at first, but he turned out to be an old school-fellow of mine.'

'What was this gentleman's name?' inquired the Coroner, his pencil poised.

Mr Thipps shrank together visibly.

'I'm afraid I can't tell you that,' he said. 'You see—that is, you *will* see—it would get him into trouble, and I couldn't do that—no, I reelly couldn't do that, not if my life depended on it. No!' he added, as the ominous pertinence of the last phrase smote upon him, 'I'm sure I couldn't do that.'

'Well, well,' said the Coroner.

The Duchess leaned over to Parker again. 'I'm beginning quite to admire the little man,' she said.

Mr Thipps resumed.

'When we got to St Pancras I was going home, but my friend said no. We hadn't met for a long time and we ought to—to make a night of it, was his expression. I fear I was weak, and let him overpersuade me to accompany him to one of his haunts. I use the word advisedly,' said Mr Thipps, 'and I assure

point. And, then, suppose it's a wild-goose chase after all, you'll have wasted time when you might have been getting on with the case. There are several things that need doing.'

'Well,' said Parker, silenced but reluctant, 'why can't I go, in that case?'

'Bosh!' said Lord Peter. 'I am retained (by old Mrs Thipps, for whom I entertain the greatest respect) to deal with this case, and it's only by courtesy I allow you to have anything to do with it.'

Mr Parker groaned.

'Will you at least take Bunter?' he said.

'In deference to your feelings,' replied Lord Peter, 'I will take Bunter, though he could be far more usefully employed taking photographs or overhauling my wardrobe. When is there a good train to Salisbury, Bunter?'

'There is an excellent train at 10.50, my lord.'

'Kindly make arrangements to catch it,' said Lord Peter, throwing off his bath-robe and trailing away with it into his bedroom. 'And, Parker—if you have nothing else to do you might get hold of Levy's secretary and look into that little matter of the Peruvian oil.'

Lord Peter took with him, for light reading in the train, Sir Reuben Levy's diary. It was a simple, and in the light of recent facts, rather a pathetic document. The terrible fighter of the Stock Exchange, who could with one nod set the surly bear dancing, or bring the savage bull to feed out of his hand, whose breath devastated whole districts with famine or swept financial potentates from their seats, was revealed in private life as kindly, domestic, innocently proud of himself and his belongings, confiding, generous and a little dull. His own small economies were duly chronicled side by side with extravagant presents to his wife and daughter. Small incidents of household routine appeared, such as: 'Man came to mend the conservatory roof,' or 'The new butler (Simpson) has arrived, recommended by the Goldbergs. I think he will be satisfactory.' All visitors and entertainments were duly entered, from a very magnificent lunch to Lord Dewsbury, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Dr Jabez K. Wort, the American plenipotentiary, through a series of diplomatic dinners to eminent financiers, down to intimate family gatherings of persons designated by Christian names or nicknames. About May there came a mention of Lady Levy's nerves, and further reference was made to the subject in subsequent months. In September it was stated that 'Freke came to see my

'Might not X,' he suggested, 'be an enemy of Crimplesham's, who designed to throw suspicion upon him?'

'He might. In that case he should be easy to discover, since he obviously lives in close proximity to Crimplesham and his glasses, and Crimplesham in fear of his life will then be a valuable ally for the prosecution.'

'How about the first possibility of all, misunderstanding or accident?'

'Well! Well, for purposes of discussion, nothing, because it really doesn't afford any data for discussion.'

'In any case,' said Parker, 'the obvious course appears to be to go to Salisbury.'

'That seems indicated,' said Lord Peter.

'Very well,' said the detective, 'is it to be you or me or both of us?'

'It is to be me,' said Lord Peter, 'and that for two reasons. First, because, if (by Possibility № 2, Hypothesis 1, Alternative A) Crimplesham is an innocent catspaw, the person who put in the advertisement is the proper person to hand over the property. Secondly, because, if we are to adopt Hypothesis 2, we must not overlook the sinister possibility that Crimplesham-X is laying a careful trap to rid himself of the person who so unwarily advertised in the daily press his interest in the solution of the Battersea Park mystery.'

'That appears to me to be an argument for our both going,' objected the detective.

'Far from it,' said Lord Peter. 'Why play into the hands of Crimplesham-X by delivering over to him the only two men in London with the evidence, such as it is, and shall I say the wits, to connect him with the Battersea body?'

'But if we told the Yard where we were going, and we both got nobbled,' said Mr Parker, 'it would afford strong presumptive evidence of Crimplesham's guilt, and anyhow, if he didn't get hanged for murdering the man in the bath he'd at least get hanged for murdering us.'

'Well,' said Lord Peter, 'if he only murdered me you could still hang him—what's the good of wasting a sound, marriageable young male like yourself? Besides, how about old Levy? If you're incapacitated, do you think anybody else is going to find him?'

'But we could frighten Crimplesham by threatening him with the Yard.'

'Well, dash it all, if it comes to that, I can frighten him by threatening him with *you*, which, seeing you hold what evidence there is, is much more to the

you, sir, that if I had known beforehand where we were going I never would have set foot in the place.'

'I cloak-roomed my bag, for he did not like the notion of our being encumbered with it, and we got into a taxicab and drove to the corner of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street. We then walked a little way, and turned into a side street (I do not recollect which) where there was an open door, with the light shining out. There was a man at a counter, and my friend bought some tickets, and I heard the man at the counter say something to him about "Your friend," meaning me, and my friend said, "Oh, yes, he's been here before, haven't you, Alf?" (which was what they called me at school), though I assure you, sir'—here Mr Thipps grew very earnest—'I never had, and nothing in the world should induce me to go to such a place again.'

'Well, we went down into a room underneath, where there were drinks, and my friend had several, and made me take one or two—though I am an abstemious man as a rule—and he talked to some other men and girls who were there—a very vulgar set of people, I thought them, though I wouldn't say but what some of the young ladies were nice-looking enough. One of them sat on my friend's knee and called him a slow old thing, and told him to come on—so we went into another room, where there were a lot of people dancing all these up-to-date dances. My friend went and danced, and I sat on a sofa. One of the young ladies came up to me and said, didn't I dance, and I said "No," so she said wouldn't I stand her a drink then. "You'll stand us a drink then, darling," that was what she said, and I said, "Wasn't it after hours?" and she said that didn't matter. So I ordered the drink—a gin and bitters it was—for I didn't like not to, the young lady seemed to expect it of me and I felt it wouldn't be gentlemanly to refuse when she asked. But it went against my conscience—such a young girl as she was—and she put her arm round my neck afterwards and kissed me just like as if she was paying for the drink—and it reelly went to my 'eart,' said Mr Thipps, a little ambiguously, but with uncommon emphasis.

Here somebody at the back said, 'Cheer-oh!' and a sound was heard as of the noisy smacking of lips.

'Remove the person who made that improper noise,' said the Coroner, with great indignation. 'Go on, please, Mr Thipps.'

'Well,' said Mr Thipps, 'about half-past twelve, as I should reckon, things began to get a bit lively, and I was looking for my friend to say good-night, not wishing to stay longer, as you will understand, when I saw him with one of the young ladies, and they seemed to be getting on altogether too well, if you follow me, my friend pulling the ribbons off her shoulder and the young lady laughing—and so on,' said Mr Thipps, hurriedly, 'so I thought I'd just slip quietly out, when I heard a scuffle and a shout—and before I knew what was happening there were half-a-dozen policemen in, and the lights went out, and everybody stampeding and shouting—quite horrid, it was. I was knocked down in the rush, and hit my head a nasty knock on a chair—that was where I got that bruise they asked me about—and I was dreadfully afraid I'd never get away and it would all come out, and perhaps my photograph in the papers, when someone caught hold of me—I think it was the young lady I'd given the gin and bitters to—and she said, "This way," and pushed me along a passage and out at the back somewhere. So I ran through some streets, and found myself in Goodge Street, and there I got a taxi and came home. I saw the account of the raid afterwards in the papers, and saw my friend had escaped, and so, as it wasn't the sort of thing I wanted made public, and I didn't want to get him into difficulties, I just said nothing. But that's the truth.'

'Well, Mr Thipps,' said the Coroner, 'we shall be able to substantiate a certain amount of this story. Your friend's name— '

'No,' said Mr Thipps, stoutly, 'not on any account.'

'Very good,' said the Coroner. 'Now, can you tell us what time you did get in?'

'About half-past one, I should think. Though reelly, I was so upset— '

'Quite so. Did you go straight to bed?'

'Yes, I took my sandwich and glass of milk first. I thought it might settle my inside, so to speak,' added the witness, apologetically, 'not being accustomed to alcohol so late at night and on an empty stomach, as you may say.'

'Quite so. Nobody sat up for you?'

'Nobody.'

'How long did you take getting to bed first and last?'

Mr Thipps thought it might have been half-an-hour.

'Did you visit the bathroom before turning in?'

'No.'

man, office-boy, clerk, secretary or porter. This offers a wide field of investigation. The method of inquiry will be to interview Crimplesham and discover whether he sent the letter, and if not, who has access to his correspondence. Alternative B: Crimplesham is under X's influence or in his power, and has been induced to write the letter by (*a*) bribery, (*b*) misrepresentation or (*c*) threats. X may in that case be a persuasive relation or friend, or else a creditor, blackmailer or assassin; Crimplesham, on the other hand, is obviously venal or a fool. The method of inquiry in this case, I would tentatively suggest, is again to interview Crimplesham, put the facts of the case strongly before him, and assure him in the most intimidating terms that he is liable to a prolonged term of penal servitude as an accessory after the fact in the crime of murder — Ah-hem! Trusting, gentlemen, that you have followed me thus far, we will pass to the consideration of Hypothesis № 2, to which I personally incline, and according to which X is identical with Crimplesham.'

'In this case, Crimplesham, who is, in the words of an English classic, a man-of-infinite-resource-and-sagacity, correctly deduces that, of all people, the last whom we shall expect to find answering our advertisement is the criminal himself. Accordingly, he plays a bold game of bluff. He invents an occasion on which the glasses may very easily have been lost or stolen, and applies for them. If confronted, nobody will be more astonished than he to learn where they were found. He will produce witnesses to prove that he left Victoria at 5.45 and emerged from the train at Balham at the scheduled time, and sat up all Monday night playing chess with a respectable gentleman well known in Balham. In this case, the method of inquiry will be to pump the respectable gentleman in Balham, and if he should happen to be a single gentleman with a deaf housekeeper, it may be no easy matter to impugn the alibi, since, outside detective romances, few ticket-collectors and 'bus-conductors keep an exact remembrance of all the passengers passing between Balham and London on any and every evening of the week.'

'Finally, gentlemen, I will frankly point out the weak point of all these hypotheses, namely: that none of them offers any explanation as to why the incriminating article was left so conspicuously on the body in the first instance.'

Mr Parker had listened with commendable patience to this academic exposition.