A splash of scarlet appeared against the grey stone of St Stephen's. Mr Murbles's clerk dashed in suddenly at the door.

'All right, my lord—acquitted—unanimously—and will you please come across, my lord?'

They ran out. At sight of Lord Peter some excited bystanders raised a cheer. The great wind tore suddenly through the Square, bellying out the scarlet robes of the emerging peers. Lord Peter was bandied from one to the other, till he reached the centre of the group.

'Excuse me, your grace.'

It was Bunter. Bunter, miraculously, with his arms full of scarlet and ermine, enveloping the shameful blue serge suit which had been a badge of disgrace.

'Allow me to offer my respectful congratulations, your grace.'

'Bunter!' cried Lord Peter. 'Great God, the man's gone mad! Damn you, man, take that thing away,' he added, plunging at a tall photographer in a made-up tie.

'Too late, my lord,' said the offender, jubilantly pushing in the slide.

'Peter,' said the Duke. 'Er—thanks, old man.'

'All right,' said his lordship. 'Very jolly trip and all that. You're lookin' very fit. Oh, don't shake hands—there, I knew it! I heard that man's confounded shutter go.'

They pushed their way through the surging mob to the cars. The two Duchesses got in, and the Duke was following, when a bullet crashed through the glass of the window, missing Denver's head by an inch, and ricocheting from the wind-screen among the crowd.

A rush and a yell. A big bearded man struggled for a moment with three constables; then came a succession of wild shots, and a fierce rush—the crowd parting, then closing in, like hounds on the fox, streaming past the Houses of Parliament, heading for Westminster Bridge.

'He's shot a woman—he's under that 'bus—no, he isn't—hi!—murder!—stop him!' Shrill screams and yells—police whistles blowing—constables darting from every corner—swooping down in taxis—running.

The driver of a taxi spinning across the bridge saw the fierce face just ahead of his bonnet, and jammed on the brakes, as the madman's fingers closed for the last time on the trigger. Shot and tyre exploded almost simultaneously; the taxi slewed giddily over to the right, scooping the fugitive with it, and crashed horribly into a tram standing vacant on the Embankment dead-end.

'I couldn't 'elp it,' yelled the taxi-man, ''e fired at me. Ow, Gawd, I couldn't 'elp it.'

Lord Peter and Parker arrived together, panting.

'Here, constable,' gasped his lordship; 'I know this man. He has an unfortunate grudge against my brother. In connection with a poaching matter—up in Yorkshire. Tell the coroner to come to me for information.'

'Very good, my lord.'

'Don't photograph *that*,' said Lord Peter to the man with the reflex, whom he suddenly found at his elbow.

The photographer shook his head.

'They wouldn't like to see that, my lord. Only the scene of the crash and the ambulance-men. Bright, newsy pictures, you know. Nothing gruesome'—with an explanatory jerk of the head at the great dark splotches in the roadway—'it doesn't pay.'

A red-haired reporter appeared from nowhere with a note-book.

'Here,' said his lordship, 'do you want the story? I'll give it you now.'

There was not, after all, the slightest trouble in the matter of Mrs Grimethorpe. Seldom, perhaps, has a ducal escapade resolved itself with so little embarrassment. His grace, indeed, who was

nothing if not a gentleman, braced himself gallantly for a regretful and sentimental interview. In all his rather stupid affairs he had never run away from a scene, or countered a storm of sobs with that maddening 'Well, I'd better be going now' which has led to so many despairs and occasionally to cold shot. But, on this occasion, the whole business fell flat. The lady was not interested.

'I am free now,' she said. 'I am going back to my own people in Cornwall. I do not want anything, now that he is dead.' The Duke's dutiful caress was a most uninteresting failure.

Lord Peter saw her home to a respectable little hotel in Bloomsbury. She liked the taxi, and the large, glittering shops, and the sky-signs. They stopped at Piccadilly Circus to see the Bonzo dog smoke his gasper and the Nestlé's baby consume his bottle of milk. She was amazed to find that the prices of the things in Swan & Edgar's window were, if anything, more reasonable than those current in Stapley.

'I should like one of those blue scarves,' she said, 'but I'm thinking 'twould not be fitting, and me a widow.'

'You could buy it now, and wear it later on,' suggested his lordship, 'in Cornwall, you know.'

'Yes.' She glanced at her brown stuff gown. 'Could I buy my blacks here? I shall have to get some for the funeral. Just a dress and a hat—and a coat, maybe.'

'I should think it would be a very good idea.'

'Now?'

'Why not?'

'I have money,' she said; 'I took it from his desk. It's mine now, I suppose. Not that I'd wish to be beholden to him. But I don't look at it that way.'

'I shouldn't think twice about it, if I were you,' said Lord Peter.

She walked before him into the shop—her own woman at last.

Chapter 19

Who Goes Home?

Drunk as a lord? As a class they are really very sober.

Judge Cluer, In Court

While the Attorney-General was engaged in the ungrateful task of trying to obscure what was not only plain, but agreeable to everybody's feelings, Lord Peter hauled Parker off to a Lyons over the way, and listened, over an enormous dish of eggs and bacon, to a brief account of Mrs Grimethorpe's dash to town, and a long one of Lady Mary's cross-examination. 'What are you grinning about?' snapped the narrator.

'Just natural imbecility,' said Lord Peter. 'I say, poor old Cathcart. She *was* a girl! For the matter of that, I suppose she still is. I don't know why I should talk as if she'd died away the moment I took my eyes off her.'

'Horribly self-centred, you are,' grumbled Mr Parker.

'I know. I always was from a child. But what worries me is that I seem to be gettin' so susceptible. When Barbara turned me down— '

'You're cured,' said his friend brutally. 'As a matter of fact, I've noticed it for some time.'

Lord Peter sighed deeply. 'I value your candour, Charles,' he said, 'but I wish you hadn't such an unkind way of putting things. Besides—I say, are they coming out?'

The crowd in Parliament Square was beginning to stir and spread. Sparse streams of people began to drift across the street.

In the early hours of the morning Inspector Sugg, who happened to be passing Parliament Square, came upon a taxi-man apparently addressing a heated expostulation to the statue of Lord Palmerston. Indignant at this senseless proceeding, Mr Sugg advanced, and then observed that the statesman was sharing his pedestal with a gentleman in evening dress, who clung precariously with one hand, while with the other he held an empty champagne-bottle to his eye, and surveyed the surrounding streets.

'Hi,' said the policeman, 'what are you doing there? Come off of it!'

'Hullo!' said the gentleman, losing his balance quite suddenly, and coming down in a jumbled manner. 'Have you seen my friend? Very odd thing—damned odd. 'Spec you know where find him, what? When in doubt—tasker pleeshman, what? Friend of mine. Very dignified sort of man 'nopera-hat. Freddy—good ol' Freddy. Alwaysh answersh t'name—jush like jolly ol' bloodhound!' He got to his feet and stood beaming on the officer.

'Why, if it ain't his lordship,' said Inspector Sugg, who had met Lord Peter in other circumstances. 'Better be gettin' home, my lord. Night air's chilly-like, ain't it? You'll catch a cold or summat o' that. Here's your taxi—just you jump in now.'

'No,' said Lord Peter. 'No. Couldn' do that. Not without frien'. Good ol' Freddy. Never—desert—friend! Dear ol' Sugg. Wouldn't desert Freddy.' He attempted an attitude, with one foot poised on the step of the taxi, but, miscalculating his distance, stepped heavily into the gutter, thus entering the vehicle unexpectedly, head first.

Mr Sugg tried to tuck his legs in and shut him up, but his lordship thwarted this movement with unlooked-for agility, and sat firmly on the step.

'Not my taxi,' he explained solemnly. 'Freddy's taxi. Not right—run away with frien's taxi. Very odd. Jush went roun' corner to fesh Fred'sh taxshi—Freddy jush went roun' corner fesh *my* taxi

—fesh friend'sh taxshi—friendship sush a beautiful thing—don't you thing-so, Shugg? Can't leave frien'. Beshides—there'sh dear ol' Parker.'

'Mr Parker?' said the Inspector apprehensively. 'Where?'

'Hush!' said his lordship. 'Don' wake baby, theresh good shoul. Neshle'sh baby—jush shee 'm neshle, don't he neshle nishely?'

Following his lordship's gaze, the horrified Sugg observed his official superior cozily tucked up on the far side of Palmerston and smiling a happy smile in his sleep. With an exclamation of alarm he bent over and shook the sleeper.

'Unkind!' cried Lord Peter in a deep, reproachful tone. 'Dishturb poor fellow—poor hardworkin' pleeshman. Never getsh up till alarm goes.... 'Stra'or'nary thing,' he added, as though struck by a new idea, 'why hashn't alarm gone off, Shugg?' He pointed a wavering finger at Big Ben. 'They've for-forgotten to wind it up. Dishgrayshful. I'll write to *The T-T-Timesh* about it.'

Mr Sugg wasted no words, but picked up the slumbering Parker and hoisted him into the taxi.

'Never—never—deshert— ' began Lord Peter, resisting all efforts to dislodge him from the step, when a second taxi, advancing from Whitehall, drew up, with the Hon. Freddy Arbuthnot cheering loudly at the window.

'Look who's here!' cried the Hon. Freddy. 'Jolly, jolly, jolly ol' Sugg. Let'sh all go home together.'

'That'sh *my* taxshi,' interposed his lordship, with dignity, staggering across to it. The two whirled together for a moment; then the Hon. Freddy was flung into Sugg's arms, while his lordship, with a satisfied air, cried 'Home!' to the new taxi-man, and instantly fell asleep in a corner of the vehicle.

Mr Sugg scratched his head, gave Lord Peter's address, and watched the cab drive off. Then, supporting the Hon. Freddy on his ample bosom, he directed the other man to convey Mr Parker to 12a Great Ormond Street.

> 'Tis not the balm, the sceptre and the ball,
> The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
> The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
> The farcèd title, nor the tide of pomp
> That beats upon the high shores of the world

that can add any dignity to noble blood. And yet, to have beheld, day after day, the head of one of the oldest and noblest houses in England standing here, cut off from your fellowship, stripped of his historic honours, robed only in the justice of his cause—this cannot have failed to move your pity and indignation.

My lords, it is your happy privilege to restore to his grace the Duke of Denver these traditional symbols of his exalted rank. When the clerk of this House shall address to you severally the solemn question: Do you find Gerald, Duke of Denver, Viscount St George, guilty or not guilty of the dreadful crime of murder, every one of you may, with a confidence unmarred by any shadow of doubt, lay his hand upon his heart and say, 'Not guilty, upon my honour.'

ings. He passes through the shrubbery without a thought. He reaches the conservatory door, through which in a few moments love and happiness will come to him. And in that moment he stumbles across—the dead body of a man!

Fear possesses him. He hears a distant footstep. With but one idea—escape from this horror of horrors—he dashes into the shrubbery, just as, fatigued perhaps a little, but with a mind soothed by his little expedition, the Duke of Denver comes briskly up the path, to meet the eager bride over the body of her betrothed.

My lords, the rest is clear. Lady Mary Wimsey, forced by a horrible appearance of things into suspecting her lover of murder, undertook—with what courage every man amongst you will realize—to conceal that George Goyles ever was upon the scene. Of this ill-considered action of hers came much mystery and perplexity. Yet, my lords, while chivalry holds its own, not one amongst us will breathe one word of blame against that gallant lady. As the old song says:

> God send each man at his end
> Such hawks, such hounds, and such a
> friend.

I think, my lords, that there is nothing more for me to say. To you I leave the solemn and joyful task of freeing the noble peer, your companion, from this unjust charge. You are but human, my lords, and some among you will have grumbled, some will have mocked on assuming these medieval splendours of scarlet and ermine, so foreign to the taste and habit of a utilitarian age. You know well enough that

'Take me home,' cried the Hon. Freddy, bursting into tears, 'they've all gone and left me!'

'You leave it to me, sir,' said the Inspector. He glanced over his shoulder at St Stephen's, whence a group of Commons were just issuing from an all-night sitting.

'Mr Parker an' all,' said Inspector Sugg, adding devoutly, 'Thank Gawd there weren't no witnesses.'

THE END

Colophon

EB Garamond is Georg Mayr-Duffner's free and open source implementation of Claude Garamond's famous humanist typefaces from the mid-16th century. This digital version reproduces the original design by Claude Garamont closely: the source for the letterforms is a scan of a specimen known as the 'Berner specimen,' which was composed in 1592 by Conrad Berner, the son-in-law of Christian Egenolff and his successor at the Egenolff print office.
github.com/georgd/EB-Garamond

Title page illustration is cropped from 'La Villa d'Este', a 1923 painting by French artist George Barbier (1882–1932). The original is held by the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

Typeset in LaTeX.

The rain is less heavy now. Look! In the shrubbery—what was that? A movement. The shot man is moving—groaning a little—crawling to his feet. Chilled to the bone, weak from loss of blood, shaking with the fever of his wound, he but dimly remembers his purpose. His groping hands go to the wound in his breast. He pulls out a handkerchief and presses it upon the place. He drags himself up, slipping and stumbling. The handkerchief slides to the ground, and lies there beside the revolver among the fallen leaves.

Something in his aching brain tells him to crawl back to the house. He is sick, in pain, hot and cold by turns, and horribly thirsty. There someone will take him in and be kind to him—give him things to drink. Swaying and starting, now falling on hands and knees, now reeling to and fro, he makes that terrible nightmare journey to the house. Now he walks, now he crawls, dragging his heavy limbs after him. At last, the conservatory door! Here there will be help. And water for his fever in the trough by the well. He crawls up to it on hands and knees, and strains to lift himself. It is growing very difficult to breathe—a heavy weight seems to be bursting his chest. He lifts himself—a frightful hiccuping cough catches him—the blood rushes from his mouth. He drops down. It is indeed all over.

Once more the hours pass. Three o'clock, the hour of rendezvous, draws on. Eagerly the young lover leaps the wall and comes hurrying through the shrubbery to greet his bride to be. It is cold and wet, but his happiness gives him no time to think of his surround-

Upstairs, Lady Mary Wimsey was packing her suitcase and writing a farewell letter to her people. At length Cathcart signs his name; he takes up the revolver and hurries out into the shrubbery. Still he paces up and down, with what thoughts God alone knows—reviewing the past, no doubt, racked with vain remorse, most of all, bitter against the woman who has ruined him. He bethinks him of the little love-token, the platinum-and-diamond cat which his mistress gave him for good luck! At any rate, he will not die with that pressing upon his heart. With a furious gesture he hurls it far from him. He puts the pistol to his head.

But something arrests him. Not that! Not that! He sees in fancy his own hideously disfigured corpse —the shattered jaw—the burst eyeball—blood and brains horribly splashed about. No. Let the bullet go cleanly to the heart. Not even in death can he bear the thought of looking—*so*!

He places the revolver against his breast and draws the trigger. With a little moan, he drops to the sodden ground. The weapon falls from his hand; his fingers scrabble a little at his breast.

The gamekeeper who heard the shot is puzzled that poachers should come so close. Why are they not on the moors? He thinks of the hares in the plantation. He takes his lantern and searches in the thick drizzle. Nothing. Only soggy grass and dripping trees. He is human. He concludes his ears deceived him, and he returns to his warm bed. Midnight passes. One o'clock passes.

statement—that he left it at half-past eleven. My lords, whatever interpretation you like to place upon the motives of the noble Duke in so doing, I must remind you once more that at the time when that first statement was made everybody supposed that the shot had been fired at three o'clock, and that the misstatement was then useless for the purpose of establishing an alibi.

Great stress, too, has been laid on the noble Duke's inability to establish this alibi for the hours from 11:30 to 3 A.M. But, my lords, if he is telling the truth in saying that he walked all that time upon the moors without meeting anyone, what alibi could he establish? He is not bound to supply a motive for all his minor actions during the twenty-four hours. No rebutting evidence has been brought to discredit his story. And it is perfectly reasonable that, unable to sleep after the scene with Cathcart, he should go for a walk to calm himself down.

Meanwhile, Cathcart has finished his letter and tossed it into the post-bag. There is nothing more ironical in the whole of this case than that letter. While the body of a murdered man lay stark upon the threshold, and detectives and doctors searched everywhere for clues, the normal routine of an ordinary English household went, unquestioned, on. That letter, which contained the whole story, lay undisturbed in the post-bag, till it was taken away and put in the post as a matter of course, to be fetched back again, at enormous cost, delay, and risk of life, two months later in vindication of the great English motto: 'Business as usual.'