
XXXIII

THE GREAT DISCOVERY

VIV sat hunched over some papers on the dining-room table. She had been working thus undisturbed most of the afternoon and was quite unconscious of all that was happening elsewhere. As far as she knew, Jimmie was away on "something good" and Hyslop had dashed out just before tea without saying where he was going. Presumably he had gone to meet Jimmie somewhere, for she had vaguely heard him talking on the phone.

Anyway she did not bother, for she was absorbed in a task Jimmie had set her. She had got out of the secret drawer all the typewritten letters that had been received from the Black King, and with the help of a large magnifying glass she was examining all the characters very carefully—particularly the two uneven ones.

It was past five o'clock when she at last sat back with a triumphant little smile. She had learned a lot from her study. First, that the two obvious peculiarities of "s" and "t" were not at all the real distinguishing characteristics of the machine that they had seemed. For the distance they were out of line varied infinitesimally in the different letters sent, which showed they had been tapped out of position on purpose for the typing of each particular communication and tapped back again afterwards. In fact they were simply blinds to catch the eye, false clues to throw an investigator off real ones. And real ones there were; Viv had now found some after minute search—a worn-down tail to the little

“a,” an enlarged serif in the little “u,” and one or two others. These were genuine idiosyncrasies peculiar to the machine used by the Black King, and would not be present in any other. By way of verification she picked up one or two other typewritten sheets lying to hand which had *not* come from the Black King, in order to make certain that these peculiarities of “a” and “u” did not appear elsewhere. . . . And thus it was she made the great discovery. . . .

For a moment she could hardly believe it was true; then she rose with a cry of triumph and did a few delighted little dance steps. She wanted to tell Jimmie at once, but he was out and so was H. H. She could not sit calmly in the flat till they returned; she must do something to work off her excitement. She decided to go for a short walk to pass the time before Jimmie’s return.

“And by the Lord Harry,” she said aloud, as she ran for her hat, “this ought to make Jimmie admit that wives are some use even in a detective business.”

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Jimmie and Hyslop met on the steps of Somerset Mansions, but a few minutes after Viv had gone out.

“Thank God you’re safe, man!” cried Hyslop. “What have you been playing at?”

“H. H.,” said Jimmie weakly, “I can tell you the Black King damn nearly won game and rubber this afternoon. Twice I’ve been as near death as that”—he snapped his finger—“since I last saw you. . . . Pay my taxi for me,” he concluded on a note of anticlimax. “They’ve got all my money.”

“Good Lord! I ought to have streaked for Scotland Yard the very moment I was suspicious!”

“I’m glad you didn’t. Once the police come officially

into this we reduce our chances of getting that £20,000 from the Black King. And having waived my fee from Naylor, I must get that. No, we must keep Gullidge out as long as we're all right. Indeed, the moment I found I was safe, I rang him up to tell him to take his man, Havers, off and found he knew nothing about it. . . ."

"I know, old son. He was a fake."

"And I just opened my mouth and swallowed all he fed into it," said Jimmie bitterly.

"So did I. That's why I left you. I rang up Gullidge about him too. Our reputation for intelligence has gone right down the drain. . . . But no more talk, old top, till you're outside a stiff drink or something," ordered Hyslop, entering the flat. "You're just about all in. Wait till little H. H. has shaken you up one of his special Lightnigeracks and you'll feel fit to contradict taxi-drivers."

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Hyslop's prescription had worked well. Jimmie felt much better and was able to discuss the afternoon's events with all his old buoyancy and optimism as he sat in the study with Hyslop. It was now a quarter to six and Viv was still out. Jimmie was rather glad she had not been in on his return from his ordeal.

"If you feel up to it now, old son," said Hyslop, "tell me all. Or would you really rather pop off to your pillows?"

"No, it's all too important for that. In fact, I think we're not far off the end. . . . H. H.!" he continued dramatically, "I'm certain that the Black King is none other than that little man, Dakers."

"Dakers!" cried Hyslop. "He's clever enough, but I thought he was only a . . ."

"Listen!" interrupted Jimmie, and briefly he told his companion all the events of the afternoon.

"Golly, what a life!" Hyslop ejaculated at intervals. But by the time Rezaire had reached the end, his face was set.

"And you say you found the file cabinet with the Black King's collection of people's naughty secrets?"

"I did. But I could weep when I remember that I had Ballarat's special one in my hand and then lost it later on. If only we had that we'd have the game in our pocket, because we could easily force Ballarat to turn King's Evidence. He's the weak link, anyway."

"You know," said Hyslop suddenly, "I'm still wondering about Dakers being the man we want."

"He must be. That office with the secret file-cabinet is undoubtedly the center of the whole thing and he's the owner. The Commission Agent has been his disguise all the way through. All sorts and conditions of people could visit him without arousing much suspicion. . . . Damn it," he broke off with a shudder, "look at the neat little lethal chamber, and the secret drawer and the chair! That room *must* be the Black King's headquarters."

"Yes, I suppose it must," admitted Hyslop. "But . . ."

Rezaire interrupted, springing up. "And we ought to get busy right away. Our next move is to round the Black King up with every man we've got, extract our £20,000 fee, and hand him over with all the evidence we can collect to Gullidge. Ballarat will lose his nerve and . . ."

But Hyslop did not seem to be attending. "One thing still puzzles me, old horse," he reverted. "You say you nipped into this secret lethal chamber to hide?"

"It wasn't secret. It was an ordinary swing door."

"Then they can conceal it somehow, because there was no door in that Commission Agent's office, old lad, when I was there."

"What do you mean?" Jimmie was puzzled. "It couldn't be concealed. It was . . ."

"I went over the place quickly but thoroughly, looking for traces of you and so on, and there bally well wasn't a door, laddie."

"Beside the desk and near the window," returned Jimmie irritably. "*I* ought to know."

"Beside the desk was the fireplace, general."

"Fireplace be damned! That was at the other end." He broke off with excited suspicion. "Look here, H. H., I suppose we're thinking of the same room?"

"Of course. Dakers' room, old horse."

"Yes, but how did you know it was? How did you get to it?"

"Lift to second floor. Go down the corridor to the left and . . ."

"To the *left*?" cried Jimmie. "You mean to the *right*! My God, *you* never saw Dakers' office. You were taken to the wrong room."

"But, dammit, old top, Bailey himself took me. And it had the name 'Samuel Dakers: Commission Agent' painted outside. . . . Golly!" He leaned forward and tapped Jimmie on the knee. "I see it! *You* turned to the *right*. *You* were in the wrong room," he said seriously.

"But I was told exactly where Dakers' room . . ."

"*By the fake detective*," finished Hyslop triumphantly.

"By Heaven, you're right. They said they'd been expecting me. I walked right into the trap; and the trap was not the Commission Agent's office after all, it was without doubt the Black King's."

"In which case Dakers is not the Black King. I felt he wasn't."

"Then who the devil is? Who owns the room I went to? Here, I can find out! Let's have the phone quick!"

"I'll phone, old lad. I'll get that bird Bailey. We're quite pals."

"The proprietor?"

"No, he's only secretary, really. Tell you about it later."

In a few minutes he was through to the office, but Captain Bailey was not there. "He finishes his office work at four, sir," Hyslop was told. "He may be in his room upstairs. But that's a private number. Gerrard 04912. You'll have to get the . . ."

"Never mind for the moment," cried Hyslop, trying to restrain his excitement. "I only wanted to ask a question about the ownership of the offices and rooms on the second floor. Can you tell me?"

"I'm afraid I don't know anything about them," interrupted the voice. "Oh, one minute, sir," it broke off suddenly. "The maître d'hôtel has just come into the office. Will you speak to him?"

"Just the chappie!" cried Hyslop, and handed the phone to Jimmie. "Here, you take on. You've spoken to Domani about all this before."

In another moment Jimmie heard Domani's suave, "Hullo."

"Signor Domani? This is Mr. Rezaire. You remember? I wonder if you could oblige me by answering a question, in the absence of Captain Bailey?"

"But certainly, Monsieur."

"There are a few rooms on the second floor hired out as offices. One is let to a Mr. Dakers, and there are others?"

"Yes, Monsieur. That is so."

"To whom has the room been let which is the first door on the left as you turn to the *right* on coming out of the small automatic lift? It overlooks Piccadilly and has attached to it a small room with a wash basin. You know the one?"

"Certainly, Monsieur. Pardon my agitation, but I am glad you should have asked that. It has just been reported to me that something mysterious seemed to be going on there this afternoon."

"I should jolly well think so," muttered Jimmie.

"I had almost thought of telling the police. I . . ."

"Don't do that! Tell me! Whose room is it?" asked Jimmie excitedly.

"It belongs to a Mr. Eagles. A strange gentleman. I don't know what his business is. He is a friend of Mr. Dakers, whom you mentioned. He lives just out of London."

"Where?"

"At Barnet. . . . But one moment, Monsieur! To-night he has gone to Scotland. He left hurriedly this afternoon."

"Scotland?" echoed Jimmie in dismay. "Good Lord! I want to speak to him very seriously."

Signor Domani's voice was eager, almost conspiratorial, as he resumed: "I know his address. It is The Royal Thistle Hotel, Edinburgh. If it was urgent, Monsieur, you could catch the night train."

"By Jove!" Jimmie whistled with a delighted surprise as the idea took shape. "Signor Domani, I'm infinitely obliged. Thanks very much." He replaced the receiver and turned to Hyslop with glowing eyes. "H. H., I have the name of the owner of that room, and he's admitted to be somewhat mysterious and a friend of Dakers. It's a hundred to one we at last know our man. . . . And what's more, I know where he's go-

ing to be to-night. . . . Now we've got to move quickly. We're off to Scotland in full force! . . ."

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The glow of triumph had not died out of Jimmie's eyes when Viv entered the room on returning from her walk, an equally triumphant look in hers.

"Jimmie!" she cried. "What'll you give me if I tell you who the Black King is?"

Jimmie's jaw dropped. Hyslop suddenly lay back dissolved in laughter. "You two are quits over Ballarat and Watermere now," he gurgled. "To think of all Jimmie's been through this afternoon in order to find out what he has, and then Viv, who's been sitting at home, sails in with the same news."

"What have you been through this afternoon, Jimmie?" asked Viv suddenly solicitous. "And anyway," she added pouting, "how did you find out my secret?"

"I'll tell you my story afterwards. Let's have yours!"

"Well, look!" The girl opened the drawer and brought out the various letters from the Black King. "Take the glass, and look at the type. Never mind the 's' and 't'; they were just made movable on purpose in order to give false clues."

"Ah!" said Jimmie, suddenly remembering the typewriter he had tested that afternoon. It must have been after all the one on which the threatening letters had been written.

"But," continued Viv, "here are *real* clues. Look at the 'a' and the 'u.' See them in this letter, the first threat to Naylor. And in this. And in this." She slipped the sheets one by one in front of him.

"And now," she added triumphantly, "just look at this one!"

"Good Lord!" cried Jimmie, jumping up in amazement. For the last paper which she had handed to him was none other than the letter about the reservation of a table that had originally come out of Ballarat's pocket-book. It did not, as he was aware, possess the uneven "s" and "t," but plain to be seen exactly as in the others were the "a" with the worn-down tail and the "u" with the enlarged serif. It must have been typed by the same machine as the others. And that machine, he already knew, was the Black King's.

"By Jove!" cried Hyslop excitedly. "Don't you see? That's the Black King's summons to his subordinate, Sir Ballance, to come up and report. And it shows, laddie, that the whole restaurant," he added, even more excitedly, "is in this."

"Keep cool, H. H.!" cried Jimmie, who was anything but cool himself, while Viv watched the pair of them with shining eyes. "I don't see how Eagles comes into it. This ought to have come through the proprietor's office."

"Proprietors don't reserve tables for clients," began Viv, but Jimmie had the same instant seen the real truth.

"Good God!" he gasped. "It can't be *him*. . . . Here, I must verify this at once. Quick! What was Bailey's telephone number?"

In another minute he had made himself known and was speaking to Captain Bailey.

"If I get out of the automatic lift on the second floor," he was asking, "and turn to the *right*, what is the first room on the left?"

"There isn't one," was the surprising reply.

"Surely there is?"

"Not till you've gone through a door across the passage. . . ."

"Yes, yes. I remember, I did. That's right," breathed Jimmie.

"It should have been shut. Anyway there's a room on the left after that. But it's part of a private suite."

"Whose?"

"Signor Domani's."

XXXIV

ACTION

JIMMIE lay back and looked at the others. "At last we have our man," he said.

There was an awed silence; then Jimmie continued: "What a heavenly position for a blackmailer! To be a *maitre d'hôtel* at a fashionable restaurant. What wouldn't he know, or couldn't he find out! Good Lord! I see it all now. Domani's typewriter typed the letters; one of Domani's men delivered them. Domani himself advised Naylor to pay; Domani laughed at us that day we tried to follow up the origin of the threatening letter; Domani bribed the commissionaire to indicate a perfectly innocent and well-known explorer. We've even asked Domani for assistance at times. . . ."

Hyslop jumped up with an abrupt oath. "You were asking him on the phone just now about his own room," he stammered excitedly.

"Good Lord! So I was."

"And," Hyslop went on, turning to Viv, "Domani told Jimmie without a moment's hesitation that the owner was a man called Eagles, who was now in Scotland. He's probably laughing at us going up there while . . ."

"While he makes preparations to get away!" suddenly cried Jimmie. "Hell! Why are we sitting here marvelling at him? We must get busy, or he'll be off. Look here, H. H.," he went on in quick sentences. "I said just now we have our man. I was wrong. I should have said we know our man. It's quite different. If

we're to make certain of him, you must go off on a job right now!"

"Ready and waiting, old son."

"I reckon Domani will be completing his preparations now, but, to stave off pursuit as long as possible, he probably won't skip till he comes off duty to-night. You get on to his tail as soon as possible and stay there till the police land him. Go and dine at the Granada and shadow him, but don't let him spot you whatever happens. He must think we've all gone to Scotland. Therefore you'd better get a good disguise. Dye your hair to begin with. That butter-colored nut of yours shows up like a bar of soap. . . ."

"And I thought I was a passionate blonde," murmured Hyslop regretfully, as he moved to the door.

"Take Joe with you," continued Jimmie. "You may want to post him outside. And, H. H., in case one of them makes a break when the police turn up, take a gun, your passport and plenty of money."

"Sounds like a honeymoon, laddie."

"What do we do, Jimmie?" asked Viv.

"What's the time? Six-thirty? He'll soon be maitre d'hôteling for the last time. I'll just get all the evidence together and go round and see Gullidge at once. He'll get the rest of the evidence in that room. And before the night's much older, we'll pull Domani in. And Dakers and Ballarat too."

"What about our money?" asked Hyslop, at the door.

"Don't you worry about that. While I was having a peep into that room of Domani's to-day I found one of his special safes chock full of notes. While the search is on I shall be dipping in that for our £20,000 before either he or the police can get at it."

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But the police raid and arrest intended for that night never came off. A dark-haired Hyslop, looking "something like a gigolo but full of quids and guns," as he expressed it, had long since set forth together with Joe to keep Domani under observation for the evening; and Jimmie after collecting all his facts to lay before Guldige, was just about to set out for the Yard, when Joe Plumer rang through.

"I've just had a note, sir, brought me by some flunkey bloke from Mr. 'Islop. To be phoned to you."

"I'm listening."

"'Phone Mr. R.," read out Joe, "'that things are moving. Have learned from Bailey that our friend is reported ill and will not be in the restaurant as usual tonight. I am up with Bailey watching his rooms. Suggest you wait till further news before talking to the Yard, as I don't know what our friend will do.' That's all, sir."

"Now," said Jimmie, when he had passed this on to Viv, "I wonder what that means. I was reckoning on old Domani playing the nice little head-waiter up to the time when he could be gathered in. I forgot that he might pretend to be ill. However, I don't see that he can suspect that we know his secret yet, or can do anything—at least not till we get back from our supposed wild-goose chase at Scotland."

"There's no reason why he should wait till we do, though," retorted Viv. "You'd better phone Guldige . . ."

"Yes," agreed Jimmie. He was reaching for the receiver when the bell rang again, and he heard Joe's excited voice in his ears.

"Mr. 'Islop, sir, just gorn past me in a 'ell of a 'urry. Like as if he was following someone. Tipped me the wink to let you know."

"Let me know what?"

"Well, I couldn't say, sir. Let you know, I suppose, that he *had* gorn past in a 'ell of a 'urry."

"All right, Joe."

Jimmie sat back and tapped his teeth with a pencil.

"Domani's lost his nerve and done a quick bunk," he said at length. "I don't think we can very well put the police on now till we know where he'll turn up."

"Is H. H. after him?"

"Apparently. He'll let me know as soon as he gets a chance. If he doesn't lose him. But H. H. is a good man for tailing."

"Well," said Viv cheerfully, "we've broken that little lot up, anyway."

"No. They've broken themselves up because of us. That's not at all the same. If only I'd had that damned paper of Ballarat's, I'd have been able to do it beautifully. . . ."

"Why not go and see if you can get it now?"

"No good. If Domani had pushed off, he's taken it with him. And the money too, blast him!" he swore. After a moment he added: "I wonder if we can get anything out of Naylor after all? Or we shall be badly down on this deal. You know, this doesn't look at all like the finish for the Black King that I had hoped."

"That's still a good chance. We must just wait for H. H. to get in touch."

"I suppose so," replied Jimmie, sitting thoughtful with knitted brows.

XXXV

AN UNEXPECTED TURN

HYSLOP did not ring up that night. Jimmie and Viv took turns by the telephone up till about four in the morning, but the only time the bell rang was to herald a plaintive request from Joe at one A. M. to be allowed to come home now, because the Granada was all shut up.

And next morning's papers brought a shock.

ANOTHER THAMES TRAGEDY WELL-KNOWN MAITRE D'HOTEL COMMITS SUICIDE

ran the headlines and Jimmie's gasp brought Viv, wide awake, to peer over his shoulder.

We regret to learn (he read) that Signor Cesare Domani, well known to the élite of London and the Continent as the suave and tactful maître d'hôtel of the far famed Granada Restaurant, committed suicide at about 9 P. M. last night by jumping into the Thames from Victoria Embankment.

Rescue Attempts Unavailing

A policeman on the Embankment beat was a few minutes before the tragedy addressed by a man answering to Signor Domani's description. He had a somewhat worried manner and the constable had just determined to keep an eye upon him when sud-

denly the man divested himself of his coat, climbed swiftly onto the parapet and leaped into the river before he could be restrained. Though the night was so dark that little could be seen, the constable with commendable courage and promptitude dived in after him; but despite this brave attempt and the presence of a motor-boat which aided in the search, the unfortunate victim was not seen again.

Mystery Letter

The body has not yet been recovered, but both the discarded coat and the testimony of the constable leave no doubt as to the identity of the victim. Inquiry at the Granada revealed further the fact that the unfortunate Signor Domani had also left a note for his employer, Captain Bailey. In this, we understand, he apologized for the step he was about to take and ascribed it to money troubles. Captain Bailey also hinted at an amazing revelation made in this letter, which is now in the hands of the police.

Signor Domani, who was unmarried and occupied rooms on the second floor of the Restaurant, had complained earlier in the evening of feeling unwell. . . .

Jimmie read on eagerly to the end. Then he reread it and passed it to Viv.

"Well," she said at last, "that's that. I thought at first it was a put-up job."

Jimmie shook his head reprovingly at her. "After all my training too, Viv! Or perhaps you're not properly awake yet! Of course it *is* a put-up job." He rose and began to dress hurriedly. "Look at the trouble he took to ensure that there should be no doubt as to

identity, talking to the policeman, taking off his coat, leaving a letter for Bailey—all because *he* knew there'd be no body. And yet you lie there and say . . .”

“All right, I apologize. Don't rub it in. Where are you going?”

“Straight down to see this Captain Bailey and find out what was in that letter.”

“I hope H. H. is all right,” he said a little later, and Viv, bare arms clasped behind her head as she watched him from the pillows, replied: “Ought we to let Betty know, as we promised?”

“Not unless we really think something's happened to him.”

“Oh, H. H. always falls on his feet.”

“I hope so,” said Jimmie, again. “For I believe Domani is still very much alive and in hiding somewhere.”

“Well, no doubt H. H. will turn up soon to tell us where he is.”

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After a little persuasion and a brief explanation of his profession, Jimmie Rezaire convinced Captain Bailey of his bona fides and was able to learn from him the truth of the “amazing revelation” at which the papers had hinted. As a matter of fact it appeared later that day in the noon editions of the evening papers. And it made Jimmie wonder whether after all Domani might not have lost his nerve at the thought of imminent arrest and passed out. For the information contained in the letter certainly provided a really genuine excuse for suicide. Previously he had considered that a maître d'hôtel was unlikely to have really serious money troubles, but it had been made quite clear both by papers left for Captain Bailey and by the firm of lawyers in whose

hands the business was, that Signor Domani himself was the actual proprietor of the Granada. Learning apparently some years ago that the Granada's finances were in a bad way, he had bought it up, through the medium of a firm of lawyers, had engaged a new secretary and ostensible proprietor, Captain Bailey, and had himself remained to work and live on the premises.

"I never suspected the place was in a bad way," said Bailey to Jimmie. "But then I never had all the figures for one thing. Good Lord! When I think of the occasional dust-ups I had with poor old Domani and realize that he was my own boss and might have fired me, it makes me go cold all over."

Jimmie nodded. He did not say that the memory of *his* occasional dust-ups with Domani also made him go cold all over.

"I don't know what'll happen to the place now. I shouldn't be surprised if we were sold up. But I can't get at the figures. All I know is that poor Domani apparently owed money right and left, not to tradespeople, but to private individuals, who had rashly lent it to him—for he had an engaging personality. . . ."

"Oh, very," said Jimmie, and wondered just whereabouts that engaging personality had hidden himself and his money.

"Evidently these debts preyed on his mind, because the evening he drowned himself, he wrote and sent checks to all these creditors in payment, though he had no money in the bank to meet them. I suppose he thought the place would be sold in settlement. . . . No, I don't know what he thought he was doing to write all those useless checks. Some queer working of conscience perhaps."

"Ah!" said Jimmie thoughtfully. "Was there a will?"

"Yes, he's made me executor and left everything to his brother, who lives in Italy. At Alassio. And here's a surprising thing: his brother's a Count—Count Gabriele Giudecca."

Jimmie took a note of the Count's name and address. "They're common enough out there," he said.

"I'm cabling the sad news to him this morning. I believe the lawyers are doing it too, but I want to get right in at the start and keep my job! Means a lot to me. Wooden legs, you know, are not in demand."

"I wonder if I could have a look at Domani's room?"

"We—ll. The police were there earlier. I shouldn't think it would matter, if they've gone. . . ."

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Jimmie could hardly repress a shudder as he stood once more in that fateful room where he had so nearly died. However, he mastered himself to step over the threshold and then made a swift examination of the room. The chair in which he had been so neatly trapped was gone, so was the box of cigarettes; nor was there any trace of the contents of his pockets. But everything else seemed much the same. The earphones of the wireless still hung on the wall, the desk was littered with papers much as he had seen it, and in the little room in which he had so nearly died he even noticed the gaspipe. He bent down and saw the cut in the rubber joint that had saved his life. He wondered whether to point this out, but as he turned round he saw to his surprise that Bailey was standing by the bookcase with his hand on the hidden catch.

"Secretive bird, poor old Domani!" he was saying. "Look!" And the shelf with the Encyclopædia swung out to his touch.

Jimmie gasped. "How did you know about that?"

"It was in the letter. Most of the details of the poor old chap's losses and debts were here and the papers about his ownership and his check book and so on."

"Oh, were they?" said Jimmie, and was silent. The fact that Domani had cleared out all the Black King's hoard of incriminating documents was just one more proof that Domani was alive and waiting to make some further move. A moment later he distracted Bailey's attention for an instant and got a peep into the secret drawer at the back of the desk. It was empty and his last suspicion vanished in certainty. The final act was not yet played.

"Seen all you want?" asked Bailey, as he stumped to the door. "By the way, in all this trouble, I forgot to ask you: didn't you have some bother with that man Dakers yesterday? Your friend, Mr. Hyslop, was around here rather excited. . . ."

"Oh, it was nothing," said Jimmie. "He did try to be nasty, but it didn't come off."

"The first thing I get the Count to do will be to push that little worm out. He's a wrong 'un, I'm certain. . . . By Jove, that explains it—no wonder I couldn't get my unknown employer to get rid of him, if it was Domani all the time."

"Why?" asked Jimmie, very interested indeed.

"Because Domani had dealings with him. Betting, I suppose, to try and retrieve his fallen fortune. Dakers is one of the fellows to whom the poor old chap owed money."

"Ah!" said Jimmie, very thoughtfully. Light was dawning on him. He was not surprised to learn a moment later that Mr. Samuel Dakers had pretended to be rather affected by the maître d'hôtel's death and had gone into the country for a week. Bailey ascribed it to a sense of shame and responsibility, but Jimmie, smil-

ing grimly, had other ideas. He thanked Captain Bailey very much for his help, asked him not to mention anything to the police, as they did not like private detectives.

"Oh, I don't think the police will bother me again now," said Bailey. "Of course if there had been any suspicion of foul play, it would have been different, but it's suicide as clear as daylight."

"Quite," said Jimmie, thinking that Domani would not have been the clever criminal he was, if the suicide had not been as clear as daylight. Then he went home to consult with Viv and find out if she had heard from Hyslop. With the certain knowledge that Domani was alive, he was getting a little worried about Hyslop. He was glad Betty did not yet know, but he was wondering whether he ought not to fulfil his promise to Hyslop by writing to her.

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Later that day Jimmie went round to see Mr. Naylor, and reduced the usually self-possessed financier to a condition of open-mouthed amazement. "By God!" and "The swine!" he ejaculated at intervals between his teeth, as Jimmie unfolded the startling tale of events since they had last met.

"When I think of how he brought me that damned letter himself and pretended to sympathize. When I . . . Thank Heaven you've broken him up."

"I'm not so sure. Not completely. I don't suppose the Black King's gang will ever function as such again, but he's not dead by any means."

"So you keep saying, but the evidence is"

". . . all carefully prepared. When an arch criminal disappears at a convenient moment, well, I'm always suspicious—especially if there's a wealth of

evidence as to identity but no actual body. Besides, there's the attitude of the rest of the gang. There wasn't time for him to square the whole thing up satisfactorily and yet they're all quiet. Deduction: that it's prearranged. However, I'll know more about that to-night. My wife's away now working on a line. . . . Unfortunately Hyslop's disappeared and I'm very afraid he may have been caught. In fact, I've just posted a letter to Betty at Ipfield telling her. . . ."

"Mr. Rezaire!" interrupted Naylor. "I—I'd like a word with you about that boy. I got a letter from him last night."

"Did you? Are you sure? Where is he?" asked Jimmie eagerly.

"Oh, it was written yesterday morning, before he disappeared. In it he told me about his—er—earlier life. Said he felt I had a right to know."

"Well?" said Rezaire, non-committally.

"Well, I . . . You know I was talking to you the other day about him and Betty."

"They seem very fond of each other."

"That's just it," burst out Naylor. "Look here! You see my point; you know my own circumstances. I can't possibly have these two—er—getting married."

"I quite agree," said Jimmie. He saw that neither by his past life nor his temperament was H. H. fitted to be the respectable son-in-law that Naylor had a right to demand, indeed, must demand, as the ultimate crown to the big effort of his life. "What are you going to do?" he asked at last.

"What can I do? I'm not a fool. I know that to refuse my daughter permission to marry him is to drive her to the registry office next day. Can't you do something? Can't you speak to him when he turns up? Surely he must see that she—*my* daughter remember—

will never be happy knowing her husband is an unpunished criminal?"

"A good fellow though!"

"A good fellow, yes—but hang it—what's the motto of your own crowd? Justice before Legality. Sooner or later, when she knows my story in full, she'll be wanting him to do as I did—for no woman can be happy if she thinks her father has done the straight thing and her husband hasn't. And then look what a mess-up there'll be! Can't you put it to him?"

Jimmie rose and shook hands. "I'll say something," he promised. "Because I feel as you do. And personally I think it's only infatuation on his side."

"And on hers, I believe—at present. And the trouble is infatuation may change into several things. . . . Well, good-bye for the present and thank you."

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Viv returned late that night and retailed the results of her day's work to Jimmie. She had been down in the Wentley to Watermere and had conducted some investigations in the neighborhood of The Grange.

Sir Victor Ballarat, she had learned from the van-driver of a local butcher, was reported to be in bed with a chill, and there was also a new man-servant in the house, who had come from London the night before.

"He sounded like Masters from the description," she added.

"Quite possibly," said Jimmie. "You're certain it couldn't have been Domani himself?"

"Positive. I thought of that too, but he came by train and I got a tallying description from the station-master."

"Anything else?"

"Nothing. The place is like the grave. Ballarat's

car went into a garage this morning to have the cylinders re-ground."

"A conveniently long and probably unnecessary job," remarked Jimmie. "That'll get that out of the way. Has he communicated with anyone?"

"One telegram, by the dark footman; but I couldn't get to know what it was. The postmaster is silent and deaf."

"Things are working out slowly," murmured Jimmie. "Did you hear of anyone answering to H. H.'s description?"

"Jimmie, I tried everywhere. I am worried about that boy."

"He's tailing Domani somewhere, I'll bet."

"I'm beginning to be afraid the devil has caught him."

"So am I. But, Viv, I don't mind telling you I have great faith in H. H. Soon we'll hear from him suddenly; and when we do, we'll hear where the mysterious Black King, who's mysterious no longer, is in hiding. And," he added after a moment, "if we know that, we'll have a good chance of getting our cash."

XXXVI

SOME INQUIRIES ANSWERED

CAPTAIN BAILEY was proving very helpful indeed. His brain was not very quick, but he had begun to believe that there was after all something strange about the whole affair of the late Signor Domani, though his suspicions were centered on Dakers. The interest of a private detective such as Rezaire had made him wonder whether the little Commission Agent might not have had some big swindling game on, for he was fairly certain from what knowledge he had that Domani, whether as proprietor or maitre d'hôtel, had not been as badly off as he had made out. He therefore lent Jimmie all the assistance in his power by keeping him informed of anything fresh that transpired.

Thus it was that Jimmie heard next morning almost as soon as anyone of the answer to the cable Bailey had sent to Domani's brother in Italy.

"He's coming over as soon as possible, according to his cable," said Bailey, over the phone, "to help clear up his brother's troubles. He leaves Alassio to-day and he'll arrive Victoria to-morrow night about seven P. M. he says."

"He's not wasting any time. Where did he cable from?"

"From Alassio." And Bailey's tone was more cheerful than it had been for the last few days. "He's apparently quite keen about the Granada, because he adds instructions to me to keep the place going at all costs and that he himself will pay all his brother's creditors. Pretty sporting of him."

"Very," agreed Jimmie, who was now as certain as any man could be that the arrival of Domani's brother was all part of the arch-blackmailer's well-planned finish.

"For," he explained to Viv, when Bailey had rung off with a promise to fix an appointment for Jimmie to see the Count the morning after his arrival, "this explains the last little point that was puzzling me: namely why all the gang are so quiet. If Domani, the head of the show, had really committed suicide, they'd have been scattering like rabbits for the big open spaces, while if Domani had shopped them by staging a personal get-away and beating it for the Continent, they'd have been humming round looking for him to get their pound of flesh. But they're quiet. Which means that they know Domani is hiding in this country somewhere and are just waiting patiently for their hand-out. And I wouldn't mind betting that when this brother of his, who is of course in the know, turns up with his noble promise to pay all poor dead brother's creditors, said creditors will prove to be all the late members of the gang. Domani's written out their pay-slips; and his brother pushes over the envelopes. Neat, isn't it? Why, he's already prepared some of the ground for it, because I remember now Bailey told me that according to his papers Domani had had dealings with Dakers and owed him money! Damned neat!"

"Do you think this brother is a real Count—if he's in this thing?"

"My dear Viv," smiled Jimmie. "The money that's been lost in this world because women have refused to believe that a real Count could ever be a wrong 'un would keep you in frocks for years. And that's saying something. Anyway, I shall know by to-night. I'm expecting a cable from Alassio myself."

Jimmie's anticipated cable came through to Somerset Mansions that evening. It was a very lengthy one and was from a private detective agency at Alassio to whom Jimmie had himself cabled a large sum of money and certain instructions as soon as he had got the name and address of Domani's brother from Captain Bailey.

Jimmie spent some time deciphering it,—not because it was in code, but because his Italian was poor,—and eventually had the following written out on a piece of paper.

“ Subject well known in Alassio. Title genuine, but behavior eccentric. Lives in frugality and great seclusion most of year in large villa outside town, but in height of season comes out of retirement for a month and leads very gay life on Riviera Coast, frequenting best hotels, restaurants and casinos with expensive female companions. Owns yacht, generally laid up in harbor, but lately she has not been seen.

“ Above report held over to ascertain latest movements as instructed. Subject received two cablegrams yesterday afternoon and sent servant down to dispatch his answers that night. Servant unbribable, believe cables destined England. Had visitor this morning and soon after left in hurry for station, catching afternoon train for San Remo and Paris. Small luggage. Wire further instructions if required.

“ CELATI.”

Jimmie read it through twice, then tossed it across to Viv.

“ There you are,” he said. “ That's Big Brother coming to the rescue. The two cables he received were from

Bailey and the lawyers and he answered that he was coming next day, as we've just heard from Bailey." He reached down a Continental Bradshaw. "Let's see, he told Bailey in his cable that he'd be here to-morrow evening at seven. Alassio to San Remo? That shows he's not coming by Modane. . . . Ah, I have it. He's picking up the 'Blue and Gold' *train de luxe*. Gets in Paris 10 A. M. and Victoria 7:15 P. M. to-morrow night. That's it. And I take it he'll get to business the next morning."

"He sounds a queer bird," said Viv, who had been looking at the cable again, "saving up his money for one big crack at the high spots each year."

"The question is," mused Jimmie, "shall I go and see if I can get a peep at him at Victoria?"

"Be careful he doesn't see you first. He'll have been warned about you and won't stop at anything if you're in his way."

"That's quite right. No, I'd better suddenly confront the old bird next morning at the meeting Bailey's arranged."

"What exactly are you going to say?"

"It needs careful working out, but primarily I want to squeeze out our £20,000. I may be able to extract it by threats, because I know so much about his brother's affairs. Secondly I'd like to find out from him where Domani is hidden, and if possible how he's going to get away, so that the police . . ."

"The yacht!" suddenly interrupted Viv. "Your Alassio man says the Count's yacht has not lately been seen. Why? Because it's on its way to England. *That* is going to be their method of escape—so as to dodge the police."

"By Jove, you're right!" cried Jimmie. "He's going to pay out his friends, clear up all he can—probably by

putting the Granada up for private sale—and then fetch Domani from his hiding place and take him away to . . . You know,” he broke off, “though I says it as shouldn’t, we do seem to have put the wind properly up this crowd. They haven’t got a kick left in ’em; they’re simply out to make their escape as unobtrusively as possible.”