

Chapter V - The Allegorical Practical Joker

The criminal specialist who had come with Dr. Warner was a somewhat more urbane and even dapper figure than he had appeared when clutching the railings and craning his neck into the garden. He even looked comparatively young when he took his hat off, having fair hair parted in the middle and carefully curled on each side, and lively movements, especially of the hands. He had a dandified monocle slung round his neck by a broad black ribbon, and a big bow tie, as if a big American moth had alighted on him. His dress and gestures were bright enough for a boy's; it was only when you looked at the fish-bone face that you beheld something acrid and old. His manners were excellent, though hardly English, and he had two half-conscious tricks by which people who only met him once remembered him. One was a trick of closing his eyes when he wished to be particularly polite; the other was one of lifting his joined thumb and forefinger in the air as if holding a pinch of snuff, when he was hesitating or hovering over a word. But those who were longer in his company tended to forget these oddities in the stream of his quaint and solemn conversation and really singular views.

"Miss Hunt," said Dr. Warner, "this is Dr. Cyrus Pym."

Dr. Cyrus Pym shut his eyes during the introduction, rather as if he were "playing fair" in some child's game, and gave a prompt little bow, which somehow suddenly revealed him as a citizen of the United States.

"Dr. Cyrus Pym," continued Warner (Dr. Pym shut his eyes again), "is perhaps the first criminological expert of America. We are very fortunate to be able to consult with him in this extraordinary case--"

"I can't make head or tail of anything," said Rosamund. "How can poor Mr. Smith be so dreadful as he is by your account?"

"Or by your telegram," said Herbert Warner, smiling.

"Oh, you don't understand," cried the girl impatiently. "Why, he's done us all more good than going to church."

"I think I can explain to the young lady," said Dr. Cyrus Pym. "This criminal or maniac Smith is a very genius of evil, and has a method of his own, a method of the most daring ingenuity. He is popular wherever he goes, for he invades every house as an uproarious child. People are getting suspicious of all the respectable disguises for a scoundrel; so he always uses the disguise of--what shall I say--the

Bohemian, the blameless Bohemian. He always carries people off their feet. People are used to the mask of conventional good conduct. He goes in for eccentric good-nature. You expect a Don Juan to dress up as a solemn and solid Spanish merchant; but you're not prepared when he dresses up as Don Quixote. You expect a humbug to behave like Sir Charles Grandison; because (with all respect, Miss Hunt, for the deep, tear-moving tenderness of Samuel Richardson) Sir Charles Grandison so often behaved like a humbug. But no real red-blooded citizen is quite ready for a humbug that models himself not on Sir Charles Grandison but on Sir Roger de Coverly. Setting up to be a good man a little cracked is a new criminal incognito, Miss Hunt. It's been a great notion, and uncommonly successful; but its success just makes it mighty cruel. I can forgive Dick Turpin if he impersonates Dr. Busby; I can't forgive him when he impersonates Dr. Johnson. The saint with a tile loose is a bit too sacred, I guess, to be parodied."

"But how do you know," cried Rosamund desperately, "that Mr. Smith is a known criminal?"

"I collated all the documents," said the American, "when my friend Warner knocked me up on receipt of your cable. It is my professional affair to know these facts, Miss Hunt; and there's no more doubt about them than about the Bradshaw down at the depot. This man has hitherto escaped the law, through his admirable affectations of infancy or insanity. But I myself, as a specialist, have privately authenticated notes of some eighteen or twenty crimes attempted or achieved in this manner. He comes to houses as he has to this, and gets a grand popularity. He makes things go. They do go; when he's gone the things are gone. Gone, Miss Hunt, gone, a man's life or a man's spoons, or more often a woman. I assure you I have all the memoranda."

"I have seen them," said Warner solidly, "I can assure you that all this is correct."

"The most unmanly aspect, according to my feelings," went on the American doctor, "is this perpetual deception of innocent women by a wild simulation of innocence. From almost every house where this great imaginative devil has been, he has taken some poor girl away with him; some say he's got a hypnotic eye with his other queer features, and that they go like automata. What's become of all those poor girls nobody knows. Murdered, I dare say; for we've lots of instances, besides this one, of his turning his hand to murder, though none ever brought him under the law. Anyhow, our most modern methods of research can't find any trace of the wretched women. It's when I think of them that I am really moved, Miss Hunt. And I've really nothing else to say just now except what Dr. Warner has said."

"Quite so," said Warner, with a smile that seemed moulded in marble--"that we all have to thank you very much for that telegram."

The little Yankee scientist had been speaking with such evident sincerity that one forgot the tricks of his voice and manner-- the falling eyelids, the rising intonation, and the poised finger and thumb--which were at other times a little comic. It was not so much that he was cleverer than Warner; perhaps he was not so clever, though he was more celebrated. But he had what Warner never had, a fresh and unaffected seriousness-- the great American virtue of simplicity. Rosamund knitted her brows and looked gloomily toward the darkening house that contained the dark prodigy.

Broad daylight still endured; but it had already changed from gold to silver, and was changing from silver to gray. The long plummy shadows of the one or two trees in the garden faded more and more upon a dead background of dusk. In the sharpest and deepest shadow, which was the entrance to the house by the big French windows, Rosamund could watch a hurried consultation between Inglewood (who was still left in charge of the mysterious captive) and Diana, who had moved to his assistance from without. After a few minutes and gestures they went inside, shutting the glass doors upon the garden; and the garden seemed to grow grayer still.

The American gentleman named Pym seemed to be turning and on the move in the same direction; but before he started he spoke to Rosamund with a flash of that guileless tact which redeemed much of his childish vanity, and with something of that spontaneous poetry which made it difficult, pedantic as he was, to call him a pedant.

"I'm vurry sorry, Miss Hunt," he said; "but Dr. Warner and I, as two quali-FIED practitioners, had better take Mr. Smith away in that cab, and the less said about it the better. Don't you agitate yourself, Miss Hunt. You've just got to think that we're taking away a monstrosity, something that oughtn't to be at all--something like one of those gods in your Britannic Museum, all wings, and beards, and legs, and eyes, and no shape. That's what Smith is, and you shall soon be quit of him."

He had already taken a step towards the house, and Warner was about to follow him, when the glass doors were opened again and Diana Duke came out with more than her usual quickness across the lawn. Her face was aquiver with worry and excitement, and her dark earnest eyes fixed only on the other girl.

"Rosamund," she cried in despair, "what shall I do with her?"

"With her?" cried Miss Hunt, with a violent jump. "O lord, he isn't a woman too,

is he?"

"No, no, no," said Dr. Pym soothingly, as if in common fairness. "A woman? no, really, he is not so bad as that."

"I mean your friend Mary Gray," retorted Diana with equal tartness. "What on earth am I to do with her?"

"How can we tell her about Smith, you mean," answered Rosamund, her face at once clouded and softening. "Yes, it will be pretty painful."

"But I HAVE told her," exploded Diana, with more than her congenital exasperation. "I have told her, and she doesn't seem to mind. She still says she's going away with Smith in that cab."

"But it's impossible!" ejaculated Rosamund. "Why, Mary is really religious. She--"

She stopped in time to realize that Mary Gray was comparatively close to her on the lawn. Her quiet companion had come down very quietly into the garden, but dressed very decisively for travel. She had a neat but very ancient blue tam-o'-shanter on her head, and was pulling some rather threadbare gray gloves on to her hands. Yet the two tints fitted excellently with her heavy copper-coloured hair; the more excellently for the touch of shabbiness: for a woman's clothes never suit her so well as when they seem to suit her by accident.

But in this case the woman had a quality yet more unique and attractive. In such gray hours, when the sun is sunk and the skies are already sad, it will often happen that one reflection at some occasional angle will cause to linger the last of the light. A scrap of window, a scrap of water, a scrap of looking-glass, will be full of the fire that is lost to all the rest of the earth. The quaint, almost triangular face of Mary Gray was like some triangular piece of mirror that could still repeat the splendour of hours before. Mary, though she was always graceful, could never before have properly been called beautiful; and yet her happiness amid all that misery was so beautiful as to make a man catch his breath.

"O Diana," cried Rosamund in a lower voice and altering her phrase; "but how did you tell her?"

"It is quite easy to tell her," answered Diana sombrely; "it makes no impression at all."

"I'm afraid I've kept everything waiting," said Mary Gray apologetically, "and now

we must really say good-bye. Innocent is taking me to his aunt's over at Hampstead, and I'm afraid she goes to bed early."

Her words were quite casual and practical, but there was a sort of sleepy light in her eyes that was more baffling than darkness; she was like one speaking absently with her eye on some very distant object.

"Mary, Mary," cried Rosamund, almost breaking down, "I'm so sorry about it, but the thing can't be at all. We--we have found out all about Mr. Smith."

"All?" repeated Mary, with a low and curious intonation; "why, that must be awfully exciting."

There was no noise for an instant and no motion except that the silent Michael Moon, leaning on the gate, lifted his head, as it might be to listen. Then Rosamund remaining speechless, Dr. Pym came to her rescue in a definite way.

"To begin with," he said, "this man Smith is constantly attempting murder. The Warden of Brakespeare College--"

"I know," said Mary, with a vague but radiant smile. "Innocent told me."

"I can't say what he told you," replied Pym quickly, "but I'm very much afraid it wasn't true. The plain truth is that the man's stained with every known human crime. I assure you I have all the documents. I have evidence of his committing burglary, signed by a most eminent English curate. I have--"

"Oh, but there were two curates," cried Mary, with a certain gentle eagerness; "that was what made it so much funnier."

The darkened glass doors of the house opened once more, and Inglewood appeared for an instant, making a sort of signal. The American doctor bowed, the English doctor did not, but they both set out stolidly towards the house. No one else moved, not even Michael hanging on the gate; but the back of his head and shoulders had still an indescribable indication that he was listening to every word.

"But don't you understand, Mary," cried Rosamund in despair; "don't you know that awful things have happened even before our very eyes. I should have thought you would have heard the revolver shots upstairs."

"Yes, I heard the shots," said Mary almost brightly; "but I was busy packing just then. And Innocent had told me he was going to shoot at Dr. Warner; so it wasn't

worth while to come down."

"Oh, I don't understand what you mean," cried Rosamund Hunt, stamping, "but you must and shall understand what I mean. I don't care how cruelly I put it, if only I can save you. I mean that your Innocent Smith is the most awfully wicked man in the world. He has sent bullets at lots of other men and gone off in cabs with lots of other women. And he seems to have killed the women too, for nobody can find them."

"He is really rather naughty sometimes," said Mary Gray, laughing softly as she buttoned her old gray gloves.

"Oh, this is really mesmerism, or something," said Rosamund, and burst into tears.

At the same moment the two black-clad doctors appeared out of the house with their great green-clad captive between them. He made no resistance, but was still laughing in a groggy and half-witted style. Arthur Inglewood followed in the rear, a dark and red study in the last shades of distress and shame. In this black, funereal, and painfully realistic style the exit from Beacon House was made by a man whose entrance a day before had been effected by the happy leaping of a wall and the hilarious climbing of a tree. No one moved of the groups in the garden except Mary Gray, who stepped forward quite naturally, calling out, "Are you ready, Innocent? Our cab's been waiting such a long time."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Dr. Warner firmly, "I must insist on asking this lady to stand aside. We shall have trouble enough as it is, with the three of us in a cab."

"But it IS our cab," persisted Mary. "Why, there's Innocent's yellow bag on the top of it."

"Stand aside," repeated Warner roughly. "And you, Mr. Moon, please be so obliging as to move a moment. Come, come! the sooner this ugly business is over the better--and how can we open the gate if you will keep leaning on it?"

Michael Moon looked at his long lean forefinger, and seemed to consider and reconsider this argument. "Yes," he said at last; "but how can I lean on this gate if you keep on opening it?"

"Oh, get out of the way!" cried Warner, almost good-humouredly. "You can lean on the gate any time."

"No," said Moon reflectively. "Seldom the time and the place and the blue gate altogether; and it all depends whether you come of an old country family. My ancestors leaned on gates before any one had discovered how to open them."

"Michael!" cried Arthur Inglewood in a kind of agony, "are you going to get out of the way?"

"Why, no; I think not," said Michael, after some meditation, and swung himself slowly round, so that he confronted the company, while still, in a lounging attitude, occupying the path.

"Hullo!" he called out suddenly; "what are you doing to Mr. Smith?"

"Taking him away," answered Warner shortly, "to be examined."

"Matriculation?" asked Moon brightly.

"By a magistrate," said the other curtly.

"And what other magistrate," cried Michael, raising his voice, "dares to try what befell on this free soil, save only the ancient and independent Dukes of Beacon? What other court dares to try one of our company, save only the High Court of Beacon? Have you forgotten that only this afternoon we flew the flag of independence and severed ourselves from all the nations of the earth?"

"Michael," cried Rosamund, wringing her hands, "how can you stand there talking nonsense? Why, you saw the dreadful thing yourself. You were there when he went mad. It was you that helped the doctor up when he fell over the flower-pot."

"And the High Court of Beacon," replied Moon with hauteur, "has special powers in all cases concerning lunatics, flower-pots, and doctors who fall down in gardens. It's in our very first charter from Edward I: `Si medicus quisquam in horto prostratus--'"

"Out of the way!" cried Warner with sudden fury, "or we will force you out of it."

"What!" cried Michael Moon, with a cry of hilarious fierceness. "Shall I die in defence of this sacred pale? Will you paint these blue railings red with my gore?" and he laid hold of one of the blue spikes behind him. As Inglewood had noticed earlier in the evening, the railing was loose and crooked at this place, and the painted iron staff and spearhead came away in Michael's hand as he shook it.

"See!" he cried, brandishing this broken javelin in the air, "the very lances round Beacon Tower leap from their places to defend it. Ah, in such a place and hour it is a fine thing to die alone!" And in a voice like a drum he rolled the noble lines of Ronsard--

"Ou pour l'honneur de Dieu, ou pour le droit de mon prince, Navre, poitrine ouverte, au bord de mon province."

"Sakes alive!" said the American gentleman, almost in an awed tone. Then he added, "Are there two maniacs here?"

"No; there are five," thundered Moon. "Smith and I are the only sane people left."

"Michael!" cried Rosamund; "Michael, what does it mean?"

"It means bosh!" roared Michael, and slung his painted spear hurtling to the other end of the garden. "It means that doctors are bosh, and criminology is bosh, and Americans are bosh-- much more bosh than our Court of Beacon. It means, you fatheads, that Innocent Smith is no more mad or bad than the bird on that tree."

"But, my dear Moon," began Inglewood in his modest manner, "these gentlemen--"

"On the word of two doctors," exploded Moon again, without listening to anybody else, "shut up in a private hell on the word of two doctors! And such doctors! Oh, my hat! Look at 'em!--do just look at 'em! Would you read a book, or buy a dog, or go to a hotel on the advice of twenty such? My people came from Ireland, and were Catholics. What would you say if I called a man wicked on the word of two priests?"

"But it isn't only their word, Michael," reasoned Rosamund; "they've got evidence too."

"Have you looked at it?" asked Moon.

"No," said Rosamund, with a sort of faint surprise; "these gentlemen are in charge of it."

"And of everything else, it seems to me," said Michael. "Why, you haven't even had the decency to consult Mrs. Duke."

"Oh, that's no use," said Diana in an undertone to Rosamund; "Auntie can't say 'Bo!' to a goose."

"I am glad to hear it," answered Michael, "for with such a flock of geese to say it to, the horrid expletive might be constantly on her lips. For my part, I simply refuse to let things be done in this light and airy style. I appeal to Mrs. Duke--it's her house."

"Mrs. Duke?" repeated Inglewood doubtfully.

"Yes, Mrs. Duke," said Michael firmly, "commonly called the Iron Duke."

"If you ask Auntie," said Diana quietly, "she'll only be for doing nothing at all. Her only idea is to hush things up or to let things slide. That just suits her."

"Yes," replied Michael Moon; "and, as it happens, it just suits all of us. You are impatient with your elders, Miss Duke; but when you are as old yourself you will know what Napoleon knew-- that half one's letters answer themselves if you can only refrain from the fleshly appetite of answering them."

He was still lounging in the same absurd attitude, with his elbow on the grate, but his voice had altered abruptly for the third time; just as it had changed from the mock heroic to the humanly indignant, it now changed to the airy incisiveness of a lawyer giving good legal advice.

"It isn't only your aunt who wants to keep this quiet if she can," he said; "we all want to keep it quiet if we can. Look at the large facts--the big bones of the case. I believe those scientific gentlemen have made a highly scientific mistake. I believe Smith is as blameless as a buttercup. I admit buttercups don't often let off loaded pistols in private houses; I admit there is something demanding explanation. But I am morally certain there's some blunder, or some joke, or some allegory, or some accident behind all this. Well, suppose I'm wrong. We've disarmed him; we're five men to hold him; he may as well go to a lock-up later on as now. But suppose there's even a chance of my being right. Is it anybody's interest here to wash this linen in public?"

"Come, I'll take each of you in order. Once take Smith outside that gate, and you take him into the front page of the evening papers. I know; I've written the front page myself. Miss Duke, do you or your aunt want a sort of notice stuck up over your boarding-house--`Doctors shot here.'? No, no--doctors are rubbish, as I said; but you don't want the rubbish shot here. Arthur, suppose I am right, or suppose I am wrong. Smith has appeared as an old schoolfellow of yours. Mark my words, if he's proved guilty, the Organs of Public Opinion will say you introduced him. If he's proved innocent, they will say you helped to collar him. Rosamund, my dear, suppose I am right or wrong. If he's proved guilty, they'll say

you engaged your companion to him. If he's proved innocent, they'll print that telegram. I know the Organs, damn them."

He stopped an instant; for this rapid rationalism left him more breathless than had either his theatrical or his real denunciation. But he was plainly in earnest, as well as positive and lucid; as was proved by his proceeding quickly the moment he had found his breath.

"It is just the same," he cried, "with our medical friends. You will say that Dr. Warner has a grievance. I agree. But does he want specially to be snapshotted by all the journalists ~prostratus in horto~? It was no fault of his, but the scene was not very dignified even for him. He must have justice; but does he want to ask for justice, not only on his knees, but on his hands and knees? Does he want to enter the court of justice on all fours? Doctors are not allowed to advertise; and I'm sure no doctor wants to advertise himself as looking like that. And even for our American guest the interest is the same. Let us suppose that he has conclusive documents. Let us assume that he has revelations really worth reading. Well, in a legal inquiry (or a medical inquiry, for that matter) ten to one he won't be allowed to read them. He'll be tripped up every two or three minutes with some tangle of old rules. A man can't tell the truth in public nowadays. But he can still tell it in private; he can tell it inside that house."

"It is quite true," said Dr. Cyrus Pym, who had listened throughout the speech with a seriousness which only an American could have retained through such a scene. "It is true that I have been perceptibly less hampered in private inquiries."

"Dr. Pym!" cried Warner in a sort of sudden anger. "Dr. Pym! you aren't really going to admit--"

"Smith may be mad," went on the melancholy Moon in a monologue that seemed as heavy as a hatchet, "but there was something after all in what he said about Home Rule for every home. Yes, there is something, when all's said and done, in the High Court of Beacon. It is really true that human beings might often get some sort of domestic justice where just now they can only get legal injustice--oh, I am a lawyer too, and I know that as well. It is true that there's too much official and indirect power. Often and often the thing a whole nation can't settle is just the thing a family could settle. Scores of young criminals have been fined and sent to jail when they ought to have been thrashed and sent to bed. Scores of men, I am sure, have had a lifetime at Hanwell when they only wanted a week at Brighton. There IS something in Smith's notion of domestic self-government; and I propose that we put it into practice. You have the prisoner; you have the documents. Come, we are a company of free, white, Christian people, such as

might be besieged in a town or cast up on a desert island. Let us do this thing ourselves. Let us go into that house there and sit down and find out with our own eyes and ears whether this thing is true or not; whether this Smith is a man or a monster. If we can't do a little thing like that, what right have we to put crosses on ballot papers?"

Inglewood and Pym exchanged a glance; and Warner, who was no fool, saw in that glance that Moon was gaining ground. The motives that led Arthur to think of surrender were indeed very different from those which affected Dr. Cyrus Pym. All Arthur's instincts were on the side of privacy and polite settlement; he was very English and would often endure wrongs rather than right them by scenes and serious rhetoric. To play at once the buffoon and the knight-errant, like his Irish friend, would have been absolute torture to him; but even the semi-official part he had played that afternoon was very painful. He was not likely to be reluctant if any one could convince him that his duty was to let sleeping dogs lie.

On the other hand, Cyrus Pym belonged to a country in which things are possible that seem crazy to the English. Regulations and authorities exactly like one of Innocent's pranks or one of Michael's satires really exist, propped by placid policemen and imposed on bustling business men. Pym knew whole States which are vast and yet secret and fanciful; each is as big as a nation yet as private as a lost village, and as unexpected as an apple-pie bed. States where no man may have a cigarette, States where any man may have ten wives, very strict prohibition States, very lax divorce States--all these large local vagaries had prepared Cyrus Pym's mind for small local vagaries in a smaller country. Infinitely more remote from England than any Russian or Italian, utterly incapable of even conceiving what English conventions are, he could not see the social impossibility of the Court of Beacon. It is firmly believed by those who shared the experiment, that to the very end Pym believed in that phantasmal court and supposed it to be some Britannic institution.

Towards the synod thus somewhat at a standstill there approached through the growing haze and gloaming a short dark figure with a walk apparently founded on the imperfect repression of a negro breakdown. Something at once in the familiarity and the incongruity of this being moved Michael to even heartier outbursts of a healthy and humane flippancy.

"Why, here's little Nosey Gould," he exclaimed. "Isn't the mere sight of him enough to banish all your morbid reflections?"

"Really," replied Dr. Warner, "I really fail to see how Mr. Gould affects the question; and I once more demand--"

"Hello! what's the funeral, gents?" inquired the newcomer with the air of an uproarious umpire. "Doctor demandin' something? Always the way at a boarding-house, you know. Always lots of demand. No supply."

As delicately and impartially as he could, Michael restated his position, and indicated generally that Smith had been guilty of certain dangerous and dubious acts, and that there had even arisen an allegation that he was insane.

"Well, of course he is," said Moses Gould equably; "it don't need old 'Olmes to see that. The 'awk-like face of 'Olmes," he added with abstract relish, "showed a shide of disappointment, the sleuth-like Gould 'avin' got there before 'im."

"If he is mad," began Inglewood.

"Well," said Moses, "when a cove gets out on the tile the first night there's generally a tile loose."

"You never objected before," said Diana Duke rather stiffly, "and you're generally pretty free with your complaints."

"I don't compline of him," said Moses magnanimously, "the poor chap's 'armless enough; you might tie 'im up in the garden here and 'e'd make noises at the burglars."

"Moses," said Moon with solemn fervour, "you are the incarnation of Common Sense. You think Mr. Innocent is mad. Let me introduce you to the incarnation of Scientific Theory. He also thinks Mr. Innocent is mad.--Doctor, this is my friend Mr. Gould.--Moses, this is the celebrated Dr. Pym." The celebrated Dr. Cyrus Pym closed his eyes and bowed. He also murmured his national war-cry in a low voice, which sounded like "Pleased to meet you."

"Now you two people," said Michael cheerfully, "who both think our poor friend mad, shall jolly well go into that house over there and prove him mad. What could be more powerful than the combination of Scientific Theory with Common Sense? United you stand; divided you fall. I will not be so uncivil as to suggest that Dr. Pym has no common sense; I confine myself to recording the chronological accident that he has not shown us any so far. I take the freedom of an old friend in staking my shirt that Moses has no scientific theory. Yet against this strong coalition I am ready to appear, armed with nothing but an intuition--which is American for a guess."

"Distinguished by Mr. Gould's assistance," said Pym, opening his eyes suddenly. "I gather that though he and I are identical in primary di-agnosis there is yet

between us something that cannot be called a disagreement, something which we may perhaps call a--" He put the points of thumb and forefinger together, spreading the other fingers exquisitely in the air, and seemed to be waiting for somebody else to tell him what to say.

"Catchin' flies?" inquired the affable Moses.

"A divergence," said Dr. Pym, with a refined sigh of relief; "a divergence. Granted that the man in question is deranged, he would not necessarily be all that science requires in a homicidal maniac--"

"Has it occurred to you," observed Moon, who was leaning on the gate again, and did not turn round, "that if he were a homicidal maniac he might have killed us all here while we were talking."

Something exploded silently underneath all their minds, like sealed dynamite in some forgotten cellars. They all remembered for the first time for some hour or two that the monster of whom they were talking was standing quietly among them. They had left him in the garden like a garden statue; there might have been a dolphin coiling round his legs, or a fountain pouring out of his mouth, for all the notice they had taken of Innocent Smith. He stood with his crest of blonde, blown hair thrust somewhat forward, his fresh-coloured, rather short-sighted face looking patiently downwards at nothing in particular, his huge shoulders humped, and his hands in his trousers pockets. So far as they could guess he had not moved at all. His green coat might have been cut out of the green turf on which he stood. In his shadow Pym had expounded and Rosamund expostulated, Michael had ranted and Moses had ragged. He had remained like a thing graven; the god of the garden. A sparrow had perched on one of his heavy shoulders; and then, after correcting its costume of feathers, had flown away.

"Why," cried Michael, with a shout of laughter, "the Court of Beacon has opened-- and shut up again too. You all know now I am right. Your buried common sense has told you what my buried common sense has told me. Smith might have fired off a hundred cannons instead of a pistol, and you would still know he was harmless as I know he is harmless. Back we all go to the house and clear a room for discussion. For the High Court of Beacon, which has already arrived at its decision, is just about to begin its inquiry."

"Just a goin' to begin!" cried little Mr. Moses in an extraordinary sort of disinterested excitement, like that of an animal during music or a thunderstorm. "Follow on to the 'Igh Court of Eggs and Bacon; 'ave a kipper from the old firm! 'Is Lordship complimented Mr. Gould on the 'igh professional delicacy 'e had shown, and which was worthy of the best traditions of the Saloon Bar-- and three

of Scotch hot, miss! Oh, chase me, girls!"

The girls betraying no temptation to chase him, he went away in a sort of waddling dance of pure excitement; and had made a circuit of the garden before he reappeared, breathless but still beaming. Moon had known his man when he realized that no people presented to Moses Gould could be quite serious, even if they were quite furious. The glass doors stood open on the side nearest to Mr. Moses Gould; and as the feet of that festive idiot were evidently turned in the same direction, everybody else went that way with the unanimity of some uproarious procession. Only Diana Duke retained enough rigidity to say the thing that had been boiling at her fierce feminine lips for the last few hours. Under the shadow of tragedy she had kept it back as unsympathetic. "In that case," she said sharply, "these cabs can be sent away."

"Well, Innocent must have his bag, you know," said Mary with a smile. "I dare say the cabman would get it down for us."

"I'll get the bag," said Smith, speaking for the first time in hours; his voice sounded remote and rude, like the voice of a statue.

Those who had so long danced and disputed round his immobility were left breathless by his precipitance. With a run and spring he was out of the garden into the street; with a spring and one quivering kick he was actually on the roof of the cab. The cabman happened to be standing by the horse's head, having just removed its emptied nose-bag. Smith seemed for an instant to be rolling about on the cab's back in the embraces of his Gladstone bag. The next instant, however, he had rolled, as if by a royal luck, into the high seat behind, and with a shriek of piercing and appalling suddenness had sent the horse flying and scampering down the street.

His evanescence was so violent and swift, that this time it was all the other people who were turned into garden statues. Mr. Moses Gould, however, being ill-adapted both physically and morally for the purposes of permanent sculpture, came to life some time before the rest, and, turning to Moon, remarked, like a man starting chattily with a stranger on an omnibus, "Tile loose, eh? Cab loose anyhow." There followed a fatal silence; and then Dr. Warner said, with a sneer like a club of stone,--

"This is what comes of the Court of Beacon, Mr. Moon. You have let loose a maniac on the whole metropolis."

Beacon House stood, as has been said, at the end of a long crescent of continuous houses. The little garden that shut it in ran out into a sharp point

like a green cape pushed out into the sea of two streets. Smith and his cab shot up one side of the triangle, and certainly most of those standing inside of it never expected to see him again. At the apex, however, he turned the horse sharply round and drove with equal violence up the other side of the garden, visible to all those in the group. With a common impulse the little crowd ran across the lawn as if to stop him, but they soon had reason to duck and recoil. Even as he vanished up street for the second time, he let the big yellow bag fly from his hand, so that it fell in the centre of the garden, scattering the company like a bomb, and nearly damaging Dr. Warner's hat for the third time. Long before they had collected themselves, the cab had shot away with a shriek that went into a whisper.

"Well," said Michael Moon, with a queer note in his voice; "you may as well all go inside anyhow. We've got two relics of Mr. Smith at least; his fiancee and his trunk."

"Why do you want us to go inside?" asked Arthur Inglewood, in whose red brow and rough brown hair botheration seemed to have reached its limit.

"I want the rest to go in," said Michael in a clear voice, "because I want the whole of this garden in which to talk to you."

There was an atmosphere of irrational doubt; it was really getting colder, and a night wind had begun to wave the one or two trees in the twilight. Dr. Warner, however, spoke in a voice devoid of indecision.

"I refuse to listen to any such proposal," he said; "you have lost this ruffian, and I must find him."

"I don't ask you to listen to any proposal," answered Moon quietly; "I only ask you to listen."

He made a silencing movement with his hand, and immediately the whistling noise that had been lost in the dark streets on one side of the house could be heard from quite a new quarter on the other side. Through the night-maze of streets the noise increased with incredible rapidity, and the next moment the flying hoofs and flashing wheels had swept up to the blue-railed gate at which they had originally stood. Mr. Smith got down from his perch with an air of absent-mindedness, and coming back into the garden stood in the same elephantine attitude as before.

"Get inside! get inside!" cried Moon hilariously, with the air of one shooing a company of cats. "Come, come, be quick about it! Didn't I tell you I wanted to

talk to Inglewood?"

How they were all really driven into the house again it would have been difficult afterwards to say. They had reached the point of being exhausted with incongruities, as people at a farce are ill with laughing, and the brisk growth of the storm among the trees seemed like a final gesture of things in general. Inglewood lingered behind them, saying with a certain amicable exasperation, "I say, do you really want to speak to me?"

"I do," said Michael, "very much."

Night had come as it generally does, quicker than the twilight had seemed to promise. While the human eye still felt the sky as light gray, a very large and lustrous moon appearing abruptly above a bulk of roofs and trees, proved by contrast that the sky was already a very dark gray indeed. A drift of barren leaves across the lawn, a drift of riven clouds across the sky, seemed to be lifted on the same strong and yet laborious wind.

"Arthur," said Michael, "I began with an intuition; but now I am sure. You and I are going to defend this friend of yours before the blessed Court of Beacon, and to clear him too--clear him of both crime and lunacy. Just listen to me while I preach to you for a bit." They walked up and down the darkening garden together as Michael Moon went on.

"Can you," asked Michael, "shut your eyes and see some of those queer old hieroglyphics they stuck up on white walls in the old hot countries. How stiff they were in shape and yet how gaudy in colour. Think of some alphabet of arbitrary figures picked out in black and red, or white and green, with some old Semitic crowd of Nosey Gould's ancestors staring at it, and try to think why the people put it up at all."

Inglewood's first instinct was to think that his perplexing friend had really gone off his head at last; there seemed so reckless a flight of irrelevancy from the tropic-pictured walls he was asked to imagine to the gray, wind-swept, and somewhat chilly suburban garden in which he was actually kicking his heels. How he could be more happy in one by imagining the other he could not conceive. Both (in themselves) were unpleasant.

"Why does everybody repeat riddles," went on Moon abruptly, "even if they've forgotten the answers? Riddles are easy to remember because they are hard to guess. So were those stiff old symbols in black, red, or green easy to remember because they had been hard to guess. Their colours were plain. Their shapes were plain. Everything was plain except the meaning."

Inglewood was about to open his mouth in an amiable protest, but Moon went on, plunging quicker and quicker up and down the garden and smoking faster and faster. "Dances, too," he said; "dances were not frivolous. Dances were harder to understand than inscriptions and texts. The old dances were stiff, ceremonial, highly coloured but silent. Have you noticed anything odd about Smith?"

"Well, really," cried Inglewood, left behind in a collapse of humour, "have I noticed anything else?"

"Have you noticed this about him," asked Moon, with unshaken persistency, "that he has done so much and said so little? When first he came he talked, but in a gasping, irregular sort of way, as if he wasn't used to it. All he really did was actions--painting red flowers on black gowns or throwing yellow bags on to the grass. I tell you that big green figure is figurative-- like any green figure capering on some white Eastern wall."

"My dear Michael," cried Inglewood, in a rising irritation which increased with the rising wind, "you are getting absurdly fanciful."

"I think of what has just happened," said Michael steadily. "The man has not spoken for hours; and yet he has been speaking all the time. He fired three shots from a six-shooter and then gave it up to us, when he might have shot us dead in our boots. How could he express his trust in us better than that? He wanted to be tried by us. How could he have shown it better than by standing quite still and letting us discuss it? He wanted to show that he stood there willingly, and could escape if he liked. How could he have shown it better than by escaping in the cab and coming back again? Innocent Smith is not a madman--he is a ritualist. He wants to express himself, not with his tongue, but with his arms and legs-- with my body I thee worship, as it says in the marriage service. I begin to understand the old plays and pageants. I see why the mutes at a funeral were mute. I see why the mummers were mum. They MEANT something; and Smith means something too. All other jokes have to be noisy--like little Nosey Gould's jokes, for instance. The only silent jokes are the practical jokes. Poor Smith, properly considered, is an allegorical practical joker. What he has really done in this house has been as frantic as a war-dance, but as silent as a picture."

"I suppose you mean," said the other dubiously, "that we have got to find out what all these crimes meant, as if they were so many coloured picture-puzzles. But even supposing that they do mean something--why, Lord bless my soul!--"

Taking the turn of the garden quite naturally, he had lifted his eyes to the moon, by this time risen big and luminous, and had seen a huge, half-human figure

sitting on the garden wall. It was outlined so sharply against the moon that for the first flash it was hard to be certain even that it was human: the hunched shoulders and outstanding hair had rather the air of a colossal cat. It resembled a cat also in the fact that when first startled it sprang up and ran with easy activity along the top of the wall. As it ran, however, its heavy shoulders and small stooping head rather suggested a baboon. The instant it came within reach of a tree it made an ape-like leap and was lost in the branches. The gale, which by this time was shaking every shrub in the garden, made the identification yet more difficult, since it melted the moving limbs of the fugitive in the multitudinous moving limbs of the tree.

"Who is there?" shouted Arthur. "Who are you? Are you Innocent?"

"Not quite," answered an obscure voice among the leaves. "I cheated you once about a penknife."

The wind in the garden had gathered strength, and was throwing the tree backwards and forwards with the man in the thick of it, just as it had on the gay and golden afternoon when he had first arrived.

"But are you Smith?" asked Inglewood as in an agony.

"Very nearly," said the voice out of the tossing tree.

"But you must have some real names," shrieked Inglewood in despair. "You must call yourself something."

"Call myself something," thundered the obscure voice, shaking the tree so that all its ten thousand leaves seemed to be talking at once. "I call myself Roland Oliver Isaiah Charlemagne Arthur Hildebrand Homer Danton Michaelangelo Shakespeare Brakespeare--"

"But, manalive!" began Inglewood in exasperation.

"That's right! that's right!" came with a roar out of the rocking tree; "that's my real name." And he broke a branch, and one or two autumn leaves fluttered away across the moon.