

pair of balances.

"I want you to sit in that chair," said the magician to Flynn. "This is my House of Judgement. But I want to ask you to judge in this case; I am not qualified to judge the matter that I am about to put before you; for I have already recorded my opinion." Flynn, a little awed, obeyed with a certain diffidence.

Simon Iff stood before the altar, drew the letter from his pocket, and began to read:

"My dear sir:

"This letter is due to you, for you understand the nature of Truth.

"In your article upon the recent murder, that of my wife Sybil, you had no knowledge of what happened, for you had no facts on which to base your judgement; nor indeed was the discovery of the murderer the object of your inquiry; you confined yourself to proving not what did happen, but what could not have happened. In this limited investigation you were extraordinarily accurate.

"I have adored my wife since the day I met her; more, I have revered her with a passionate devotion as of a man to a goddess. For this exaggeration of proper feeling I am punished.

"I have always believed in her purity and fidelity, despite numerous rumors which reached my ears. But in July last I allowed myself to be tempted by an old friend, who was importunate, and justifiably so, since the honor of his own wife was involved in a way to which I need not refer more precisely.

"I therefore purchased a disguise and presented myself at the Costume Ball at Covent Garden on the 3d of July last. I soon recognized my wife, and observed her conduct closely. She danced several times with Dr. Haramzada Swamy, and they left the ball together. I followed them; I still hoped that no serious wrong was contemplated. They went up in the lift; I took the opportunity to slip upstairs, unobserved. I was just able to distinguish into which door they went. At this door I waited and listened. In ten minutes I had heard enough. The blow was crippling; I must have fainted; for the next thing I remember is that I was sitting on the floor, but alert and intent upon the dialogue. I heard first the whimpering voice of the Eurasian, punctuated with a nauseating giggle. 'It is a most unfortunate necessity, dear lady,' were his first words. She replied with a torrent of oaths and curses. She was apparently defying him, but I could not tell why. 'You see, I put the dainty little thing away,' he said, 'where you can't find it, dear lady; you surely wouldn't deprive your adorer of such an intimate souvenir. And you mustn't make a noise in the flat, must you, dear? We're so respectable here.' Again she cursed him, but in a lower voice. I had no idea she knew such words; some of them I did not know myself. 'Your husband will certainly kill you outright, or divorce you at the very least, if he finds you out; personally, I'm inclined to think he'll kill you, you know. He's such a severe type of man, not at all a ladies' man, dear, I'm afraid. So you'll give me all those pretty little toys, and you can make up a story about a robbery; I'm sure he'll believe you, you're so clever, rather like my wife in some ways.'

"I cannot describe the impression made by his little whining voice, but it made me screw up my face like one who has bitten into a sour apple. I heard the noise of clattering; evidently Sybil had thrown her jewels on the floor. 'I'll take the

rings, too,' he went on. 'It will be better for the story you'll tell him. I'm advising you in your own interests, you know.' Again the horrible little giggle. 'Such a sensible little lady!' he added, 'and now I'll get my hat and coat and leave you for an hour, so that you can dress and go home. I'm so sorry I haven't got a maid to help you.'

"By instinct, I suppose, I withdrew from the door and concealed myself beyond the elevator. Let him go out, jewels and all; my business was with my wife.

"He slipped hurriedly and stealthily out, as I could see through the gilded palings of the elevator shaft, ran down one flight of stairs and rang for the lift. The moment the machine started he began to run down the stairs again. At the same moment I strode across the landing and struck my fist upon the door. It yielded; he had left it unlatched.

"You, Mr. Iff, are probably the one person in England who can imagine — that is, in the proper sense of the word, make an image of — my state of mind. Coincident were, firstly, a blaze of wrath at her treachery of a life time; and, secondly, a habit of protection. She was an infamous woman who had destroyed the life of a good man; and she was also a helpless woman who had been blackmailed and robbed by a man more wretched and infamous than she.

"I honestly believe that my brain had become dull to the former of these impressions; that my main conscious idea was to comfort. But I had not counted on the effect of the scene itself. Some people, as you know better than anybody, visualize everything; some don't. Tell one man to shut his eyes; then whisper 'church'; he will see twenty familiar churches in a moment just as if they were in front of him. I am not one of these men. When my eyes are closed I see nothing. So, though I had the fact of adultery in my mind, I had nowise staged the act in the theatre of my mind. Therefore the opening of the door was a new shock. Sybil was standing, clad only in a light garment, and that torn across; her hair disheveled, her eyes bloodshot; the paint and powder on her face — that was itself a revelation of infamy to me.

"The divan was in a state of disorder; everything testified with open mouth to the atrocity perpetrated against me. I believe that doctors would prove — I believe that you yourself would agree — that I became totally insane for the moment. This is probably then true; yet what I know of it is this, that I lost all sense of anger or distress. She said one word, a word of extreme filth, at seeing me. I simply stooped, picked up the poker, and struck her down. I had no idea that I was killing a woman; so far I will agree with you; my act was entirely reflex, like a knee-jerk, or as one brushes a fly from one's head without consciousness of its presence.

"Still without true volition, I went out and closed the door. The interview was at an end. I walked down the stairs; Daniels, preoccupied with predatory ideas, apparently failed to see me at all.

"Why did I not explain this a week or two ago? Sir, I was desirous that a certain half-breed cur should meet with his desert.

"This done, I am at your service. I shall not kill myself; you may hand my letter to the Public Prosecutor; I hope at least to go to the gallows like a man.

"REGINALD-BROOKE HUNTER."

Jack Flynn broke the long silence which followed the read-