The Red Triangle

BEING SOME FURTHER CHRONICLES OF MARTIN HEWITT, INVESTIGATOR

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VI

THE ADVENTURE OF CHANNEL MARSH

I

MAYES'S stronghold was taken, but Mayes had escaped us once again; the cage was in our hands, but the bird had flown.

Martin Hewitt, however, had his plans, as he was soon to show. The recovery of the Admiralty code was a good stroke, and was a satisfactory ending to an important case; but that, and even the capture of the curious premises behind the Barbican, made but a halting-place in his pursuit of Mayes, and as soon as I was in some degree recovered from my struggle, and the captured place had been hastily searched, the chase was resumed without a moment's delay; and that adventure was entered upon which saw the end of the Red Triangle and its unholy doings—which came terribly near to seeing the end of Hewitt himself, in fact.

I have not described the den near the Barbican with any great particularity, but I have said that the office, accessible from the open street, was only connected with the hidden premises behind—

premises, as was afterwards discovered, held under a separate tenancy—by an easily-shifted ladder. It was in these hidden premises, approached by the maze of courts and the stable-yard, that the main evidences of Mayes's way of life were observable. The passage where my wrist had been locked to the wall, and the room or cellar in which Plummer had been confined, were the only parts of the lower premises fitted for the detention of prisoners, with the exception of one very low and wholly unlighted cellar, entered by a trap-door and a very steep flight of brick steps. This place smelt horribly faint and stagnant; but it produced on my mind, both then and when I examined it later, an effect of horror and repulsion more than could be accounted for by the smell alone. Of its history nothing was discovered, and perhaps the feeling (though others experienced it as well as myself) was the effect of mere fancy; but I have never got rid of a conviction that that black cellar, or rather pit—for it was very narrow—had been the instrument of crimes never to be told.

There were one or two rooms sparely furnished—one as a bedroom, a larger room, with a long table, a sofa, and several chairs; and in one of the smaller rooms was found a stove, ladles and crucibles for

the melting down of metals—gold or silver. It was in this same room also that the table stood, in the drawers of which were found papers, letters and formulæ—things giving more than a hint of the use to which Mayes had put his friendship with Mr. Jacob Mason, for of every possible manner and detail in which science—more particularly the science of chemistry—could aid in the commission of crime, there were notes in these same drawers.

But most of these things were observed in detail later. The thing that set us once more on the trail of Mayes, that very night and that very hour, was found in the isolated office facing the street. It was a cheque-book, quite full of unused cheques.

"This cheque-book," said Hewitt to Inspector Plummer and myself, "was in the drawer below that in which we discovered the Admiralty code. The Eastern Consolidated is the bank, as you see—Upper Holloway branch. Now we must follow this at once, before waiting to search any further. There may be something more important as a clue, or there may not, but at any rate, while we are looking for it we are losing time. This may bring us to him at once."

"You mean that he may have some address in

Holloway," suggested Plummer, "and we may get it from the bank?"

"There's that possibility, and another," Hewitt answered. "He has had to bolt without warning or preparation, with nothing but the clothes he ran in —probably very little money. Money he will want at once, and he would rather not wait till the morning to get it; if he can get it at once it will mean thirteen or fourteen hours' start at least. More, he will know very well that this place will be searched, that this cheque-book will be discovered soon enough, and that consequently the bank will be watched. This is what he will do—what he is doing now, very likely. He will knock up the resident manager of that bank and try to get a cheque cashed to-night. I don't think that can be done; in which case he will probably try to make some arrangement to have money sent him. Either way, we must be at the Upper Holloway branch of the Eastern Consolidated Bank as soon as a hansom can get us there."

Thus it was settled, and Hewitt and Plummer went off at once, leaving Plummer's men, with the City police, in charge of the raided premises; leaving some of them also to make inquiries in the neighbourhood. Mr. Victor Peytral had shown himself anxious to accompany Hewitt and Plummer, but

had been dissuaded by Hewitt. I guessed that Hewitt feared that some hasty indiscretion on the part of this terribly wronged man might endanger his plans. Peytral, however, seemed tractable enough, and left immediately after them; he had business, he said, which he expected would occupy him for a day or two, and when it was completed he would see us again.

As for myself I only remained long enough to ascertain that the police could find no trace of the direction of Mayes's flight in the immediate neighbourhood. They had little to aid them. He had gone without a hat, and his dress was in some degree disordered by his struggle with me; but the latter defect he might easily have remedied in the courts as he ran, and they could gather no tidings of a hatless man. So I took my way to my office, my wrist growing stiffer and more painful as I went, so that I was not sorry to arrange for another member of the staff to take my duty for the night, and to get to bed a few hours earlier than usual, after the day's fatigue and excitement.

II

GOING to bed uncommonly soon I woke correspondingly early in the morning; but I was no earlier than Hewitt, who was at my door, in fact, ere my breakfast was well begun.

"Well," I asked eagerly, almost before my friend had entered, "have you got him at last?"

"Not yet," Hewitt answered. "But he did exactly as I had expected. Plummer and I knocked up the bank manager, who lives over the premises at the Upper Holloway branch. He was a very decent fellow—rather young for the post—but he was naturally a bit surprised, possibly irritated, at being bothered by one and another after office hours. I showed him the cheque-book, and asked him if it belonged to any customer of his.

"'Why, yes,' he said, examining the numbers, 'I remember this because it is the first of a new series, and we issued it the day before yesterday to a new customer. Where did you get it?'

"'We are very anxious to see that customer,' I said. 'Has he been here this evening?'

"The manager seemed a trifle surprised, but answered readily enough. 'Yes,' he said, 'he was here not an hour ago.'

"'Wanting to draw money?' I asked. But that the manager wouldn't tell me, of course. So that it was necessary for Plummer to step in and reveal the facts that this was a police matter, and that he was a detective-inspector. That made some difference. The manager told us that our man had opened an account at the bank only two days before; and I'd like you to guess what name he had opened it under."

"Not Myatt?" I said. "After the chase——"

"No, not Myatt."

"Catherton Hunt?"

"No, nor Catherton Hunt. He had opened it in the name of Mayes!"

"What! his actual name?"

"His actual original name, according to Peytral. The account was transferred, it would seem, from another bank; and I have an idea we may find that he has been shifting his money about from one bank to another as safety suggested, using his real name with it. You remember we could find no trace of a banking account when the police raided and

ransacked Calton Lodge after Mason was killed? Quite probably he has had small current accounts in other names at various times to aid in his schemes, but his main account has always stood in his real name; and by that, you see, we get some confirmation of Peytral's story. Well, as I say, the account was opened in the name of Mayes, and the cheque-book was issued which we discovered last night. The Upper Holloway branch saw no more of its customer till yesterday evening, long after hours, when he drove up in a hansom."

"Oh," I said, "in a hansom, was it? The men left behind could get no news of him."

"Yes, we ascertained that last night; we called back, of course, the last thing. I expect he got the first cab visible and drove off to a hatter's a fair distance away, and then on to the bank. At any rate, he knocked up the manager and told him that he had a sudden need for money that very night; could he have some?

"The manager told him it would be impossible. Even if he had been willing to do it, against all regulations, it would still be impossible. For the strong-room and every cash receptacle in it was locked with two separate locks with different keys, and though he had one of these keys himself, it was useless without the other, which was in the posses-

sion of his second in command, who lived some distance out of London. This course is the usual precaution adopted in branch banks of this sort; opening and closing, morning and evening, have to be done by chief and assistant together. And I tell you, Brett, I believe that it was only the being informed of this fact that prevented Mayes from trying some of his hypnotic tricks on the bank manager; in which case there would have been a big bank robbery—perhaps something worse in addition."

"Murder?"

"Murder with a tourniquet, perhaps—perhaps with some other weapon; but, at any rate, probably with the Red Triangle. You know, of course—indeed I told you, I think—that in most cases—not all—it is necessary to get the subject's consent to the *first* exercise of hypnotism on him. I told you also it is possible for the practised hypnotist, while the subject is under the influence of the *first* experiment, to suggest to him a certain word or formula, or even a silent sign, which shall bring him under the influence at any other time, whenever the hypnotist chooses to repeat it—just as must have been done with Mr. Telfer, in the case of the Admiralty code. The first suggestion would not be the difficult thing it might seem—it would only require

a little time and persuasion. Nothing would be said about hypnotism, of course; perhaps something about a little physical experiment, or the like, and then in a moment or two the subject would be in this creature's power for ever. Remember the little 'ceremony of initiation' that the scoundrel attempted to persuade you to submit to! That meant hypnotism —perhaps death.

"But this is mere speculation. Mayes found that the keys on the premises were not enough to release his money, even if the strict rules of the bank had permitted the cashing of a cheque out of hours. But the manager suggested that perhaps some neighbouring tradesman would exchange cash for a cheque, and, with the view of obliging the new customer, went with him as far as the shop of Mr. Isaac Trenaman, a grocer and cheesemonger with a rather large shop at the corner of the road. Mr. Trenaman, introduced and assured by the manager, was willing to give as much cash as he could find in the till against Mr. Mayes's cheque, and did so to the extent of twenty-seven pounds, a cheque for which sum was duly drawn on one of the tradesman's own cheque forms, and left with him. This done, the bank's new customer took himself off, with thanks and apologies; carrying with him, however, two blank cheque forms from Mr. Trena-

man's book, the pennies for which he punctiliously paid over the counter. Having no cheque forms with him, he explained, he might find them useful if he could come across some friend who could provide the cash he wished to use that night. And having completed this business so far, this charming new customer of the bank made off into the night."

"And is that all you know of his movements?"

"Yes, as yet. He seems to have made no very definite excuse to the manager for wanting the money in such a hurry—just said something had occurred which made cash necessary, and was very polite and apologetic, generally. The manager formed a notion that it must be for some gambling purpose—he fancied that Mayes said something distantly alluding to that, but wasn't sure."

"Did you ask about the address given to the bank?"

"Of course; but there we gained nothing. The manager couldn't remember it exactly, and the books, of course, were locked up. But we know it already—for what the manager *could* remember was that it was an office address, and somewhere near Barbican! So that we are back at the Barbican den again, where I am going now, with Plummer, to give a day to a minute investigation of the whole place. Meanwhile a watch is being set at the bank in Holloway."

"Do you expect him back there, then?"

"Hardly. You see he knows that by this time we must have found his cheque-book, and will be on the watch. But there is just a chance—a very remote one—that he may send a message; perhaps send somebody to cash a cheque. Though I don't expect it, for he is no fool—he is, indeed, a sort of genius—and that would be a mistake, I think. Still, he is bold, and that is where his money is, and he may make a dash at it. So a couple of Plummer's men are to be waiting there, this morning, in the manager's office, and if anybody comes from Mayes he will be detained. Perhaps you would like to be with them? You can't be of much use with me, and the job will be dull. But there you *may* have a chance of excitement, and you will be useful to come and report if anything does happen. Why, you may even bag Mayes himself!"

"Of course—I'll go anywhere you please. They told you last night, I suppose, that Peytral had business, and had gone off?"

"Yes, and I'm not sorry. He is too dangerous a man to have about us, with his hot blood and the terrible injuries he keeps in memory. As likely as not, if we get Mayes, we should next have to collar Peytral for shooting him, or something. So I'm not sorry he is out of it for a bit. But can you start

now? Plummer is in my office and the two men are in a cab outside. The bank opens at nine, and that is in Upper Holloway."

I seized my hat and made ready.

"You should keep your eyes open," Hewitt hinted, "before you get to the bank and when you leave, as well as while you're there. Do you remember how poor Mason was watched? Well, there is probably some watching going on now. Last night, on our way to the bank and back, I believe Plummer and I were watched pretty closely."

III

PLUMMER'S two plain-clothes men and I reached the neighbourhood of the bank with a quarter of an hour to spare, or rather more. We dismissed the cab at some little distance from the spot, and approached singly, so that it was not difficult for us to slip in separately among the dozen or fifteen clerks as they arrived. We passed directly into the manager's room, the door of which opened into the space left for the public before the counter. From this room the whole of the outer office was visible through the glass of the partition. The manager, Mr. Blockley, a quick, intelligent man of thirty-six or so, gave us chairs and pointed out how best we could watch the counter without ourselves being observed.

"If a letter is sent," he said, "it will be brought here to me, of course, and I will bring the messenger in. If a cheque is presented from Mayes, I have told the cashier to slide that big ledger off his desk accidentally with his elbow. That will

be your signal, and then you can do whatever you think proper. I don't think I can do any more than that."

We took our positions and waited. I felt pretty sure that if Mayes sent at all it would be early, for obvious reasons. And I was right, for the very first customer was our man.

He stepped in briskly scarcely a minute after the manager had ceased speaking, and I remembered having seen him waiting at the street corner as I came along. He was a well-dressed, smart enough looking man, in frock coat and tall hat. He took a letter-case from his pocket, picked out a cheque from the rest of the papers in it, and passed it under the wire grille of the counter.

The cashier took it, turned it over, and shifted mechanically to post the amount in the book on his desk. As he did so his elbow touched the heavy ledger which the manager had pointed out to us, and it fell with a crash. The cashier calmly put his pen behind his ear, and stooped to pick up the book, but even as he did it the two Scotland Yard men were out before the counter, and had sidled up to the stranger, one on each side.

"May we see that cheque, if you please?" asked

one, and the cashier turned its face toward him. "Ah, just so ; a hundred pounds—Mayes. We must just trouble you to come with us, if you please. There is some explanation wanted about that cheque."

I had followed the two men from the manager's room, and now I saw that while one had laid his hand on the stranger's shoulder the other had taken him by the opposite arm. "Why," said the former, looking into his face, "it's Broady Sims!"

"All right," the man growled resignedly. "It's a cop. I'll go quiet."

But as he spoke I saw the free hand steal out behind him and pitch away a crumpled fragment of paper. One of the policemen saw it too, followed it with his eyes, and saw me snatch it up.

"That's right, sir," he said, "take care of that ; and we'll have a cab, in case anything else drops accidentally. It's just a turning over, Broady, that's what it is."

I spread out the piece of paper, and was astonished to find inscribed on it just such another series of figures, in groups of eight, as was found in the cypher message in the Case of the Lever Key.

Here was a great find—a secret message as clear

to me as to Mayes himself, and as likely as not the scrap of paper that would hang him ! I took one of the plain-clothes men aside while the other kept his hold of Broady Sims.

"This is very important," I said. "It is a cypher message which Mr. Hewitt can read—or I, myself, in fact, with a little time. Must you take it with you ? If so, I'll make a copy now."

"Well, sir, we're responsible, you see," the man said, "so I think we must take it ; so perhaps you'd better make a copy, as you suggest."

"Very well," I said, "that is done in a few seconds. You can take your man off, and I will go direct to Mr. Hewitt and Inspector Plummer with the copy." And with that I made the copy, which read thus :—

23, 19, 15, 1, 9, 14, 9, 2 ; 20, 8, 1, 20, 14, 14, 20, 8; 14, 5, 12, 4, 9, 7, 5, 14; 3, 8, 18, 23, 0, 14, 1, 8 ; 22, 9, 6, 1, 18, 3, 5, 1 ; 19, 14, 15, 21, 9, 0, 20, 12 ; 18, 12, 21, 1, 6, 23, 20, 12 ; 9, 18, 15, 5, 18, 13, 12, 20.

It struck me to ask the manager if the cheque just presented were one of those procured from

Mr. Trenaman the night before, and I found that it was. Then I left the policemen with their prisoner and made for the nearest cab-rank. This cypher message, no doubt conveying Mayes's instructions to the man just captured, was probably of the utmost importance, and Hewitt must see it at once; and as the cab ambled along towards Barbican I busied myself in deciphering the figures according to the plan of the knight's move in chess, as Hewitt had explained to me. I could only see two noughts among the numbers, so plainly it was a longer message than the one then deciphered—one of sixty-two letters, in fact. I turned the figures into the letters corresponding in the alphabet, *a* for 1, *b* for 2, and so on, as Hewitt had done, and I arranged these letters in the squares of a roughly drawn chessboard, so that they stood thus :—

w	*s*	*o*	*a*	*i*	*n*	*i*	*b*
t	*h*	*a*	*t*	*n*	*n*	*t*	*h*
n	*e*	*l*	*d*	*i*	*g*	*e*	*n*
c	*h*	*r*	*w*	o	*n*	*a*	*h*
v	*i*	*f*	*a*	*r*	*c*	*e*	*a*
s	*n*	*o*	*u*	*i*	o	*t*	*l*
r	*l*	*u*	*a*	*f*	*w*	*t*	*l*
i	*r*	*o*	*e*	*r*	*m*	*l*	*t*

The letters thus set out, to read off the message was a simple task enough, in view of the key Hewitt had given me. I began, as in the case of the Lever Key message, at the right-hand top corner, and taking the knight's move from *b* to *e* in the last square but one of the third line, thence to *a* at the end of the fifth line, and so to *t* in the seventh line, and from that to *r* (fifth square in bottom line), *u* in seventh line and so on, in the order shown by the Lever Key message, a copy of which I kept as a curiosity in my pocket-book. So I read the message through, and I set it down thus :—

Be at ruin Channel Marsh to-night twelve ; wait in hall for instruc. Word final.

The general meaning of this seemed clear enough. The man whom the policeman had recognised as Broady Sims was to be at some spot—a ruined building, it would seem—in a place called Channel Marsh, at midnight, there to wait in the hall for instructions; no doubt for instructions where to take the hundred pounds he was to have got from the bank. "Word final" was not so clear, though I judged—and I think rightly—that it meant that the word "final" was to be used as a pass-word by which the two messengers should know each other.

I was almost at my destination, and was cogitating the message and its meaning, when the cab checked at some traffic in Barbican, just by the "Compasses" public-house, and Mr. Victor Peytral hailed me and climbed on the step of the cab.

"I was just going to see if Mr. Hewitt was at the place," he said, "and if so to ask him for news. But I am rather in a hurry, and perhaps you can tell me?"

"We are on the track, I think," I answered, "and I have just come across this, which I am taking to Hewitt," and with that I showed him my translation of the cypher, and gave him its history in half a dozen sentences.

"That's good," Peytral answered. "I don't know

Channel Marsh, do you? But probably Mr. Hewitt does. I won't keep you any longer—I see you're hurrying. But I hope to see you again before long."

He dropped off the step and disappeared, and the cab went on round the corner by the "Compasses."

I found Hewitt and Plummer in the office where, on pretence of bookbindery, I had first seen Mayes face to face the day before. They were near the completion of their examination of this office and all its contents, and soon would begin as systematically on the premises behind. I gave Hewitt my copy of the cypher message, and my translation, with an exact account of how it had come into my possession.

Martin Hewitt studied the message for a minute or two, and then relapsed into grave thought. So he sat for some little time, while Plummer left the room by the window and descended the ladder to speak with his men on guard below.

Presently Hewitt looked up and said: "Brett, this message is most important—probably as important as you suppose it to be. But at the same time I believe you have made a great mistake about it."

"But I haven't misread it, have I? Is there any other way——"

"No, you haven't misread it; you've read every word as it was intended to be read. But it is a very different thing from what you suppose it to be."

"What is it, then?"

Martin Hewitt put the paper on the table and looked keenly in my face. "It is a trap," he said. "It is a trap to catch *me*—unless I flatter myself unduly."

I could not understand. "A trap?" I repeated. "But how?"

"Why should Mayes need to send his confederate instructions by written note? We know the nature of his hold over his subordinates, and we know that it means personal communication. Also, the cheque was in Mayes's own hands last night. More, Mayes knows very well that I have read that cypher—has known it for some time; otherwise how could we have discovered the bonds in the case of the Lever Key? Also, Mayes knows that we have his cheque-book and know his bank. Didn't I assure you we were watched last night? I believe he knows all we have done. In such circumstances he might risk his jackal's liberty by sending him on the desperate chance of cashing a cheque, but, knowing the risk, he would never have let him come with information on him. And least of all would he have let him come carrying a vital secret written in that very

cypher which he knows I read many weeks ago. And then see how that message, instead of being concealed, was positively brought to your notice! That man Broady Sims is a cunning rascal, and the police know him of old as a skilful swindler and bill-forger. A man like that doesn't get rid of a compromising scrap of paper by trundling it out under your nose just at the moment he is arrested, when the attention of everybody is directed to him; no, he would wait his opportunity, and then he would probably slip it into his mouth and swallow it. As it is, he would seem to have succeeded in dropping this paper full in your sight, with an elaborate pretence of secrecy. Now this is what has been done, Brett. That man has been sent to cash a cheque, with very little hope of success, or none, because the first move that Mayes would anticipate on our part would be the watching for him and his cheques at the bank in Upper Holloway. If by any chance the cheques had been cashed, well and good, no harm would have been done, and then Mayes could have gone on to arrange for drawing the rest of his balance—could probably have quite safely come himself to draw it. But if on the other hand, as he fully anticipated, Sims was arrested, what then? Nothing was lost but a penny cheque-form, and even Sims—though Mayes would

care nothing about that—could only be searched and then released, for the cheque was perfectly genuine, and there was no charge against him. But since he would certainly be searched, that cypher note was given him, with instructions to make a conspicuous show of attempting to get rid of it. Now that note was written in a cypher which Mayes knew was as plain as print—to whom? To *me*. I am on his trail, and this note is deliberately flung in my way, open as the day, but with every appearance of secrecy. I am his dangerous enemy, and he knows it—as he told you, in fact, yesterday. If he can clear me away, he can take breath and make himself safe. The purpose of this note is to induce me to go, alone, to this place on Channel Marsh to-night at twelve, in the hope of learning where to find Mayes. There I am to be got rid of—murdered in some way, for which preparation will be made. Mayes judges my character pretty well. He knows that, in such circumstances as he represents, Sims being kept away from his appointment, I should certainly go and take his place, and use his password, to learn what I could. And, Brett, *that is precisely what I shall do!*"

"What? You will go?" I exclaimed. "But you mustn't—the danger! We'd better both go together."

Hewitt smiled. "Why not forty of us?" he said. "No. Here is a chance of bagging our man, for, however I am to be arranged for—whether by shot, steel, or the tourniquet, I make no doubt it is Mayes himself who is to do it. You shall come, however, you and Plummer at least. But we will not go in a bunch—you shall follow me and watch, ready to help when needful. This Channel Marsh is an empty, dark space between two channels of the Lea. It is among the Hackney Marshes, lying between Stratford and Homerton, and I fancy there is a deserted house there, though I can't remember ever having seen it. Do you know it?"

"No; not in the least."

"Well, I must reconnoitre to-day, and that with a lot of care. I think I told you I was convinced of being watched, and that is a thing you can't prevent in a place like London, if it is skilfully done. Now, Brett, you have done very well this morning. If you want to be on the scene of action to-night at twelve, you must get leave from your editor, mustn't you? How's your wrist?"

It was still extremely stiff, and I told Hewitt that I doubted my ability to hold a pen for two or three days.

"Very well, then; get off and convey your excuses as soon as you please. I shall have a

talk with Plummer, and then I shall take a few hours to myself, by myself, in somebody else's clothes. Be in your rooms all the evening, for you may expect a message."

IV

It was at a little past nine in the evening that I next saw Hewitt. He came into my rooms in an incongruous get-up. He wore corduroy trousers, a very dirty striped jersey, a particularly greasy old jacket, and a twisted neckcloth; but over all was an excellent overcoat, and on his head a tall hat of high polish.

"Brought to me by Kerrett," he said, in explanation of the hat and overcoat. "He's been waiting with them for a long time in a court by Milford Lane. A good hat and overcoat will cover anything, and I preferred to enter this building in my own character. I've been wearing that this afternoon," and he pulled out of his pocket an old peaked cap with ear-pieces tied over the top.

"You mustn't bring your best clothes," he went on, "or you'll spoil them scrambling about boats and groping in ditches. I have done my ditch-groping for the day, and I'm going to change. You had

best be putting on older things while I get into newer."

"What sort of place is this Channel Marsh?" I asked.

"Well, I should think there must be a great many better places to spend a night in. It must be the dreariest, wettest flat within many miles of London, and I should like to see the portrait of the man who had the idea of building a house there. For a house there is, or rather the ruins of it —deserted for years, and half carried away by rats and people who wanted slates and firewood and water pipes."

"Is that the place where you intend waiting to-night?"

"It is. I haven't examined it nearly so closely as I should like, for fear of raising a scare. Channel Marsh is almost an island, with a narrow neck of an entrance at each end. A foot-track runs the whole length, and a person in the ruined house can easily see anybody entering the Marsh from either end. For that reason I reconnoitred from a boat —the boat you will go in to-night. I think it is the very dirtiest old tub I ever saw, so that it suited my rig out. I discovered it at a wharf some little way down the river, and I paid a shilling for the hire of it. Channel Marsh is banked a bit on one

side, and I crept up under cover of the bank. I learned very little, beyond the general lie of the land, because I was so mighty cautious. I judged it better to be content with half an examination, rather than drive away the game. And even as it is I've an idea I have been seen. I lay up among some reeds till dark, but after that I am *sure* there was somebody on the Marsh—and skulking, too, like me. So after waiting and scouting for a little I gave it up and paddled quietly back."

"But look here, Hewitt," I said, "this seems a bit mad. Why go and risk yourself as you talk of doing? You believe Mayes will be there, at the ruin, or will come there at twelve. Very well, then, why can't the police send enough men to surround the place and capture him for certain?"

Hewitt smiled and shook his head. "My dear Brett," he said, "you haven't seen the place, and I have. It will be hard enough job for you and Plummer to get near the spot unobserved, guided by a man who knows every inch. A trampling crowd of policemen would have as much chance as a herd of elephants, and on such light nights as we are having now they would be seen a mile off. And who knows what scouts he may have out? No, as I say, it will be a great piece of luck if you get through unobserved as it is, and even now I'm not perfectly

certain that I couldn't do best alone. However, arrangements are made now, and you are coming, three of you."

"Then what are the arrangements?" I asked.

"Just these. You are to leave here first. Make the best of your way to Mile End Gate, where an old inn stands in the middle of the road. Go to the corner of the turning opposite this, at the south side of the road. At eleven o'clock a four-wheeler will drive up, with Plummer and one of his men in it. The man is one who knows all the geography of Channel Marsh, and he also knows exactly where to find the boat I used to-day. You will drive to a little way beyond Bow Bridge, and then Plummer's man will lead you to the boat. You had better scull and leave the others to look out. They will know what to do. You will pull along to a place where you can watch till you see me coming on to the Marsh by the path. As soon as you see me you will slip quietly along to a place the policeman will show you, close to the ruin, and watch again. That's all. I don't know whether or not you think it worth while to take a pistol. I certainly shall; but then I'm most likely to want it. Plummer will have one."

I thought it well worth while, and I took my regulation "Webley"—a relic of my old Volunteer

captaincy. Then, by way of the underground railway, I gained the neighbourhood of Mile End, and interested myself about its back streets till the time approached to look for Plummer's cab.

Plummer was more than punctual—indeed, he was two or three minutes before his time. The cab drew near the kerb and scarcely stopped, so quickly did I scramble in.

"Good," said Plummer; "we're well ahead of time. Mr. Hewitt quite right?"

"Yes," I said. "I left him so an hour and a half ago at his office." And we sat silent while the cab rattled and rumbled over the stony road to Bow Bridge, and the shopkeepers on the way put up their shutters and extinguished their lights.

Bow Bridge was reached and passed, and presently we stopped the cab and alighted. Here Styles, Plummer's man, took the lead, and a little way farther along the road we turned into a dark and muddy lane on the left. We floundered through this for some hundred and fifty yards or so, and then suddenly drew in at an opening on the right. Here we stood for a few moments while our guide groped his way down toward the muddy water we could smell, rather than see, a little way before us.

There were a few broken steps and a broad black thing which was the boat. We got into it as

silently as we could manage, and cast off. It was a clumsy, broad-beamed, leaky old conveyance, and that it was as dirty as Hewitt had described it I could feel as I groped for the sculls and got them out. The night was light and dark by turns—changing with the clouds. We shipped the rudder, and Styles steered, or I should probably have run ashore more than once, for the banks were not always distinct, and the channel was narrow and dark. We passed the black forms of several factories with tall chimneys, and then drew out among the Marshes, flat and grey, with wisps of mist lying here and there. So we went in silence for a while, till at last we drew in against the bank on the left and laid hold by a post at a landing-place.

"This is the Channel Marsh," whispered Styles, as we climbed cautiously ashore. "We can't see the house very well from here, but there's where Mr. Hewitt will come through."

Looking over the top of the low bank, we could discern a path which traversed the length of the marsh, entering it by a broken gate at a neck of land which we must have passed on our way. Here we crouched and waited. We had heard the half-hour struck on some distant clock soon after entering the boat, and now we waited anxiously for the

three-quarters. So long did the time seem to my excited perceptions that I had quite decided that the clock must have stopped, or, at any rate, did not chime quarters, when at last the strokes came, distant and plaintive, over the misty flats.

"A quarter of an hour," Plummer remarked. "He won't be a minute late, nor a minute too early, from what I know of him. How long will it take him from that gate to the ruin?"

"Eight or nine minutes, good," Styles answered.

"Then we shall see him in seven minutes or six minutes, as the case may be," Plummer rejoined in the same low tones.

Slowly the minutes dragged, with not a sound about us save the sucking and lapping of the muddy river and the occasional flop of a water-rat. The dark clouds were now fewer, and the moon was high and only partially obscured by the thinner clouds that traversed its face. More than once I fancied a sound from the direction of the ruin, and then I doubted my fancy; when at last there was a sound indeed, but from the opposite direction, and in a moment we saw Hewitt, muffled close about the neck, walking briskly up the path.

We regained the boat with all possible speed and silence, and I pulled my best, regardless of my stiff wrist. During our watch I had had time to perceive

the wisdom of the arrangements which had been made. We had been watching from a place fairly out of sight from the ruin, yet sufficiently near it to be able to reach its neighbourhood before Hewitt; and certainly it was better to approach the actual spot at the same time as Hewitt himself, for then, if he were being watched for, the attention of the watcher would be diverted from us.

Presently we reached the reed-bed that Hewitt had spoken of, and I could see a sort of little creek or inlet. Here I ceased to pull, and Styles cautiously punted us into the creek with one of the sculls. The boat grounded noiselessly in the mud, and we crept ashore one at a time through mud and sedge.

The creek was edged with a bank of rough, broken ground, grown with coarse grass and bramble, and as we peeped over this bank the ruined house stood before us—so near as to startle me by its proximity. It must have been a large house originally—if, indeed, it was ever completed. Now it stood roofless, dismantled, and windowless, and in many places whole rods of brickwork had fallen and now littered the ground about. The black gap of the front door stood plain to see, with a short flight of broken steps before it, and by the side of these a thick timber shore supported the front wall. It struck me then

that the ruin was perhaps largely due to a failure of the marshy foundation.

The place seemed silent and empty. Hewitt's footsteps were now plain to hear, and presently he appeared, walking briskly as before. He could not see us, and did not look for us, but made directly for the broken steps. He mounted these, paused on the topmost, and struck a match. It seemed a rather large hall, and I caught a momentary glimpse of bare rafters and plasterless wall. Then the match went out and Hewitt stepped within.

Almost on the instant there came a loud jar, and a noise of falling bricks; and then, in the same instant of time I heard a terrific crash, and saw Hewitt leap out at the front door—leap out, as it seemed, from a cloud of dust and splinters.

I sprang to my feet, but Plummer pulled me down again. "Steady!" he said, "lie low! He isn't hurt. Wait and see before we show ourselves."

It seemed that the floor above had fallen on the spot where Hewitt had been standing. He had alighted from his leap on hands and knees, but now stood facing the house, revolver in hand, watching.

There was a moment's pause, a sound of movement from the upper part of the ruin, another quiet moment, and then a bang and a flash from high on the wall to the right. Hewitt sprang to shelter behind

the heavy shore, and another shot followed him, scoring a white line across the thick timber.

Plummer was up, and Styles and I were after him.

"There he is!" cried Plummer, "up on the coping!" I pulled out my own pistol.

"Don't shoot!" cried Hewitt. "We'll take him alive!"

Far to the right, on the topmost coping of the front wall, I could see a crouching figure. I saw it rise to its knees, and once more raise an arm to take aim at Hewitt; and then, with a sudden cry, another human figure appeared from behind the coping and sprang upon the first. There was a moment of struggle, and then the rotten coping crumbled, and down, down, came bricks and men together.

I sickened. I can only explain my feeling by saying that never before had I seen anything that seemed so long in falling as those two men. And then with a horrid crash they struck the broken ground, and the pistol fired again with the shock.

We reached them in a dozen strides, and turned them over, limp, oozing, and lifeless. And then we saw that one was Mayes, and the other—Victor Peytral!

We kept no silence now, but Plummer blew his whistle loud and long, and I fired my revolver into the air, chamber after chamber. Styles started off at

a run along the path towards the town lights, to fetch what aid he might.

But even then we had doubt if any aid would avail Mayes. He was the under man in the fall, and he had dropped across a little heap of bricks. He now lay unconscious, breathing heavily, with a terrible wound at the back of the head, and Hewitt foretold—and rightly—that when the doctor did come he would find a broken spine. Peytral, on the other hand, though unconscious, showed no sign of injury, and just before the doctor came sighed heavily and turned on his side.

First there came policemen, and then in a little time a hastily dressed surgeon, and after him an ambulance. Mayes was carried off to hospital, but with a good deal of rubbing and a little brandy, Peytral came round well enough to be helped over the Marshes to a cab.

The trap which had been laid for Hewitt was simple, but terribly effective. The floor above the hall—loose and broken everywhere—was supported on rafters, and the rafters were crossed underneath and supported at the centre by a stout beam. The rafters had been sawn through at both ends, and the rotten floor had been piled high with broken brick and stone to a weight of a ton or more. The end of a loose beam had been wedged obliquely under the

end of the one timber now supporting the whole weight, so that a pull on the opposite end of this long lever would force away the bricks on which the beam rested and let the whole weight fall. It was the jar of the beam and the fall of the first few loose bricks that had so far warned Hewitt as to enable him to leap from under the floor almost as it fell.

Peytral's sudden appearance, when we had time to reflect on it, gave us a suspicion as to some at least of the espionage to which Hewitt had been subjected—a suspicion confirmed, later, by Peytral himself after his recovery from the shock of the fall. For fresh news of his enemy had re-awakened all his passion, and since he alone could not find him, he was willing enough to let Hewitt do the tracking down, if only he himself might clutch Mayes's throat in the end. This explained the "business" that had called him away after the Barbican stronghold had been captured ; finding both Hewitt and Plummer somewhat uncommunicative, and himself somewhat "out of it," he had drawn off, and had followed Hewitt's every movement, confident that he would be led to his old enemy at last. What I had told him of the cypher message had led him to hunt out Channel Marsh in the afternoon, and to return at midnight. He, of course, regarded the message, as I did myself at the time, as a perfectly

genuine instruction from Mayes to Sims, and he came to the rendezvous wholly in ignorance as to what Hewitt was doing, and with no better hope than that he might hear something that would lead him in the direction of Mayes. He had entered the marsh after dark from the upper end, and had lain concealed by the other channel till near midnight; then he had crept to the rear of the ruin and climbed to where an opening seemed to offer a good chance of hearing what might pass in the hall. He had heard Hewitt approach from the front, and the crash that followed. The rest we had seen.

V

MAYES never recovered consciousness, and was dead when we visited the hospital the day after; both skull and spine were badly fractured. And the very last we saw of the Red Triangle was the implement with which it had been impressed, which was found in his pocket.

It was a small triangular prism of what I believe is called soapstone. It was perhaps four inches long, and the face at the end corresponded with the mark that Hewitt had seen on the forehead of Mr. Jacob Mason. It fitted closely in a leather case, in the end of which was a small, square metal box full of the red, greasy pigment with which the mark had been impressed.

It was from Broady Sims that we learnt the exact use and meaning of this implement: though he would not say a word till he had seen with his own eyes Mayes lying dead in the mortuary. Then he gasped his relief and said, "That's the end of some-

thing worse than slavery for me! I'll turn straight after this."

Sims's story was long, and it went over ground that concerns none of Hewitt's adventures. But what we learned from it was briefly this. It had been Mayes's way to meet clever criminals as they left gaol after a term of imprisonment. In this manner he had met Sims. He had made great promises, had spoken of great ideas which they could put into execution together, had lent him money, and then at last had "initiated" him, as he called it. He had put him to lie back in a chair and had directed his gaze on the Red Triangle held in the air before him: and then the Triangle had descended gently, and he felt sleepy, till at the cold touch of the thing on his forehead his senses had gone. This was done more than once, and in the end the victim found that Mayes had only to raise the Triangle before him to send him to sleep instantly. Then he found that he must do certain things, whether he wanted or not. And it ended in complete subservience; so that Mayes could set him to perpetrate a robbery and then appropriate the proceeds for himself, for by post-hypnotic suggestion he could force him to bring and hand over every penny. More, the poor wretch was held in constant terror, for he knew that his very life depended on the lift of his

master's hand. He could be sent into lethargy by a gesture and killed in that state. That very thing was done, in fact, as we have seen, in two cases.

Sims was but one of a gang of such criminals, brought to heel and made victims. Their minds and souls, such as they were, had passed into the miscreant's keeping, and terror reinforced the power of hypnotism. They committed crimes, and when they failed they took the punishment; when they succeeded Mayes took the gains, or at any rate the greater part of them. He went, also, among people who were not yet criminals, and by degrees made them so, to his own profit. The case of Henning, the correspondence clerk, was one that had come under Hewitt's eyes. He used his faculty also with great cunning in other ways—as we had seen in the matter of the Admiralty code. And it was even said among the gang that a man he had once hypnotised he could force by suggestion to commit suicide when he became useless or inconvenient.

Sims and the ragged fellow who had decoyed me into Mayes's den were the only members of the gang whom we could identify after his death, but many others must have shared their relief; and I sincerely hope—though I hardly expect—that they all availed themselves of their liberty to abandon

their evil courses. As in fact the two I speak of did, and took to honest work.

All that had remained mysterious in the earlier cases now became clear. In the first, the case of Samuel's diamonds, Denson had been put into the office where Samuel had found him, by Mayes, with the express design of effecting a diamond robbery. The robbery was effected, and the unhappy Denson formed a plan of making a bolt of it himself with the diamonds. He was, perhaps, what is called a difficult subject in hypnotism—amenable enough to direct influence, but not sufficiently retentive of post-hypnotic suggestion. He hid the jewels and adopted a disguise, but Mayes was watching him better than he supposed. The diamonds were lost, but Denson was found and done to death—probably not in that retreat near Barbican, but at night in some empty street. The diamonds were not found on him, and the body, with the mark of the Triangle still on it, was taken by night to a central spot in London and there left. Mayes probably thought that a notable example like this, so boldly displayed and so conspicuously reported in the Press, would impress his auxiliaries throughout London with the terror that was one of his weapons; for they would well understand the meaning of the Red Triangle, and they would receive a striking

illustration of the consequences of rebellion or bad faith. The money and the watch were left in the pockets because they were trifles after the loss of fifteen thousand pounds' worth of diamonds, and their presence in the pockets made the murder the less easy to understand—which was a point gained. And as to the keys—Mayes knew nothing of where the diamonds were hidden, and so had no use for them. For where could he use them? Denson had left his lodgings, and as to the office, that, he would guess, would be in the hands of the police, on Samuel's complaint. The immediate result of this affair on the only honest member of Mayes's circle I have told in the case of Mr. Jacob Mason. He was not yet thoroughly in Mayes's hands, but he had "dabbled," as he remorsefully confessed, and Mayes had already found him useful. He was dangerous, and his end came quickly. Another victim who had probably begun innocently enough was Henning, the clerk to Kingsley, Bell and Dalton, and his death in the Penn's Meadow barn leaves a mystery that never can be positively cleared up. Was it murder or was it suicide by post-hypnotic suggestion? It will be remembered that the fire burst out in the barn after Mayes had left it.

The case of Mr. Telfer was explained clearly

enough by Hewitt at the time; but it is an example of the snares that lie open for the most innocent person who allows himself to be made the subject of hypnotic experiments at the hands of persons with whom, and with whose objects, he is not thoroughly acquainted. And it must be remembered that at this time there are persons advertising to teach the practice of hypnotism to anybody who will pay; to anybody who may use the terrible power as he pleases. More, the danger is so great that it has led two eminent men of science to issue a public protest and warning, with an urgent plea that the practice of hypnotism be restricted by law at least as closely as that of vivisection.

As to what would have happened if Plummer and I had yielded to Mayes's threats so far as to undergo the "initiation" he proposed, at the time we were helpless in his hands—of that I have little doubt. I cannot suppose that he would have wasted much time over me, once I had fallen lethargic. When Hewitt burst in he would have found me lying dead, with the Red Triangle on my forehead. It would have saved Mayes a lot of noise and struggle, at least.

But I often wonder whether or not there was anything in his reference to the place beyond the sea, where he would make me a great man if I did as he

wished. Was it his design, having accumulated sufficient wealth, to return and take his natural place among the enlightened rulers of Hayti? He would not have been so much worse than some of the others.