

The Greenstone God and the Stockbroker

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As a rule, the average detective gets twice the credit he deserves. I am not talking of the pictorial miracle-monger, but of the flesh and blood reality who is liable to err, and frequently proves such liability. You can take it as certain that a detective who sets down a clean run and no hitch as entirely due to his astucity is young in years, and still younger in experience. Older men, who have been bamboozled a hundred times by the craft of criminality, recognize the influence of Chance to make or mar. There you have it! Nine times out of ten, Chance does more in clinching a case than all the dexterity and mother-wit of the man in charge. The exception must be engineered by an infallible apostle. Such a one is unknown to me—out of print.

This opinion, based rather on collective experience than on any one episode, can be substantiated by several incontrovertible facts. In this instance, one will suffice. Therefore, I take the Brixton case to illustrate Chance as a factor in human affairs. Had it not been for that Maori fetich—but such rather ends than begins the story, therefore it were wise to dismiss it for the moment. Yet that piece of greenstone hanged—a person mentioned hereafter.

When Mr and Mrs Paul Vincent set up housekeeping at Ulster Lodge they were regarded as decided acquisitions to Brixton society. She, pretty and musical; he, smart in looks, moderately well off, and an excellent tennis player. Their antecedents, who were known as his father and her mother (both since deceased), had lived a life of undoubted middle-class respectability. The halo thereof still environed their children, who were, in consequence of such inherited grace and their own individualisms, much sought after by genteel Brixtonians. Moreover, this popular couple were devoted to each other, and even after three years of marriage still posed as lovers. This was as it should be, and by admiring friends and relations the Vincents were regarded as paragons of matrimonial perfection.

Vincent was a stockbroker, and therefore passed most of his time in the City.

Judge, then, of the commotion, when pretty Mrs Vincent was discovered in the study, stabbed to the heart. So aimless a crime were scarce imaginable. She had many friends, no known enemies, yet came to this tragic end. Closer examination revealed that the escritoire had been broken into, and Mr Vincent declared himself the poorer by two hundred pounds. Primarily, therefore, robbery was the sole object, but, by reason of Mrs Vincent's interference, the thief had been converted into a murderer.

So excellently had the assassin chosen his time, that such choice argued a close acquaintance with the domestic economy of Ulster Lodge. The husband was detained in town till midnight; the servants (cook and housemaid), on leave to attend wedding festivities, were absent till eleven o'clock. Mrs Vincent was therefore absolutely alone in the house for six hours, during which period the crime was committed. The servants discovered the body of their unfortunate mistress, and at once raised the alarm. Later on Vincent arrived, to find his wife dead, his house in possession of the police, and the two servants in hysterics. For that night nothing could be done, but at dawn a move was made towards elucidating the mystery. At this point I come into the story.

Instructed at nine to take charge of the case, by ten o'clock I was on the spot noting details and collecting evidence. Beyond removal of the body, nothing had been disturbed, and the study was in precisely the same condition as when the crime was discovered. I carefully examined the apartment, and afterwards interrogated the cook, the housemaid, and, lastly, the master of Ulster Lodge. The result gave me slight hope of securing the assassin.

The room (a fair-sized one looking out on a lawn between house and road) was furnished in cheap bachelor fashion. An old-fashioned desk placed at right angles to the window, a round table reaching nigh the sill, two armchairs, three of the ordinary cane-seated kind, and on the mantelpiece an arrangement of pipes, pistols, boxing gloves, and foils. One of these latter was missing.

A single glimpse showed how terrible a struggle had taken place before the murderer had overpowered his victim. The tablecloth lay disorderly on the floor, two of the lighter chairs were overturned, and the desk, with several drawers open, was considerably hacked about.

No key was in the door-lock facing the *escritoire*, and the window-snick was securely fastened.

Further search resulted in the following discoveries:

1. A hatchet used for chopping wood (found near the desk).
2. A foil with the button broken off (lying under the table).
3. A greenstone idol (edged under the fender).

The cook (defiantly courageous by reason of brandy) declared that she had left the house at four o'clock on the previous day, and had returned close on eleven. The back door (to her surprise) was open. With the housemaid she went to inform her mistress of this fact, and found the body lying midway between door and fireplace. At once she called in the police. Her master and mistress were a most attached couple, and (so far as she knew) had no enemies.

Similar evidence was obtained from the housemaid, with the additional information that the hatchet belonged to the wood-shed. The other rooms were undisturbed.

Poor young Vincent was so broken down by the tragedy that he could hardly answer my questions with calmness. Sympathizing with his natural grief, I interrogated him as delicately as was possible, and am bound to admit that he replied with remarkable promptitude and clearness.

'What do you know of this unhappy affair?' I asked, when we were alone in the drawing-room. He refused to stay in the study, as was surely natural under the circumstances.

'Absolutely nothing,' he replied. 'I went to the City yesterday at ten in the morning, and, as I had business to do told my wife I would not return till midnight. She was full of health and spirits when I last saw her, but now——' incapable of further speech he made a gesture of despair. Then, after a pause, added, 'Have you any theory on the subject?'

'Judging from the wrecked condition of the desk I should say robbery——'

'Robbery?' he interrupted, changing colour. 'Yes, that was the motive. I had two hundred pounds locked up in the desk.'

'In gold or notes?'

'The latter. Four fifties. Bank of England.'

'You are sure they have gone?'

'Yes! The drawer in which they were placed is smashed to pieces.'

'Did anyone know you had placed two hundred pounds therein?'

'No! Save my wife, and yet—ah!' he said, breaking off abruptly, 'that is impossible.'

'What is impossible?'

'I shall tell you when I hear your theory!'

'You got that notion out of novels of the shilling sort,' I answered dryly; 'every detective doesn't theorize on the instant. I haven't any particular theory that I know of. Whomsoever committed this crime must have known your wife was alone in the house, and that there was two hundred locked up in that desk. Did you mention these two facts to anyone?'

Vincent pulled his moustache in some embarrassment. I guessed by the action he had been indiscreet.

'I don't wish to get an innocent person into trouble,' he said at length, 'but I did mention it—to a man called Roy.'

'For what reason?'

'It is a bit of a story. I lost two hundred to a friend at cards, and drew four fifties to pay him. He went out of town, so I locked the money up in my desk for safety. Last night Roy came to me at the club, much agitated, and asked me to loan him a hundred. Said at meant ruin else. I offered him a cheque, but he wanted cash. I then told him I had left two hundred at home, so could not possibly lend it. He asked if he could not go to Brixton for it, but I said the house was empty, and——'

'But it wasn't empty,' I interrupted.

'I believed it would be! I knew the servants were going to that wedding, and thought my wife, instead of spending a lonely evening, would stay out and see a friend.'

'Well, and after you told Roy that the house was empty?'

'He went away, looking awfully cut up, and swore he must have the money at any price. But it is quite impossible he could have anything to do with this.'

'I don't know. You told him where the money was, and that the house was unprotected, as you thought. What was more probable than that he should have come down with the intention of stealing the money? If so, what follows? Entering by the back door, he takes the hatchet from the wood-shed to open the desk. Your wife, hearing a

noise, discovers him in the study. In a state of frenzy, he snatches a foil from the mantelpiece, and kills her. Then decamps with the money. There is your theory, and a mighty bad one—for Roy.'

'You don't intend to convict him?' asked Vincent, quickly.

'Not on insufficient evidence! If he committed the crime and stole the money it is certain that, sooner or later, he will change the notes. Now if I had the numbers——'

'Here are the numbers,' said Vincent, producing his pocket-book. 'I always take the numbers of such large notes. But surely,' he added, as I copied them down—'surely you don't think Roy guilty?'

'I don't know. I should like to know his movements on that night.'

'I cannot tell you. He saw me at the Chestnut Club about seven o'clock, and left immediately afterwards. I kept my business appointment, went to the Alhambra, and then returned home.'

'Give me Roy's address, and describe his personal appearance?'

'He is a medical student, and lodges at No.——, Gower Street. Tall, fair-haired, a good-looking young fellow.'

'And his dress last night?'

'He wore evening dress, concealed by a fawn-coloured overcoat.'

I duly noted these particulars, and was about to take my leave when I recollected the greenstone idol. It was so strange an object to find in prosaic Brixton that I could not help thinking it must have come there by accident.

'By the way, Mr Vincent,' said I, producing the monstrosity, 'is this greenstone god your, property?'

'I never saw it before,' replied he, taking it in his hand. 'Is it—ah!' he added, dropping the idol, 'there is blood on it.'

"Tis the blood of your wife, sir. If it does not belong to you, it does to the murderer. From the position in which this was found I fancy it slipped out of his breast-pocket as he stood over his victim. As you see, it is stained with blood. He must have lost his presence of mind, else he would not have left behind so damning a piece of evidence. This idol, sir, will hang the assassin of Mrs Vincent.'

'I hope so, but, unless you are sure of Roy, do not mar his life by accusing him of this crime.'

'I certainly shall not convict him without sufficient proof,' I answered promptly, and so took my departure.

Vincent showed up very well in this preliminary conversation. Much as he desired to punish the criminal, yet he was unwilling to

subject Roy to possibly unfounded suspicions. Had I not forced the club episode out of him I doubt whether he would have told it. As it was, the information gave me the necessary clue. Roy alone knew that the notes were in the escritoire, and imagined (owing to the mistake of Vincent) that the house was empty. Determined to have the money at any price (his own words), he but intended robbery, till the unexpected appearance of Mrs Vincent merged the lesser in the greater crime.

My first step was to advise the Bank that four fifty pound notes, numbered so and so were stolen, and that the thief or his deputy would probably change them within a reasonable period. I did not say a word about the crime, and kept all special details out of the newspapers; as the murderer would probably read up the reports, so as to shape his course by the action of the police, I judged it wiser that he should know as little as possible. Those minute press notices do more harm than good. They gratify the morbid appetite of the public, and put the criminal on his guard. Thereby the police work in the dark, but he—thanks to the posting up of special reporters—knows the doings of the law, and baffles it accordingly.

The greenstone idol worried me considerably. I wanted to know how it had got into the study of Ulster Lodge. When I knew that, I could nail my man. But there was considerable difficulty to overcome before such knowledge was available. Now a curiosity of this kind is not a common object in this country. A man who owns one must have come from New Zealand, or have obtained it from a New Zealand friend. He could not have picked it up in London. If he did, he would not carry it constantly about with him. It was therefore my idea that the murderer had received the idol from a friend on the day of the crime. That friend, to possess such an idol, must have been in communication with New Zealand. The chain of thought is somewhat complicated, but it began with curiosity about the idol, and ended in my looking up the list of steamers going to the Antipodes. Then I carried out a little design which need not be mentioned at this moment. In due time it will fit in with the hanging of Mrs Vincent's assassin. Meanwhile, I followed up the clue of the banknotes, and left the greenstone idol to evolve its own destiny. Thus I had two strings to my bow.

The crime was committed on the twentieth of June, and on the twenty-third two fifty-pound notes, with numbers corresponding to

those stolen, were paid into the Bank of England. I was astonished at the little care exercised by the criminal in concealing his crime, but still more so when I learned that the money was banked by a very respectable solicitor. Furnished with the address, I called on this gentleman. Mr Maudsley received me politely, and had no hesitation in telling me how the notes had come into his possession. I did not state my primary reason for the enquiry.

'I hope there is no trouble about these notes,' said he, when I explained my errand. 'I have had sufficient already.'

'Indeed, Mr Maudsley, and in what way?'

For answer he touched the bell, and when it was answered, 'Ask Mr Ford to step this way,' he said. Then, turning to me, 'I must reveal what I hoped to keep silent, but I trust the revelation will remain with yourself.'

'That is as I may decide after hearing it. I am a detective, Mr Maudsley, and, you may be sure, do not make these enquiries out of idle curiosity.'

Before he could reply, a slender, weak-looking young man, nervously excited, entered the room. This was Mr Ford, and he looked from me to Maudsley with some apprehension.

'This gentleman,' said Maudsley, not unkindly, 'comes from Scotland Yard about the money you paid me two days ago.'

'It is all right, I hope,' stammered Ford, turning red and pale and red again.

'Where did you get the money?' I asked, parrying this question.

'From my sister.'

I started when I heard this answer, and with good reason. My enquiries about Roy had revealed that he was in love with a hospital nurse whose name was Clara Ford. Without doubt she had obtained the notes from Roy, after he had stolen them from Ulster Lodge. But why the necessity of the robbery?

'Why did you get a hundred pounds from your sister?' I asked Ford.

He did not answer, but looked appealingly at Maudsley. That gentleman interposed.

'We must make a clean breast of it, Ford,' he said, with a sigh; 'if you have committed a second crime to conceal the first, I cannot help you. This time matters are not at my discretion.'

'I have committed no crime,' said Ford desperately, turning to me.

'Sir, I may as well admit that I embezzled one hundred pounds from Mr Maudsley to pay a gambling debt. He kindly and most generously consented to overlook the delinquency if I replaced the money. Not having it myself I asked my sister. She, a poor hospital nurse, had not the amount. Yet, as non-payment meant ruin to me, she asked a Mr Julian Roy to help her. He at once agreed to do so, and gave her two fifty-pound notes. She handed them to me, and I gave them to Mr Maudsley, who paid them into the bank.'

This, then, was the reason of Roy's remark. He did not refer to his own ruin, but to that of Ford. To save this unhappy man, and for love of the sister, he had committed the crime. I did not need to see Clara Ford, but at once made up my mind to arrest Roy. The case was perfectly clear, and I was fully justified in taking this course. Meanwhile, I made Maudsley and his clerk promise silence, as I did not wish Roy to be put on his guard by Miss Ford, through her brother.

'Gentlemen,' I said, after a few moments' pause, 'I cannot, at present, explain my reasons for asking these questions, as it would take too long, and I have no time to lose. Keep silent about this interview till tomorrow, and by that time you shall know all.'

'Has Ford got into fresh trouble?' asked Maudsley, anxiously.

'No, but someone else has.'

'My sister,' began Ford faintly, when I interrupted him at once.

'Your sister is all right, Mr Ford. Pray trust in my assistance; no harm shall come to her or to you, if I can help it—but, above all, be silent.'

This they readily promised, and I returned to Scotland Yard, quite satisfied that Roy would get no warning. The evidence was so clear that I could not doubt the guilt of Roy. Else how had he come into possession of the notes? Already there was sufficient proof to hang him, yet I also hoped to clinch the certainty by proving his ownership of the greenstone idol. It did not belong to Vincent, or to his dead wife, yet someone must have brought it into the study. Why not Roy, who, to all appearances, had committed the crime, the more so as the image was splashed with the victim's blood? There was no difficulty in obtaining a warrant, and with this I went off to Gower Street.

Roy loudly protested his innocence. He denied all knowledge of the crime and of the idol. I expected the denial, but was astonished at the defence he put forth. It was very ingenious, but so manifestly

absurd that it did not shake my belief in his guilt. I let him talk himself out—which was perhaps wrong—but he would not be silent, and then took him off in a cab.

‘I swear I did not commit the crime,’ he said, passionately; ‘no one was more astonished than I at the news of Mrs Vincent’s death.’

‘Yet you were at Ulster Lodge on the night in question?’

‘I admit it,’ he replied, frankly; ‘were I guilty I would not do so. But I was there at the request of Vincent.’

‘I must remind you that all you say now will be used in evidence against you.’

‘I don’t care! I will defend myself. I asked Vincent for a hundred pounds, and——’

‘Of course you did, to give to Miss Ford.’

‘How do you know that?’ he asked, sharply.

‘From her brother, through Maudsley. He paid the notes supplied by you into the bank. If you wanted to conceal your crime you should not have been so reckless.’

‘I have committed no crime,’ retorted Roy, fiercely. ‘I obtained the money from Vincent, at the request of Miss Ford, to save her brother from being convicted for embezzlement.’

‘Vincent denies that he gave you the money!’

‘Then he lies. I asked him at the Chestnut Club for one hundred pounds. He had not that much on him, but said that two hundred were in his desk at home. As it was imperative that I should have the money on the night, I asked him to let me go down for it.’

‘And he refused!’

‘He did not. He consented, and gave me a note to Mrs Vincent, instructing her to hand me over a hundred pounds. I went to Brixton, got the money in two fifties, and gave them to Miss Ford. When I left Ulster Lodge, between eight and nine, Mrs Vincent was in perfect health, and quite happy.’

‘An ingenious defence,’ said I, doubtfully, ‘but Vincent absolutely denies that he gave you the money.’

Roy stared hard at me to see if I were joking. Evidently the attitude of Vincent puzzled him greatly.

‘That is ridiculous,’ said he, quietly; ‘he wrote a note to his wife instructing her to hand me the money.’

‘Where is that note?’

‘I gave it to Mrs Vincent.’

'It cannot be found,' I answered; 'if such a note were in her possession it would now be in mine.'

'Don't you believe me?'

'How can I against the evidence of those notes and the denial of Vincent?'

'But he surely does not deny that he gave me the money?'

'He does.'

'He must be mad,' said Roy, in dismay; 'one of my best friends, and to tell so great a falsehood. Why, if——'

'You had better be silent,' I said, weary of this foolish talk; 'if what you say is true, Vincent will exonerate you from complicity in the crime. If things occurred as you say, there is no sense in his denial.'

This latter remark was made to stop the torrent of his speech. It was not my business to listen to incriminating declarations, or to ingenious defences. All that sort of thing is for judge and jury; therefore I ended the conversation as above, and marched off my prisoner. Whether the birds of the air carry news I do not know, but they must have been busy on this occasion, for next morning every newspaper in London was congratulating me on my clever capture of the supposed murderer. Some detectives would have been gratified by this public laudation—I was not. Roy's passionate protestations of innocence made me feel uneasy, and I doubted whether, after all, I had the right man under lock and key. Yet the evidence was strong against him. He admitted having been with Mrs Vincent on the fatal night, admitted possession of two fifty-pound notes. His only defence was the letter of the stockbroker, and this was missing—if, indeed, it had ever been written.

Vincent was terribly upset by the arrest of Roy. He liked the young man, and had believed in his innocence so far as was possible. But in the face of such strong evidence, he was forced to believe him guilty; yet he blamed himself severely that he had not lent the money, and so averted the catastrophe.

'I had no idea that the matter was of such moment,' he said to me, 'else I would have gone down to Brixton myself and given him the money. Then his frenzy would have spared my wife, and himself a death on the scaffold.'

'What do you think of his defence?'

'It is wholly untrue. I did not write a note, nor did I tell him to go

to Brixton. Why should I, when I fully believed no one was in the house?’

‘It was a pity you did not go home, Mr Vincent, instead of to the Alhambra.’

‘It was a mistake,’ he assented, ‘but I had no idea Roy would attempt the robbery. Besides, I was under engagement to go to the theatre with my friend Dr Monson.’

‘Do you think that idol belongs to Roy?’

‘I can’t say, I never saw it in his possession. Why?’

‘Because I firmly believe that if Roy had not the idol in his pocket on that fatal night he is innocent. Oh, you look astonished, but the man who murdered your wife owns that idol.’

The morning after this conversation a lady called at Scotland Yard, and asked to see me. Fortunately, I was then in the neighbourhood, and, guessing whom she was, afforded her the interview she sought. When all left the room she raised her veil, and I saw before me a noble-looking woman, somewhat resembling Mr Maudsley’s clerk. Yet, by some contradiction of nature, her face was the more virile of the two.

‘You are Miss Ford?’ I said, guessing her identity.

‘I am Clara Ford,’ she answered quietly. ‘I have come to see you about Mr Roy.’

‘I am afraid nothing can be done to save him.’

‘Something must be done,’ she said passionately. ‘We are engaged to be married, and all a woman can do to save her lover I will do. Do you believe him guilty?’

‘In the face of such evidence, Miss Ford——’

‘I don’t care what evidence is against him,’ she retorted; ‘he is as innocent of the crime as I am. Do you think a man fresh from the committal of a crime would place the money won by that crime in the hands of the woman he professes to love? I tell you he is innocent.’

‘Mr Vincent doesn’t think so.’

‘Mr Vincent!’ said Miss Ford, with scornful emphasis. ‘Oh, yes! I quite believe he would think Julian guilty.’

‘Surely not if it were possible to think otherwise! He is, or rather was, a staunch friend to Mr Roy.’

‘So staunch that he tried to break off the match between us. Listen to me, sir. I have told no one before, but I tell you now. Mr Vincent is a villain. He pretended to be the friend of Julian, and yet dared to

make proposals to me—dishonourable proposals, for which I could have struck him. He, a married man, a pretended friend, wished me to leave Julian and fly with him.'

'Surely you are mistaken, Miss Ford. Mr Vincent was most attentive to his wife.'

'He did not care at all for his wife,' she replied, steadily. 'He was in love with me. To save Julian annoyance I did not tell him of the insults offered to me by Mr Vincent. Now that Julian is in trouble by an unfortunate mistake, Mr Vincent is delighted.'

'It is impossible. I assure you Vincent is very sorry to——'

'You do not believe me,' said she, interrupting. 'Very well, I shall give you proof of the truth. Come to my brother's rooms in Bloomsbury. I shall send for Mr Vincent, and if you are concealed you shall hear from his own lips how glad he is that my lover and his wife are removed from the path of his dishonourable passion.'

'I shall come, Miss Ford, but I think you are mistaken in Vincent.'

'You shall see,' she replied, coldly. Then, with a sudden change of tone, 'Is there no way of saving Julian? I am sure he is innocent. Appearances are against him, but it was not he who committed the crime. Is there no way—no way?'

Moved by her earnest appeal, I produced the greenstone idol, and told her all I had done in connection with it. She listened eagerly, and readily grasped at the hope thus held out to her of saving Roy. When in possession of all the facts she considered in silence for some two minutes. At the end of that time she drew down her veil and prepared to take her departure.

'Come to my brother's rooms in Alfred Place, near Tottenham Court Road,' said she, holding out her hand. 'I promise you that there you shall see Mr Vincent in his true character. Good-bye till Monday at three o'clock.'

From the colour in her face and the bright light in her eye, I guessed she had some scheme in her head for the saving of Roy. I think myself clever, but after that interview at Alfred Place I declare I am but a fool compared to this woman. She put two and two together, ferreted out unguessed-of evidence, and finally produced the most wonderful result. When she left me at this moment the greenstone idol was in her pocket. With that she hoped to prove the innocence of her lover and the guilt of another person. It was the cleverest thing I ever saw in my life.

The inquest on the body of Mrs Vincent resulted in a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown. Then she was buried, and all London waited for the trial of Roy. He was brought up and charged with the crime, reserved his defence, and in due course was committed for trial. Meantime I called on Miss Ford at the appointed time, and found her alone.

'Mr Vincent will be here shortly,' she said, calmly. 'I see Julian is committed for trial.'

'And has reserved his defence.'

'I will defend him,' said she, with a strange look in her face; 'I am not afraid for him now. He saved my unhappy brother. I am going to save him.'

'Have you discovered anything?'

'I have discovered a good deal. Hush! That is Mr Vincent,' she added, as a cab drew up to the door. 'Hide yourself behind this curtain, and do not appear until I give you the signal.'

Wondering what she was about to do, I concealed myself as directed. The next moment Vincent was in the room, and then ensued one of the strangest of scenes. She received him coldly, and motioned him to a seat. Vincent was nervous, but she might have been of stone, so little emotion did she display.

'I have sent for you, Mr Vincent,' she said, 'to ask your help in releasing Julian.'

'How can I help you,' he answered, in amazement—'willingly would I do so, but it is out of my power.'

'I don't think it is!'

'I assure you, Clara,' he began eagerly, when she cut him short.

'Yes, call me Clara! Say that you love me! Lie, like all men, and yet refuse to do what I wish.'

'I am not going to help Julian to marry you,' declared he, sullenly. 'You know that I love you—I love you dearly, I wish to marry you——'

'Is not that declaration rather soon after the death of your wife?'

'My wife is gone, poor soul, let her rest.'

'Yet you loved her?'

'I never loved her,' he said, rising to his feet. 'I love you! From the first moment I saw you I loved you. My wife is dead! Julian Roy is in prison on a charge of murdering her. With these obstacles removed there is no reason why we should not marry.'

'If I marry you,' she said, slowly, 'will you help Julian to refute this charge?'

'I cannot! The evidence is too strong against him!'

'You know he is innocent, Mr Vincent.'

'I do not! I believe he murdered my wife.'

'You believe he murdered your wife,' she reiterated, coming a step nearer and holding out the greenstone idol—'do you believe that he dropped this in the study when his hand struck the fatal blow?'

'I don't know!' he said, coolly glancing at the idol, 'I never saw it before.'

'Think again, Mr Vincent—think again. Who was it that went to the Alhambra at eight o'clock with Dr Monson, and met there the captain of a New Zealand steamer with whom he was acquainted?'

'It was I,' said Vincent, defiantly, 'and what of that?'

'This!' she said, in a loud voice. 'This captain gave you the greenstone idol at the Alhambra, and you stuffed it into your breast-pocket. Shortly afterwards you went down to Brixton, after the man whose death you had plotted. You repaired to your house, killed your unhappy wife, who received you in all innocence, took the balance of the money, hacked the desk, and then dropped by accident this idol which convicted you of the crime.'

During this speech she advanced step by step towards the wretched man, who, pale and anguished, retreated before her fury. He came right to my hiding place, and almost fell into my arms. I had heard enough to convince me of his guilt, and the next moment was struggling with him.

'It is a lie! a lie!' he said hoarsely, trying to escape.

'It is true!' said I, pinning him down. 'From my soul I believe you guilty.'

During the fight his pocket-book fell on the floor, and the papers therein were scattered. Miss Ford picked up one spotted with blood.

'The proof!' she said, holding it before us. 'The proof that Julian spoke the truth. There is the letter written by you which authorized your unhappy wife to give him one hundred pounds.'

Vincent saw that all was against him, and gave in without further struggles, like the craven he was.

'Fate is too strong for me,' he said, when I snapped the handcuffs on his wrists. 'I admit the crime. It was for love of you that I did it. I hated my wife, who was a drag on me, and I hated Roy, who loved

you. In one sweep I thought to rid myself of both. His application for that money put the chance into my hand. I went to Brixton, found that my wife had given the money as directed, and then killed her with the foil snatched from the wall. I smashed the desk and overturned the chair, to favour the idea of the robbery, and then left the house. Driving to a higher station than Brixton, I caught a train and was speedily back at the Alhambra. Monson never suspected my absence, thinking I was in a different corner of the house. I had thus an alibi ready. Had it not been for that letter, which I was fool enough to keep, and that infernal idol that dropped out of my pocket, I would have hanged Roy and married you. As it turns out the idol has betrayed me. And now, sir,' he added, turning to me, 'you had better take me to gaol.'

I did so there and then. After the legal formalities were gone through Julian Roy was released, and ultimately married Miss Ford. Vincent was hanged, as he well deserved to be, for so cowardly a crime. My reward was the greenstone god, which I keep as a memento of a very curious case. Some weeks later Miss Ford told me the way in which she had laid the trap.

'When you revealed your suspicions about the idol,' she said, 'I was convinced that Vincent had something to do with the crime. You mentioned Dr Monson as having been with him at the Alhambra. He is one of the doctors at the hospital in which I am employed. I asked him about the idol, and showed it to him. He remembered it being given to Vincent by the captain of the *K*——. The curious look of the thing had impressed itself on his memory. On hearing this I went to the docks and saw the captain. He recognized the idol, and remembered giving it to Vincent. From what you told me I guessed the way in which the plot was carried out, so spoke to Vincent as you heard. Most of it was guesswork, and only when I saw that letter was I absolutely sure of his guilt. It is due to the greenstone god.'

So I think, but also to Chance. But for the accident of it dropping out of Vincent's pocket, Roy would have been hanged for a crime of which he was innocent. Therefore do I say that in nine cases out of ten Chance does more in clinching a case than all the dexterity of the man in charge.