

FIFTH NARRATIVE

The Story Resumed by Franklin Blake

CHAPTER I

But few words are needed, on my part, to complete the narrative that has been presented in the Journal of Ezra Jennings.

Of myself, I have only to say that I awoke on the morning of the twenty-sixth, perfectly ignorant of all that I had said and done under the influence of the opium—from the time when the drug first laid its hold on me, to the time when I opened my eyes, in Rachel's sitting-room.

Of what happened after my waking, I do not feel called upon to render an account in detail. Confining myself merely to results, I have to report that Rachel and I thoroughly understood each other, before a single word of explanation had passed on either side. I decline to account, and Rachel declines to account, for the extraordinary rapidity of our reconciliation. Sir and Madam, look back at the time when you were passionately attached to each other—and you will know what happened, after Ezra Jennings had shut the door of the sitting-room, as well as I know it myself.

I have, however, no objection to add, that we should have been certainly discovered by Mrs. Merridew, but for Rachel's presence of mind. She heard the sound of the old lady's dress in the corridor, and instantly ran out to meet her; I heard Mrs. Merridew say, "What is the matter?" and I heard Rachel answer, "The explosion!" Mrs. Merridew instantly permitted herself to be taken by the arm, and led into the garden, out of the way of the impending shock. On her return to the house, she met me in the hall, and expressed herself as greatly struck by the vast improvement in Science, since the time when she was a girl at school. "Explosions, Mr. Blake, are infinitely milder than they were. I assure you, I barely heard Mr. Jennings's explosion from the garden. And no smell afterwards, that I can detect, now we have come back to the house! I must really apologise to your medical friend. It is only due to him to say that he has managed it beautifully!"

So, after vanquishing Betteredge and Mr. Bruff, Ezra Jennings vanquished Mrs. Merridew herself. There is a great deal of undeveloped liberal feeling in the world, after all!

At breakfast, Mr. Bruff made no secret of his reasons for wishing that I should accompany him to London by the morning train. The watch kept at the bank, and the result which might yet come of it, appealed so irresistibly to Rachel's curiosity, that she at once decided (if Mrs. Merridew had no objection) on accompanying us back to town—so as to be within reach of the earliest news of our proceedings.

Mrs. Merridew proved to be all pliability and indulgence, after the truly considerate manner in which the explosion had conducted itself; and Betteredge was accordingly informed that we were all four to travel back together by the morning train. I fully expected that he would have asked leave to accompany us. But Rachel had wisely provided her faithful old servant with an occupation that interested him. He was charged with completing the refurnishing of the house, and was too full of his domestic responsibilities to feel the "detective-fever" as he might have felt it under other circumstances.

Our one subject of regret, in going to London, was the necessity of parting, more abruptly than we could have wished, with Ezra Jennings. It was impossible to persuade him to accompany us. I could only promise to write to him—and Rachel could only insist on his coming to see her when she returned to Yorkshire. There was every prospect of our meeting again in a few months—and

yet there was something very sad in seeing our best and dearest friend left standing alone on the platform, as the train moved out of the station.

On our arrival in London, Mr. Bruff was accosted at the terminus by a small boy, dressed in a jacket and trousers of threadbare black cloth, and personally remarkable in virtue of the extraordinary prominence of his eyes. They projected so far, and they rolled about so loosely, that you wondered uneasily why they remained in their sockets. After listening to the boy, Mr. Bruff asked the ladies whether they would excuse our accompanying them back to Portland Place. I had barely time to promise Rachel that I would return, and tell her everything that had happened, before Mr. Bruff seized me by the arm, and hurried me into a cab. The boy with the ill-secured eyes took his place on the box by the driver, and the driver was directed to go to Lombard Street.

“News from the bank?” I asked, as we started.

“News of Mr. Luker,” said Mr. Bruff. “An hour ago, he was seen to leave his house at Lambeth, in a cab, accompanied by two men, who were recognised by my men as police officers in plain clothes. If Mr. Luker’s dread of the Indians is at the bottom of this precaution, the inference is plain enough. He is going to take the Diamond out of the bank.”

“And we are going to the bank to see what comes of it?”

“Yes—or to hear what has come of it, if it is all over by this time. Did you notice my boy—on the box, there?”

“I noticed his eyes.”

Mr. Bruff laughed. “They call the poor little wretch “Gooseberry” at the office,” he said. “I employ him to go on errands—and I only wish my clerks who have nick-named him were as thoroughly to be depended on as he is. Gooseberry is one of the sharpest boys in London, Mr. Blake, in spite of his eyes.”

It was twenty minutes to five when we drew up before the bank in Lombard Street. Gooseberry looked longingly at his master, as he opened the cab door.

“Do you want to come in too?” asked Mr. Bruff kindly. “Come in then, and keep at my heels till further orders. He’s as quick as lightning,” pursued Mr. Bruff, addressing me in a whisper. “Two words will do with Gooseberry, where twenty would be wanted with another boy.”

We entered the bank. The outer office—with the long counter, behind which the cashiers sat—was crowded with people; all waiting their turn to take money out, or to pay money in, before the bank closed at five o’clock.

Two men among the crowd approached Mr. Bruff, as soon as he showed himself.

“Well,” asked the lawyer. “Have you seen him?”

“He passed us here half an hour since, sir, and went on into the inner office.”

“Has he not come out again yet?”

“No, sir.”

Mr. Bruff turned to me. “Let us wait,” he said.

I looked round among the people about me for the three Indians. Not a sign of them was to be seen anywhere. The only person present with a noticeably dark complexion was a tall man in a pilot coat, and a round hat, who looked like a sailor. Could this be one of them in disguise? Impossible! The man was taller than any of the Indians; and his face, where it was not hidden by a bushy black beard, was twice the breadth of any of their faces at least.

“They must have their spy somewhere,” said Mr. Bruff, looking at the dark sailor in his turn. “And he may be the man.”

Before he could say more, his coat-tail was respectfully pulled by his attendant sprite with the gooseberry eyes. Mr. Bruff looked where the boy was looking. "Hush!" he said. "Here is Mr. Luker!"

The money-lender came out from the inner regions of the bank, followed by his two guardian policemen in plain clothes.

"Keep your eye on him," whispered Mr. Bruff. "If he passes the Diamond to anybody, he will pass it here."

Without noticing either of us, Mr. Luker slowly made his way to the door—now in the thickest, now in the thinnest part of the crowd. I distinctly saw his hand move, as he passed a short, stout man, respectably dressed in a suit of sober grey. The man started a little, and looked after him. Mr. Luker moved on slowly through the crowd. At the door his guard placed themselves on either side of him. They were all three followed by one of Mr. Bruff's men—and I saw them no more.

I looked round at the lawyer, and then looked significantly towards the man in the suit of sober grey. "Yes!" whispered Mr. Bruff, "I saw it too!" He turned about, in search of his second man. The second man was nowhere to be seen. He looked behind him for his attendant sprite. Gooseberry had disappeared.

"What the devil does it mean?" said Mr. Bruff angrily. "They have both left us at the very time when we want them most."

It came to the turn of the man in the grey suit to transact his business at the counter. He paid in a cheque—received a receipt for it—and turned to go out.

"What is to be done?" asked Mr. Bruff. "We can't degrade ourselves by following him."

"I can!" I said. "I wouldn't lose sight of that man for ten thousand pounds!"

"In that case," rejoined Mr. Bruff, "I wouldn't lose sight of you, for twice the money. A nice occupation for a man in my position," he muttered to himself, as we followed the stranger out of the bank. "For Heaven's sake don't mention it. I should be ruined if it was known."

The man in the grey suit got into an omnibus, going westward. We got in after him. There were latent reserves of youth still left in Mr. Bruff. I assert it positively—when he took his seat in the omnibus, he blushed!

The man in the grey suit stopped the omnibus, and got out in Oxford Street. We followed him again. He went into a chemist's shop.

Mr. Bruff started. "My chemist!" he exclaimed. "I am afraid we have made a mistake."

We entered the shop. Mr. Bruff and the proprietor exchanged a few words in private. The lawyer joined me again, with a very crestfallen face.

"It's greatly to our credit," he said, as he took my arm, and led me out—"that's one comfort!"

"What is to our credit?" I asked.

"Mr. Blake! you and I are the two worst amateur detectives that ever tried their hands at the trade. The man in the grey suit has been thirty years in the chemist's service. He was sent to the bank to pay money to his master's account—and he knows no more of the Moonstone than the babe unborn."

I asked what was to be done next.

"Come back to my office," said Mr. Bruff. "Gooseberry, and my second man, have evidently followed somebody else. Let us hope that THEY had their eyes about them at any rate!"

When we reached Gray's Inn Square, the second man had arrived there before us. He had been waiting for more than a quarter of an hour.

"Well!" asked Mr. Bruff. "What's your news?"

“I am sorry to say, sir,” replied the man, “that I have made a mistake. I could have taken my oath that I saw Mr. Luker pass something to an elderly gentleman, in a light-coloured paletot. The elderly gentleman turns out, sir, to be a most respectable master iron-monger in Eastcheap.”

“Where is Gooseberry?” asked Mr. Bruff resignedly.

The man stared. “I don’t know, sir. I have seen nothing of him since I left the bank.”

Mr. Bruff dismissed the man. “One of two things,” he said to me. “Either Gooseberry has run away, or he is hunting on his own account. What do you say to dining here, on the chance that the boy may come back in an hour or two? I have got some good wine in the cellar, and we can get a chop from the coffee-house.”

We dined at Mr. Bruff’s chambers. Before the cloth was removed, “a person” was announced as wanting to speak to the lawyer. Was the person Gooseberry? No: only the man who had been employed to follow Mr. Luker when he left the bank.

The report, in this case, presented no feature of the slightest interest. Mr. Luker had gone back to his own house, and had there dismissed his guard. He had not gone out again afterwards. Towards dusk, the shutters had been put up, and the doors had been bolted. The street before the house, and the alley behind the house, had been carefully watched. No signs of the Indians had been visible. No person whatever had been seen loitering about the premises. Having stated these facts, the man waited to know whether there were any further orders. Mr. Bruff dismissed him for the night.

“Do you think Mr. Luker has taken the Moonstone home with him?” I asked.

“Not he,” said Mr. Bruff. “He would never have dismissed his two policemen, if he had run the risk of keeping the Diamond in his own house again.”

We waited another half-hour for the boy, and waited in vain. It was then time for Mr. Bruff to go to Hampstead, and for me to return to Rachel in Portland Place. I left my card, in charge of the porter at the chambers, with a line written on it to say that I should be at my lodgings at half past ten, that night. The card was to be given to the boy, if the boy came back.

Some men have a knack of keeping appointments; and other men have a knack of missing them. I am one of the other men. Add to this, that I passed the evening at Portland Place, on the same seat with Rachel, in a room forty feet long, with Mrs. Merridew at the further end of it. Does anybody wonder that I got home at half past twelve instead of half past ten? How thoroughly heartless that person must be! And how earnestly I hope I may never make that person’s acquaintance!

My servant handed me a morsel of paper when he let me in.

I read, in a neat legal handwriting, these words—“If you please, sir, I am getting sleepy. I will come back to-morrow morning, between nine and ten.” Inquiry proved that a boy, with very extraordinary-looking eyes, had called, and presented my card and message, had waited an hour, had done nothing but fall asleep and wake up again, had written a line for me, and had gone home—after gravely informing the servant that “he was fit for nothing unless he got his night’s rest.”

At nine, the next morning, I was ready for my visitor. At half past nine, I heard steps outside my door. “Come in, Gooseberry!” I called out. “Thank you, sir,” answered a grave and melancholy voice. The door opened. I started to my feet, and confronted—Sergeant Cuff.

“I thought I would look in here, Mr. Blake, on the chance of your being in town, before I wrote to Yorkshire,” said the Sergeant.

He was as dreary and as lean as ever. His eyes had not lost their old trick (so subtly noticed in Betteredge’s NARRATIVE) of “looking as if they expected something more from you than you

were aware of yourself.” But, so far as dress can alter a man, the great Cuff was changed beyond all recognition. He wore a broad-brimmed white hat, a light shooting jacket, white trousers, and drab gaiters. He carried a stout oak stick. His whole aim and object seemed to be to look as if he had lived in the country all his life. When I complimented him on his Metamorphosis, he declined to take it as a joke. He complained, quite gravely, of the noises and the smells of London. I declare I am far from sure that he did not speak with a slightly rustic accent! I offered him breakfast. The innocent countryman was quite shocked. HIS breakfast hour was half-past six—and HE went to bed with the cocks and hens!

“I only got back from Ireland last night,” said the Sergeant, coming round to the practical object of his visit, in his own impenetrable manner. “Before I went to bed, I read your letter, telling me what has happened since my inquiry after the Diamond was suspended last year. There’s only one thing to be said about the matter on my side. I completely mistook my case. How any man living was to have seen things in their true light, in such a situation as mine was at the time, I don’t profess to know. But that doesn’t alter the facts as they stand. I own that I made a mess of it. Not the first mess, Mr. Blake, which has distinguished my professional career! It’s only in books that the officers of the detective force are superior to the weakness of making a mistake.”

“You have come in the nick of time to recover your reputation,” I said.

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Blake,” rejoined the Sergeant. “Now I have retired from business, I don’t care a straw about my reputation. I have done with my reputation, thank God! I am here, sir, in grateful remembrance of the late Lady Verinder’s liberality to me. I will go back to my old work—if you want me, and if you will trust me—on that consideration, and on no other. Not a farthing of money is to pass, if you please, from you to me. This is on honour. Now tell me, Mr. Blake, how the case stands since you wrote to me last.”

I told him of the experiment with the opium, and of what had occurred afterwards at the bank in Lombard Street. He was greatly struck by the experiment—it was something entirely new in his experience. And he was particularly interested in the theory of Ezra Jennings, relating to what I had done with the Diamond, after I had left Rachel’s sitting-room, on the birthday night.

“I don’t hold with Mr. Jennings that you hid the Moonstone,” said Sergeant Cuff. “But I agree with him, that you must certainly have taken it back to your own room.”

“Well?” I asked. “And what happened then?”

“Have you no suspicion yourself of what happened, sir?”

“None whatever.”

“Has Mr. Bruff no suspicion?”

“No more than I have.”

Sergeant Cuff rose, and went to my writing-table. He came back with a sealed envelope. It was marked “Private;” it was addressed to me; and it had the Sergeant’s signature in the corner.

“I suspected the wrong person, last year,” he said: “and I may be suspecting the wrong person now. Wait to open the envelope, Mr. Blake, till you have got at the truth. And then compare the name of the guilty person, with the name that I have written in that sealed letter.”

I put the letter into my pocket—and then asked for the Sergeant’s opinion of the measures which we had taken at the bank.

“Very well intended, sir,” he answered, “and quite the right thing to do. But there was another person who ought to have been looked after besides Mr. Luker.”

“The person named in the letter you have just given to me?”

“Yes, Mr. Blake, the person named in the letter. It can’t be helped now. I shall have something to propose to you and Mr. Bruff, sir, when the time comes. Let’s wait, first, and see if the boy has anything to tell us that is worth hearing.”

It was close on ten o’clock, and the boy had not made his appearance. Sergeant Cuff talked of other matters. He asked after his old friend Betteredge, and his old enemy the gardener. In a minute more, he would no doubt have got from this, to the subject of his favourite roses, if my servant had not interrupted us by announcing that the boy was below.

On being brought into the room, Gooseberry stopped at the threshold of the door, and looked distrustfully at the stranger who was in my company. I told the boy to come to me.

“You may speak before this gentleman,” I said. “He is here to assist me; and he knows all that has happened. Sergeant Cuff,” I added, “this is the boy from Mr. Bruff’s office.”

In our modern system of civilisation, celebrity (no matter of what kind) is the lever that will move anything. The fame of the great Cuff had even reached the ears of the small Gooseberry. The boy’s ill-fixed eyes rolled, when I mentioned the illustrious name, till I thought they really must have dropped on the carpet.

“Come here, my lad,” said the Sergeant, and let’s hear what you have got to tell us.”

The notice of the great man—the hero of many a famous story in every lawyer’s office in London—appeared to fascinate the boy. He placed himself in front of Sergeant Cuff, and put his hands behind him, after the approved fashion of a neophyte who is examined in his catechism.

“What is your name?” said the Sergeant, beginning with the first question in the catechism.

“Octavius Guy,” answered the boy. “They call me Gooseberry at the office because of my eyes.”

“Octavius Guy, otherwise Gooseberry,” pursued the Sergeant, with the utmost gravity, “you were missed at the bank yesterday. What were you about?”

“If you please, sir, I was following a man.”

“Who was he?”

“A tall man, sir, with a big black beard, dressed like a sailor.”

“I remember the man!” I broke in. “Mr. Bruff and I thought he was a spy employed by the Indians.”

Sergeant Cuff did not appear to be much impressed by what Mr. Bruff and I had thought. He went on catechising Gooseberry.

“Well?” he said—“and why did you follow the sailor?”

“If you please, sir, Mr. Bruff wanted to know whether Mr. Luker passed anything to anybody on his way out of the bank. I saw Mr. Luker pass something to the sailor with the black beard.”

“Why didn’t you tell Mr. Bruff what you saw?”

“I hadn’t time to tell anybody, sir, the sailor went out in such a hurry.”

“And you ran out after him—eh?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Gooseberry,” said the Sergeant, patting his head, “you have got something in that small skull of yours—and it isn’t cotton-wool. I am greatly pleased with you, so far.”

The boy blushed with pleasure. Sergeant Cuff went on.

“Well? and what did the sailor do, when he got into the street?”

“He called a cab, sir.”

“And what did you do?”

“Held on behind, and run after it.”

Before the Sergeant could put his next question, another visitor was announced—the head clerk from Mr. Bruff’s office.

Feeling the importance of not interrupting Sergeant Cuff’s examination of the boy, I received the clerk in another room. He came with bad news of his employer. The agitation and excitement of the last two days had proved too much for Mr. Bruff. He had awoke that morning with an attack of gout; he was confined to his room at Hampstead; and, in the present critical condition of our affairs, he was very uneasy at being compelled to leave me without the advice and assistance of an experienced person. The chief clerk had received orders to hold himself at my disposal, and was willing to do his best to replace Mr. Bruff.

I wrote at once to quiet the old gentleman’s mind, by telling him of Sergeant Cuff’s visit: adding that Gooseberry was at that moment under examination; and promising to inform Mr. Bruff, either personally, or by letter, of whatever might occur later in the day. Having despatched the clerk to Hampstead with my note, I returned to the room which I had left, and found Sergeant Cuff at the fireplace, in the act of ringing the bell.

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Blake,” said the Sergeant. “I was just going to send word by your servant that I wanted to speak to you. There isn’t a doubt on my mind that this boy—this most meritorious boy,” added the Sergeant, patting Gooseberry on the head, “has followed the right man. Precious time has been lost, sir, through your unfortunately not being at home at half past ten last night. The only thing to do, now, is to send for a cab immediately.”

In five minutes more, Sergeant Cuff and I (with Gooseberry on the box to guide the driver) were on our way eastward, towards the City.

“One of these days,” said the Sergeant, pointing through the front window of the cab, “that boy will do great things in my late profession. He is the brightest and cleverest little chap I have met with, for many a long year past. You shall hear the substance, Mr. Blake, of what he told me while you were out of the room. You were present, I think, when he mentioned that he held on behind the cab, and ran after it?”

“Yes.”

“Well, sir, the cab went from Lombard Street to the Tower Wharf. The sailor with the black beard got out, and spoke to the steward of the Rotterdam steamboat, which was to start next morning. He asked if he could be allowed to go on board at once, and sleep in his berth overnight. The steward said, No. The cabins, and berths, and bedding were all to have a thorough cleaning that evening, and no passenger could be allowed to come on board, before the morning. The sailor turned round, and left the wharf. When he got into the street again, the boy noticed for the first time, a man dressed like a respectable mechanic, walking on the opposite side of the road, and apparently keeping the sailor in view. The sailor stopped at an eating-house in the neighbourhood, and went in. The boy—not being able to make up his mind, at the moment—hung about among some other boys, staring at the good things in the eating-house window. He noticed the mechanic waiting, as he himself was waiting—but still on the opposite side of the street. After a minute, a cab came by slowly, and stopped where the mechanic was standing. The boy could only see plainly one person in the cab, who leaned forward at the window to speak to the mechanic. He described that person, Mr. Blake, without any prompting from me, as having a dark face, like the face of an Indian.”

It was plain, by this time, that Mr. Bruff and I had made another mistake. The sailor with the black beard was clearly not a spy in the service of the Indian conspiracy. Was he, by any possibility, the man who had got the Diamond?

“After a little,” pursued the Sergeant, “the cab moved on slowly down the street. The mechanic crossed the road, and went into the eating-house. The boy waited outside till he was hungry and tired—and then went into the eating-house, in his turn. He had a shilling in his pocket; and he dined sumptuously, he tells me, on a black-pudding, an eel-pie, and a bottle of ginger-beer. What can a boy not digest? The substance in question has never been found yet.”

“What did he see in the eating-house?” I asked.

“Well, Mr. Blake, he saw the sailor reading the newspaper at one table, and the mechanic reading the newspaper at another. It was dusk before the sailor got up, and left the place. He looked about him suspiciously when he got out into the street. The boy—BEING a boy—passed unnoticed. The mechanic had not come out yet. The sailor walked on, looking about him, and apparently not very certain of where he was going next. The mechanic appeared once more, on the opposite side of the road. The sailor went on, till he got to Shore Lane, leading into Lower Thames Street. There he stopped before a public-house, under the sign of “The Wheel of Fortune,” and, after examining the place outside, went in. Gooseberry went in too. There were a great many people, mostly of the decent sort, at the bar. “The Wheel of Fortune” is a very respectable house, Mr. Blake; famous for its porter and pork-pies.”

The Sergeant’s digressions irritated me. He saw it; and confined himself more strictly to Gooseberry’s evidence when he went on.

“The sailor,” he resumed, “asked if he could have a bed. The landlord said “No; they were full.” The barmaid corrected him, and said “Number Ten was empty.” A waiter was sent for to show the sailor to Number Ten. Just before that, Gooseberry had noticed the mechanic among the people at the bar. Before the waiter had answered the call, the mechanic had vanished. The sailor was taken off to his room. Not knowing what to do next, Gooseberry had the wisdom to wait and see if anything happened. Something did happen. The landlord was called for. Angry voices were heard up-stairs. The mechanic suddenly made his appearance again, collared by the landlord, and exhibiting, to Gooseberry’s great surprise, all the signs and tokens of being drunk. The landlord thrust him out at the door, and threatened him with the police if he came back. From the altercation between them, while this was going on, it appeared that the man had been discovered in Number Ten, and had declared with drunken obstinacy that he had taken the room. Gooseberry was so struck by this sudden intoxication of a previously sober person, that he couldn’t resist running out after the mechanic into the street. As long as he was in sight of the public-house, the man reeled about in the most disgraceful manner. The moment he turned the corner of the street, he recovered his balance instantly, and became as sober a member of society as you could wish to see. Gooseberry went back to “The Wheel of Fortune” in a very bewildered state of mind. He waited about again, on the chance of something happening. Nothing happened; and nothing more was to be heard, or seen, of the sailor. Gooseberry decided on going back to the office. Just as he came to this conclusion, who should appear, on the opposite side of the street as usual, but the mechanic again! He looked up at one particular window at the top of the public-house, which was the only one that had a light in it. The light seemed to relieve his mind. He left the place directly. The boy made his way back to Gray’s Inn—got your card and message—called—and failed to find you. There you have the state of the case, Mr. Blake, as it stands at the present time.”

“What is your own opinion of the case, Sergeant?”

“I think it’s serious, sir. Judging by what the boy saw, the Indians are in it, to begin with.”

“Yes. And the sailor is evidently the person to whom Mr. Luker passed the Diamond. It seems odd that Mr. Bruff, and I, and the man in Mr. Bruff’s employment, should all have been mistaken about who the person was.”

“Not at all, Mr. Blake. Considering the risk that person ran, it’s likely enough that Mr. Luker purposely misled you, by previous arrangement between them.”

“Do you understand the proceedings at the public-house?” I asked. “The man dressed like a mechanic was acting of course in the employment of the Indians. But I am as much puzzled to account for his sudden assumption of drunkenness as Gooseberry himself.”

“I think I can give a guess at what it means, sir,” said the Sergeant. “If you will reflect, you will see that the man must have had some pretty strict instructions from the Indians. They were far too noticeable themselves to risk being seen at the bank, or in the public-house—they were obliged to trust everything to their deputy. Very good. Their deputy hears a certain number named in the public-house, as the number of the room which the sailor is to have for the night—that being also the room (unless our notion is all wrong) which the Diamond is to have for the night, too. Under those circumstances, the Indians, you may rely on it, would insist on having a description of the room—of its position in the house, of its capability of being approached from the outside, and so on. What was the man to do, with such orders as these? Just what he did! He ran up-stairs to get a look at the room, before the sailor was taken into it. He was found there, making his observations—and he shammed drunk, as the easiest way of getting out of the difficulty. That’s how I read the riddle. After he was turned out of the public-house, he probably went with his report to the place where his employers were waiting for him. And his employers, no doubt, sent him back to make sure that the sailor was really settled at the public-house till the next morning. As for what happened at “The Wheel of Fortune,” after the boy left—we ought to have discovered that last night. It’s eleven in the morning, now. We must hope for the best, and find out what we can.”

In a quarter of an hour more, the cab stopped in Shore Lane, and Gooseberry opened the door for us to get out.

“All right?” asked the Sergeant.

“All right,” answered the boy.

The moment we entered “The Wheel of Fortune” it was plain even to my inexperienced eyes that there was something wrong in the house.

The only person behind the counter at which the liquors were served, was a bewildered servant girl, perfectly ignorant of the business. One or two customers, waiting for their morning drink, were tapping impatiently on the counter with their money. The bar-maid appeared from the inner regions of the parlour, excited and preoccupied. She answered Sergeant Cuff’s inquiry for the landlord, by telling him sharply that her master was up-stairs, and was not to be bothered by anybody.

“Come along with me, sir,” said Sergeant Cuff, coolly leading the way up-stairs, and beckoning to the boy to follow him.

The barmaid called to her master, and warned him that strangers were intruding themselves into the house. On the first floor we were encountered by the Landlord, hurrying down, in a highly irritated state, to see what was the matter.

“Who the devil are you? and what do you want here?” he asked.

“Keep your temper,” said the Sergeant, quietly. “I’ll tell you who I am to begin with. I am Sergeant Cuff.”

The illustrious name instantly produced its effect. The angry landlord threw open the door of a sitting-room, and asked the Sergeant's pardon.

"I am annoyed and out of sorts, sir—that's the truth," he said. "Something unpleasant has happened in the house this morning. A man in my way of business has a deal to upset his temper, Sergeant Cuff."

"Not a doubt of it," said the Sergeant. "I'll come at once, if you will allow me, to what brings us here. This gentleman and I want to trouble you with a few inquiries, on a matter of some interest to both of us."

"Relating to what, sir?" asked the landlord.

"Relating to a dark man, dressed like a sailor, who slept here last night."

"Good God! that's the man who is upsetting the whole house at this moment!" exclaimed the landlord. "Do you, or does this gentleman know anything about him?"

"We can't be certain till we see him," answered the Sergeant.

"See him?" echoed the landlord. "That's the one thing that nobody has been able to do since seven o'clock this morning. That was the time when he left word, last night, that he was to be called. He WAS called—and there was no getting an answer from him, and no opening his door to see what was the matter. They tried again at eight, and they tried again at nine. No use! There was the door still locked—and not a sound to be heard in the room! I have been out this morning—and I only got back a quarter of an hour ago. I have hammered at the door myself—and all to no purpose. The potboy has gone to fetch a carpenter. If you can wait a few minutes, gentlemen, we will have the door opened, and see what it means."

"Was the man drunk last night?" asked Sergeant Cuff.

"Perfectly sober, sir—or I would never have let him sleep in my house."

"Did he pay for his bed beforehand?"

"No."

"Could he leave the room in any way, without going out by the door?"

"The room is a garret," said the landlord. "But there's a trap-door in the ceiling, leading out on to the roof—and a little lower down the street, there's an empty house under repair. Do you think, Sergeant, the blackguard has got off in that way, without paying?"

"A sailor," said Sergeant Cuff, "might have done it—early in the morning, before the street was astir. He would be used to climbing, and his head wouldn't fail him on the roofs of the houses."

As he spoke, the arrival of the carpenter was announced. We all went up-stairs, at once, to the top story. I noticed that the Sergeant was unusually grave, even for him. It also struck me as odd that he told the boy (after having previously encouraged him to follow us), to wait in the room below till we came down again.

The carpenter's hammer and chisel disposed of the resistance of the door in a few minutes. But some article of furniture had been placed against it inside, as a barricade. By pushing at the door, we thrust this obstacle aside, and so got admission to the room. The landlord entered first; the Sergeant second; and I third. The other persons present followed us.

We all looked towards the bed, and all started.

The man had not left the room. He lay, dressed, on the bed—with a white pillow over his face, which completely hid it from view.

"What does that mean?" said the landlord, pointing to the pillow.

Sergeant Cuff led the way to the bed, without answering, and removed the pillow.

The man's swarthy face was placid and still; his black hair and beard were slightly, very slightly, discomposed. His eyes stared wide-open, glassy and vacant, at the ceiling. The filmy look and the fixed expression of them horrified me. I turned away, and went to the open window. The rest of them remained, where Sergeant Cuff remained, at the bed.

"He's in a fit!" I heard the landlord say.

"He's dead," the Sergeant answered. "Send for the nearest doctor, and send for the police."

The waiter was despatched on both errands. Some strange fascination seemed to hold Sergeant Cuff to the bed. Some strange curiosity seemed to keep the rest of them waiting, to see what the Sergeant would do next.

I turned again to the window. The moment afterwards, I felt a soft pull at my coat-tails, and a small voice whispered, "Look here, sir!"

Gooseberry had followed us into the room. His loose eyes rolled frightfully—not in terror, but in exultation. He had made a detective-discovery on his own account. "Look here, sir," he repeated—and led me to a table in the corner of the room.

On the table stood a little wooden box, open, and empty. On one side of the box lay some jewellers' cotton. On the other side, was a torn sheet of white paper, with a seal on it, partly destroyed, and with an inscription in writing, which was still perfectly legible. The inscription was in these words:

"Deposited with Messrs. Bushe, Lysaught, and Bushe, by Mr. Septimus Luker, of Middlesex Place, Lambeth, a small wooden box, sealed up in this envelope, and containing a valuable of great price. The box, when claimed, to be only given up by Messrs. Bushe and Co. on the personal application of Mr. Luker."

Those lines removed all further doubt, on one point at least. The sailor had been in possession of the Moonstone, when he had left the bank on the previous day.

I felt another pull at my coat-tails. Gooseberry had not done with me yet.

"Robbery!" whispered the boy, pointing, in high delight, to the empty box.

"You were told to wait down-stairs," I said. "Go away!"

"And Murder!" added Gooseberry, pointing, with a keener relish still, to the man on the bed.

There was something so hideous in the boy's enjoyment of the horror of the scene, that I took him by the two shoulders and put him out of the room.

At the moment when I crossed the threshold of the door, I heard Sergeant Cuff's voice, asking where I was. He met me, as I returned into the room, and forced me to go back with him to the bedside.

"Mr. Blake!" he said. "Look at the man's face. It is a face disguised—and here's a proof of it!"

He traced with his finger a thin line of livid white, running backward from the dead man's forehead, between the swarthy complexion, and the slightly-disturbed black hair. "Let's see what is under this," said the Sergeant, suddenly seizing the black hair, with a firm grip of his hand.

My nerves were not strong enough to bear it. I turned away again from the bed.

The first sight that met my eyes, at the other end of the room, was the irrepressible Gooseberry, perched on a chair, and looking with breathless interest, over the heads of his elders, at the Sergeant's proceedings.

"He's pulling off his wig!" whispered Gooseberry, compassionating my position, as the only person in the room who could see nothing.

There was a pause—and then a cry of astonishment among the people round the bed.

"He's pulled off his beard!" cried Gooseberry.

There was another pause—Sergeant Cuff asked for something. The landlord went to the wash-hand-stand, and returned to the bed with a basin of water and a towel.

Gooseberry danced with excitement on the chair. “Come up here, along with me, sir! He’s washing off his complexion now!”

The Sergeant suddenly burst his way through the people about him, and came, with horror in his face, straight to the place where I was standing.

“Come back to the bed, sir!” he began. He looked at me closer, and checked himself “No!” he resumed. “Open the sealed letter first—the letter I gave you this morning.”

I opened the letter.

“Read the name, Mr. Blake, that I have written inside.”

I read the name that he had written. It was GODFREY ABLEWHITE.

“Now,” said the Sergeant, “come with me, and look at the man on the bed.”

I went with him, and looked at the man on the bed.

GODFREY ABLEWHITE!

SIXTH NARRATIVE

Contributed by Sergeant Cuff

I

Dorking, Surrey, July 30th, 1849. To Franklin Blake, Esq. Sir,—I beg to apologise for the delay that has occurred in the production of the Report, with which I engaged to furnish you. I have waited to make it a complete Report; and I have been met, here and there, by obstacles which it was only possible to remove by some little expenditure of patience and time.

The object which I proposed to myself has now, I hope, been attained. You will find, in these pages, answers to the greater part—if not all—of the questions, concerning the late Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite, which occurred to your mind when I last had the honour of seeing you.

I propose to tell you—in the first place—what is known of the manner in which your cousin met his death; appending to the statement such inferences and conclusions as we are justified (according to my opinion) in drawing from the facts.

I shall then endeavour—in the second place—to put you in possession of such discoveries as I have made, respecting the proceedings of Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite, before, during, and after the time, when you and he met as guests at the late Lady Verinder's country-house.

II

As to your cousin's death, then, first.

It appears to be established, beyond any reasonable doubt, that he was killed (while he was asleep, or immediately on his waking) by being smothered with a pillow from his bed—that the persons guilty of murdering him are the three Indians—and that the object contemplated (and achieved) by the crime, was to obtain possession of the diamond, called the Moonstone.

The facts from which this conclusion is drawn, are derived partly from an examination of the room at the tavern; and partly from the evidence obtained at the Coroner's Inquest.

On forcing the door of the room, the deceased gentleman was discovered, dead, with the pillow of the bed over his face. The medical man who examined him, being informed of this circumstance, considered the post-mortem appearances as being perfectly compatible with murder by smothering—that is to say, with murder committed by some person, or persons, pressing the pillow over the nose and mouth of the deceased, until death resulted from congestion of the lungs.

Next, as to the motive for the crime.

A small box, with a sealed paper torn off from it (the paper containing an inscription) was found open, and empty, on a table in the room. Mr. Luker has himself personally identified the box, the seal, and the inscription. He has declared that the box did actually contain the diamond, called the Moonstone; and he has admitted having given the box (thus sealed up) to Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite (then concealed under a disguise), on the afternoon of the twenty-sixth of June last. The fair inference from all this is, that the stealing of the Moonstone was the motive of the crime.

Next, as to the manner in which the crime was committed.

On examination of the room (which is only seven feet high), a trap-door in the ceiling, leading out on to the roof of the house, was discovered open. The short ladder, used for obtaining access to the trap-door (and kept under the bed), was found placed at the opening, so as to enable any person or persons, in the room, to leave it again easily. In the trap-door itself was found a square aperture cut in the wood, apparently with some exceedingly sharp instrument, just behind the bolt which fastened the door on the inner side. In this way, any person from the outside could have drawn back the bolt, and opened the door, and have dropped (or have been noiselessly lowered by an accomplice) into the room—its height, as already observed, being only seven feet. That some person, or persons, must have got admission in this way, appears evident from the fact of the aperture being there. As to the manner in which he (or they) obtained access to the roof of the tavern, it is to be remarked that the third house, lower down in the street, was empty, and under repair—that a long ladder was left by the workmen, leading from the pavement to the top of the house—and that, on returning to their work, on the morning of the 27th, the men found the plank which they had tied to the ladder, to prevent anyone from using it in their absence, removed, and lying on the ground. As to the possibility of ascending by this ladder, passing over the roofs of the houses, passing back, and descending again, unobserved—it is discovered, on the evidence of the night policeman, that he only passes through Shore Lane twice in an hour, when out on his beat. The testimony of the inhabitants also declares, that Shore Lane, after midnight, is one of the quietest and loneliest streets in London. Here again, therefore, it seems fair to infer that—with ordinary caution, and presence of mind—any man, or men, might have ascended by the ladder, and might have descended again, unobserved. Once on the roof of the tavern, it has been proved, by experiment, that a man might cut through the trap-door, while lying down on it, and that in such a position, the parapet in front of the house would conceal him from the view of anyone passing in the street.

Lastly, as to the person, or persons, by whom the crime was committed.

It is known (1) that the Indians had an interest in possessing themselves of the Diamond. (2) It is at least probable that the man looking like an Indian, whom Octavius Guy saw at the window of the cab, speaking to the man dressed like a mechanic, was one of the three Hindoo conspirators. (3) It is certain that this same man dressed like a mechanic, was seen keeping Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite in view, all through the evening of the 26th, and was found in the bedroom (before Mr. Ablewhite was shown into it) under circumstances which lead to the suspicion that he was examining the room. (4) A morsel of torn gold thread was picked up in the bedroom, which persons expert in such matters, declare to be of Indian manufacture, and to be a species of gold thread not known in England. 5) On the morning of the 27th, three men, answering to the description of the three Indians, were observed in Lower Thames Street, were traced to the Tower Wharf, and were seen to leave London by the steamer bound for Rotterdam.

There is here, moral, if not legal, evidence, that the murder was committed by the Indians.

Whether the man personating a mechanic was, or was not, an accomplice in the crime, it is impossible to say. That he could have committed the murder alone, seems beyond the limits of probability. Acting by himself, he could hardly have smothered Mr. Ablewhite—who was the taller and stronger man of the two—without a struggle taking place, or a cry being heard. A servant girl, sleeping in the next room, heard nothing. The landlord, sleeping in the room below, heard nothing. The whole evidence points to the inference that more than one man was concerned in this crime—and the circumstances, I repeat, morally justify the conclusion that the Indians committed it.

I have only to add, that the verdict at the Coroner's Inquest was Wilful Murder against some person, or persons, unknown. Mr. Ablewhite's family have offered a reward, and no effort has been left untried to discover the guilty persons. The man dressed like a mechanic has eluded all inquiries. The Indians have been traced. As to the prospect of ultimately capturing these last, I shall have a word to say to you on that head, when I reach the end of the present Report.

In the meanwhile, having now written all that is needful on the subject of Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's death, I may pass next to the narrative of his proceedings before, during, and after the time, when you and he met at the late Lady Verinder's house.

III

With regard to the subject now in hand, I may state, at the outset, that Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's life had two sides to it.

The side turned up to the public view, presented the spectacle of a gentleman, possessed of considerable reputation as a speaker at charitable meetings, and endowed with administrative abilities, which he placed at the disposal of various Benevolent Societies, mostly of the female sort. The side kept hidden from the general notice, exhibited this same gentleman in the totally different character of a man of pleasure, with a villa in the suburbs which was not taken in his own name, and with a lady in the villa, who was not taken in his own name, either.

My investigations in the villa have shown me several fine pictures and statues; furniture tastefully selected, and admirably made; and a conservatory of the rarest flowers, the match of which it would not be easy to find in all London. My investigation of the lady has resulted in the discovery of jewels which are worthy to take rank with the flowers, and of carriages and horses which have (deservedly) produced a sensation in the Park, among persons well qualified to judge of the build of the one, and the breed of the others.

All this is, so far, common enough. The villa and the lady are such familiar objects in London life, that I ought to apologise for introducing them to notice. But what is not common and not familiar (in my experience), is that all these fine things were not only ordered, but paid for. The pictures, the statues, the flowers, the jewels, the carriages, and the horses—inquiry proved, to my indescribable astonishment, that not a sixpence of debt was owing on any of them. As to the villa, it had been bought, out and out, and settled on the lady.

I might have tried to find the right reading of this riddle, and tried in vain—but for Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's death, which caused an inquiry to be made into the state of his affairs.

The inquiry elicited these facts:—

That Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite was entrusted with the care of a sum of twenty thousand pounds—as one of two Trustees for a young gentleman, who was still a minor in the year eighteen hundred and forty-eight. That the Trust was to lapse, and that the young gentleman was to receive the twenty thousand pounds on the day when he came of age, in the month of February, eighteen hundred and fifty. That, pending the arrival of this period, an income of six hundred pounds was to be paid to him by his two Trustees, half-yearly—at Christmas and Midsummer Day. That this income was regularly paid by the active Trustee, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite. That the twenty thousand pounds (from which the income was supposed to be derived) had every farthing of it been sold out of the Funds, at different periods, ending with the end of the year eighteen hundred and forty-seven. That the power of attorney, authorising the

bankers to sell out the stock, and the various written orders telling them what amounts to sell out, were formally signed by both the Trustees. That the signature of the second Trustee (a retired army officer, living in the country) was a signature forged, in every case, by the active Trustee—otherwise Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite.

In these facts lies the explanation of Mr. Godfrey's honourable conduct, in paying the debts incurred for the lady and the villa—and (as you will presently see) of more besides.

We may now advance to the date of Miss Verinder's birthday (in the year eighteen hundred and forty-eight)—the twenty-first of June.

On the day before, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite arrived at his father's house, and asked (as I know from Mr. Ablewhite, senior, himself) for a loan of three hundred pounds. Mark the sum; and remember at the same time, that the half-yearly payment to the young gentleman was due on the twenty-fourth of the month. Also, that the whole of the young gentleman's fortune had been spent by his Trustee, by the end of the year 'forty-seven.

Mr. Ablewhite, senior, refused to lend his son a farthing.

The next day Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite rode over, with you, to Lady Verinder's house. A few hours afterwards, Mr. Godfrey (as you yourself have told me) made a proposal of marriage to Miss Verinder. Here, he saw his way no doubt—if accepted—to the end of all his money anxieties, present and future. But, as events actually turned out, what happened? Miss Verinder refused him.

On the night of the birthday, therefore, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's pecuniary position was this. He had three hundred pounds to find on the twenty-fourth of the month, and twenty thousand pounds to find in February eighteen hundred and fifty. Failing to raise these sums, at these times, he was a ruined man.

Under those circumstances, what takes place next?

You exasperate Mr. Candy, the doctor, on the sore subject of his profession; and he plays you a practical joke, in return, with a dose of laudanum. He trusts the administration of the dose, prepared in a little phial, to Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite—who has himself confessed the share he had in the matter, under circumstances which shall presently be related to you. Mr. Godfrey is all the readier to enter into the conspiracy, having himself suffered from your sharp tongue in the course of the evening. He joins Betteredge in persuading you to drink a little brandy and water before you go to bed. He privately drops the dose of laudanum into your cold grog. And you drink the mixture.

Let us now shift the scene, if you please to Mr. Luker's house at Lambeth. And allow me to remark, by way of preface, that Mr. Bruff and I, together, have found a means of forcing the money-lender to make a clean breast of it. We have carefully sifted the statement he has addressed to us; and here it is at your service.

IV

Late on the evening of Friday, the twenty-third of June ('forty-eight), Mr. Luker was surprised by a visit from Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite. He was more than surprised, when Mr. Godfrey produced the Moonstone. No such Diamond (according to Mr. Luker's experience) was in the possession of any private person in Europe.

Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite had two modest proposals to make, in relation to this magnificent gem. First, Would Mr. Luker be so good as to buy it? Secondly, Would Mr. Luker (in default of seeing his way to the purchase) undertake to sell it on commission, and to pay a sum down, on the anticipated result?

Mr. Luker tested the Diamond, weighed the Diamond and estimated the value of the Diamond, before he answered a word. HIS estimate (allowing for the flaw in the stone) was thirty thousand pounds.

Having reached that result, Mr. Luker opened his lips, and put a question: "How did you come by this?" Only six words! But what volumes of meaning in them!

Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite began a story. Mr. Luker opened his lips again, and only said three words, this time. "That won't do!"

Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite began another story. Mr. Luker wasted no more words on him. He got up, and rang the bell for the servant to show the gentleman out.

Upon this compulsion, Mr. Godfrey made an effort, and came out with a new and amended version of the affair, to the following effect.

After privately slipping the laudanum into your brandy and water, he wished you good night, and went into his own room. It was the next room to yours; and the two had a door of communication between them. On entering his own room Mr. Godfrey (as he supposed) closed his door. His money troubles kept him awake. He sat, in his dressing-gown and slippers, for nearly an hour, thinking over his position. Just as he was preparing to get into bed, he heard you, talking to yourself, in your own room, and going to the door of communication, found that he had not shut it as he supposed.

He looked into your room to see what was the matter. He discovered you with the candle in your hand, just leaving your bed-chamber. He heard you say to yourself, in a voice quite unlike your own voice, "How do I know? The Indians may be hidden in the house."

Up to that time, he had simply supposed himself (in giving you the laudanum) to be helping to make you the victim of a harmless practical joke. It now occurred to him, that the laudanum had taken some effect on you, which had not been foreseen by the doctor, any more than by himself. In the fear of an accident happening he followed you softly to see what you would do.

He followed you to Miss Verinder's sitting-room, and saw you go in. You left the door open. He looked through the crevice thus produced, between the door and the post, before he ventured into the room himself.

In that position, he not only detected you in taking the Diamond out of the drawer—he also detected Miss Verinder, silently watching you from her bedroom, through her open door. His own eyes satisfied him that SHE saw you take the Diamond, too.

Before you left the sitting-room again, you hesitated a little. Mr. Godfrey took advantage of this hesitation to get back again to his bedroom before you came out, and discovered him. He had barely got back, before you got back too. You saw him (as he supposes) just as he was passing through the door of communication. At any rate, you called to him in a strange, drowsy voice.

He came back to you. You looked at him in a dull sleepy way. You put the Diamond into his hand. You said to him, "Take it back, Godfrey, to your father's bank. It's safe there—it's not safe here." You turned away unsteadily, and put on your dressing-gown. You sat down in the large arm-chair in your room. You said, "I can't take it back to the bank. My head's like lead—and I can't feel my feet under me." Your head sank on the back of the chair—you heaved a heavy sigh—and you fell asleep.

Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite went back, with the Diamond, into his own room. His statement is, that he came to no conclusion, at that time—except that he would wait, and see what happened in the morning.

When the morning came, your language and conduct showed that you were absolutely ignorant of what you had said and done overnight. At the same time, Miss Verinder's language and conduct showed that she was resolved to say nothing (in mercy to you) on her side. If Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite chose to keep the Diamond, he might do so with perfect impunity. The Moonstone stood between him and ruin. He put the Moonstone into his pocket.

V

This was the story told by your cousin (under pressure of necessity) to Mr. Luker.

Mr. Luker believed the story to be, as to all main essentials, true—on this ground, that Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite was too great a fool to have invented it. Mr. Bruff and I agree with Mr. Luker, in considering this test of the truth of the story to be a perfectly reliable one.

The next question, was the question of what Mr. Luker would do in the matter of the Moonstone. He proposed the following terms, as the only terms on which he would consent to mix himself up with, what was (even in HIS line of business) a doubtful and dangerous transaction.

Mr. Luker would consent to lend Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite the sum of two thousand pounds, on condition that the Moonstone was to be deposited with him as a pledge. If, at the expiration of one year from that date, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite paid three thousand pounds to Mr. Luker, he was to receive back the Diamond, as a pledge redeemed. If he failed to produce the money at the expiration of the year, the pledge (otherwise the Moonstone) was to be considered as forfeited to Mr. Luker—who would, in this latter case, generously make Mr. Godfrey a present of certain promissory notes of his (relating to former dealings) which were then in the money-lender's possession.

It is needless to say, that Mr. Godfrey indignantly refused to listen to these monstrous terms. Mr. Luker thereupon, handed him back the Diamond, and wished him good night.

Your cousin went to the door, and came back again. How was he to be sure that the conversation of that evening would be kept strictly secret between his friend and himself?

Mr. Luker didn't profess to know how. If Mr. Godfrey had accepted his terms, Mr. Godfrey would have made him an accomplice, and might have counted on his silence as on a certainty. As things were, Mr. Luker must be guided by his own interests. If awkward inquiries were made, how could he be expected to compromise himself, for the sake of a man who had declined to deal with him?

Receiving this reply, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite did, what all animals (human and otherwise) do, when they find themselves caught in a trap. He looked about him in a state of helpless despair. The day of the month, recorded on a neat little card in a box on the money-lender's chimney-piece, happened to attract his eye. It was the twenty-third of June. On the twenty-fourth he had three hundred pounds to pay to the young gentleman for whom he was trustee, and no chance of raising the money, except the chance that Mr. Luker had offered to him. But for this miserable obstacle, he might have taken the Diamond to Amsterdam, and have made a marketable commodity of it, by having it cut up into separate stones. As matters stood, he had no choice but

to accept Mr. Luker's terms. After all, he had a year at his disposal, in which to raise the three thousand pounds—and a year is a long time.

Mr. Luker drew out the necessary documents on the spot. When they were signed, he gave Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite two cheques. One, dated June 23rd, for three hundred pounds. Another, dated a week on, for the remaining balance seventeen hundred pounds.

How the Moonstone was trusted to the keeping of Mr Luker's bankers, and how the Indians treated Mr. Luker and Mr. Godfrey (after that had been done) you know already.

The next event in your cousin's life refers again to Miss Verinder. He proposed marriage to her for the second time—and (after having being accepted) he consented, at her request, to consider the marriage as broken off. One of his reasons for making this concession has been penetrated by Mr. Bruff. Miss Verinder had only a life interest in her mother's property—and there was no raising the twenty thousand pounds on THAT.

But you will say, he might have saved the three thousand pounds, to redeem the pledged Diamond, if he had married. He might have done so certainly—supposing neither his wife, nor her guardians and trustees, objected to his anticipating more than half of the income at his disposal, for some unknown purpose, in the first year of his marriage. But even if he got over this obstacle, there was another waiting for him in the background. The lady at the Villa, had heard of his contemplated marriage. A superb woman, Mr. Blake, of the sort that are not to be trifled with—the sort with the light complexion and the Roman nose. She felt the utmost contempt for Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite. It would be silent contempt, if he made a handsome provision for her. Otherwise, it would be contempt with a tongue to it. Miss Verinder's life interest allowed him no more hope of raising the “provision” than of raising the twenty thousand pounds. He couldn't marry—he really couldn't marry, under all the circumstances.

How he tried his luck again with another lady, and how THAT marriage also broke down on the question of money, you know already. You also know of the legacy of five thousand pounds, left to him shortly afterwards, by one of those many admirers among the soft sex whose good graces this fascinating man had contrived to win. That legacy (as the event has proved) led him to his death.

I have ascertained that when he went abroad, on getting his five thousand pounds, he went to Amsterdam. There he made all the necessary arrangements for having the Diamond cut into separate stones. He came back (in disguise), and redeemed the Moonstone, on the appointed day. A few days were allowed to elapse (as a precaution agreed to by both parties) before the jewel was actually taken out of the bank. If he had got safe with it to Amsterdam, there would have been just time between July 'forty-nine, and February 'fifty (when the young gentleman came of age) to cut the Diamond, and to make a marketable commodity (polished or unpolished) of the separate stones. Judge from this, what motives he had to run the risk which he actually ran. It was “neck or nothing” with him—if ever it was “neck or nothing” with a man yet.

I have only to remind you, before closing this Report, that there is a chance of laying hands on the Indians, and of recovering the Moonstone yet. They are now (there is every reason to believe) on their passage to Bombay, in an East Indiaman. The ship (barring accidents) will touch at no other port on her way out; and the authorities at Bombay (already communicated with by letter, overland) will be prepared to board the vessel, the moment she enters the harbour.

I have the honour to remain, dear sir, your obedient servant, RICHARD CUFF (late sergeant in the Detective Force, Scotland Yard, London).¹

¹ NOTE.—Wherever the Report touches on the events of the birthday, or of the three days that followed it, compare with Betteredge's Narrative, chapters viii. to xiii.

SEVENTH NARRATIVE

In a Letter from Mr. Candy

Frizinghall, *Wednesday, Sept. 26th, 1849.*—Dear Mr. Franklin Blake, you will anticipate the sad news I have to tell you, on finding your letter to Ezra Jennings returned to you, unopened, in this enclosure. He died in my arms, at sunrise, on Wednesday last.

I am not to blame for having failed to warn you that his end was at hand. He expressly forbade me to write to you. "I am indebted to Mr. Franklin Blake," he said, "for having seen some happy days. Don't distress him, Mr. Candy—don't distress him."

His sufferings, up to the last six hours of his life, were terrible to see. In the intervals of remission, when his mind was clear, I entreated him to tell me of any relatives of his to whom I might write. He asked to be forgiven for refusing anything to me. And then he said—not bitterly—that he would die as he had lived, forgotten and unknown. He maintained that resolution to the last. There is no hope now of making any discoveries concerning him. His story is a blank.

The day before he died, he told me where to find all his papers. I brought them to him on his bed. There was a little bundle of old letters which he put aside. There was his unfinished book. There was his Diary—in many locked volumes. He opened the volume for this year, and tore out, one by one, the pages relating to the time when you and he were together. "Give those," he said, "to Mr. Franklin Blake. In years to come, he may feel an interest in looking back at what is written there." Then he clasped his hands, and prayed God fervently to bless you, and those dear to you. He said he should like to see you again. But the next moment he altered his mind. "No," he answered when I offered to write. "I won't distress him! I won't distress him!"

At his request I next collected the other papers—that is to say, the bundle of letters, the unfinished book and the volumes of the Diary—and enclosed them all in one wrapper, sealed with my own seal. "Promise," he said, "that you will put this into my coffin with your own hand; and that you will see that no other hand touches it afterwards."

I gave him my promise. And the promise has been performed.

He asked me to do one other thing for him—which it cost me a hard struggle to comply with. He said, "Let my grave be forgotten. Give me your word of honour that you will allow no monument of any sort—not even the commonest tombstone—to mark the place of my burial. Let me sleep, nameless. Let me rest, unknown." When I tried to plead with him to alter his resolution, he became for the first, and only time, violently agitated. I could not bear to see it; and I gave way. Nothing but a little grass mound marks the place of his rest. In time, the tombstones will rise round it. And the people who come after us will look and wonder at the nameless grave.

As I have told you, for six hours before his death his sufferings ceased. He dozed a little. I think he dreamed. Once or twice he smiled. A woman's name, as I suppose—the name of "Ella"—was often on his lips at this time. A few minutes before the end he asked me to lift him on his pillow, to see the sun rise through the window. He was very weak. His head fell on my shoulder. He whispered, "It's coming!" Then he said, "Kiss me!" I kissed his forehead. On a sudden he lifted his head. The sunlight touched his face. A beautiful expression, an angelic expression, came over it. He cried out three times, "Peace! peace! peace!" His head sank back again on my shoulder, and the long trouble of his life was at an end.

So he has gone from us. This was, as I think, a great man—though the world never knew him. He had the sweetest temper I have ever met with. The loss of him makes me feel very lonely. Perhaps I have never been quite myself since my illness. Sometimes, I think of giving up my practice, and going away, and trying what some of the foreign baths and waters will do for me.

It is reported here, that you and Miss Verinder are to be married next month. Please to accept my best congratulations.

The pages of my poor friend's Journal are waiting for you at my house—sealed up, with your name on the wrapper. I was afraid to trust them to the post.

My best respects and good wishes attend Miss Verinder. I remain, dear Mr. Franklin Blake, truly yours,

THOMAS CANDY.

EIGHTH NARRATIVE

Contributed by Gabriel Betteredge

I am the person (as you remember no doubt) who led the way in these pages, and opened the story. I am also the person who is left behind, as it were, to close the story up.

Let nobody suppose that I have any last words to say here concerning the Indian Diamond. I hold that unlucky jewel in abhorrence—and I refer you to other authority than mine, for such news of the Moonstone as you may, at the present time, be expected to receive. My purpose, in this place, is to state a fact in the history of the family, which has been passed over by everybody, and which I won't allow to be disrespectfully smothered up in that way. The fact to which I allude is—the marriage of Miss Rachel and Mr. Franklin Blake. This interesting event took place at our house in Yorkshire, on Tuesday, October ninth, eighteen hundred and forty-nine. I had a new suit of clothes on the occasion. And the married couple went to spend the honeymoon in Scotland.

Family festivals having been rare enough at our house, since my poor mistress's death, I own—on this occasion of the wedding—to having (towards the latter part of the day) taken a drop too much on the strength of it.

If you have ever done the same sort of thing yourself you will understand and feel for me. If you have not, you will very likely say, "Disgusting old man! why does he tell us this?" The reason why is now to come.

Having, then, taken my drop (bless you! you have got your favourite vice, too; only your vice isn't mine, and mine isn't yours), I next applied the one infallible remedy—that remedy being, as you know, Robinson Crusoe. Where I opened that unrivalled book, I can't say. Where the lines of print at last left off running into each other, I know, however, perfectly well. It was at page three hundred and eighteen—a domestic bit concerning Robinson Crusoe's marriage, as follows:

"With those Thoughts, I considered my new Engagement, that I had a Wife"—(Observe! so had Mr. Franklin!)"—"one Child born"—(Observe again! that might yet be Mr. Franklin's case, too!)"—"and my Wife then"—What Robinson Crusoe's wife did, or did not do, "then," I felt no desire to discover. I scored the bit about the Child with my pencil, and put a morsel of paper for a mark to keep the place; "Lie you there," I said, "till the marriage of Mr. Franklin and Miss Rachel is some months older—and then we'll see!"

The months passed (more than I had bargained for), and no occasion presented itself for disturbing that mark in the book. It was not till this present month of November, eighteen hundred and fifty, that Mr. Franklin came into my room, in high good spirits, and said, "Betteredge! I have got some news for you! Something is going to happen in the house, before we are many months older."

"Does it concern the family, sir?" I asked.

"It decidedly concerns the family," says Mr. Franklin. "Has your good lady anything to do with it, if you please, sir?"

"She has a great deal to do with it," says Mr. Franklin, beginning to look a little surprised.

"You needn't say a word more, sir," I answered. "God bless you both! I'm heartily glad to hear it."

Mr. Franklin stared like a person thunderstruck. “May I venture to inquire where you got your information?” he asked. “I only got mine (imparted in the strictest secrecy) five minutes since.”

Here was an opportunity of producing Robinson Crusoe! Here was a chance of reading that domestic bit about the child which I had marked on the day of Mr. Franklin’s marriage! I read those miraculous words with an emphasis which did them justice, and then I looked him severely in the face. “NOW, sir, do you believe in Robinson Crusoe?” I asked, with a solemnity, suitable to the occasion.

“Betteredge!” says Mr. Franklin, with equal solemnity, “I’m convinced at last.” He shook hands with me—and I felt that I had converted him.

With the relation of this extraordinary circumstance, my reappearance in these pages comes to an end. Let nobody laugh at the unique anecdote here related. You are welcome to be as merry as you please over everything else I have written. But when I write of Robinson Crusoe, by the Lord it’s serious—and I request you to take it accordingly!

When this is said, all is said. Ladies and gentlemen, I make my bow, and shut up the story.

EPILOGUE

THE FINDING OF THE DIAMOND

I

The Statement of Sergeant Cliff's Man (1849)

On the twenty-seventh of June last, I received instructions from Sergeant Cuff to follow three men; suspected of murder, and described as Indians. They had been seen on the Tower Wharf that morning, embarking on board the steamer bound for Rotterdam.

I left London by a steamer belonging to another company, which sailed on the morning of Thursday the twenty-eighth. Arriving at Rotterdam, I succeeded in finding the commander of the Wednesday's steamer. He informed me that the Indians had certainly been passengers on board his vessel—but as far as Gravesend only. Off that place, one of the three had inquired at what time they would reach Calais. On being informed that the steamer was bound to Rotterdam, the spokesman of the party expressed the greatest surprise and distress at the mistake which he and his two friends had made. They were all willing (he said) to sacrifice their passage money, if the commander of the steamer would only put them ashore. Commiserating their position, as foreigners in a strange land, and knowing no reason for detaining them, the commander signalled for a shore boat, and the three men left the vessel.

This proceeding of the Indians having been plainly resolved on beforehand, as a means of preventing their being traced, I lost no time in returning to England. I left the steamer at Gravesend, and discovered that the Indians had gone from that place to London. Thence, I again traced them as having left for Plymouth. Inquiries made at Plymouth proved that they had sailed, forty-eight hours previously, in the BEWLEY CASTLE, East Indiaman, bound direct to Bombay.

On receiving this intelligence, Sergeant Cuff caused the authorities at Bombay to be communicated with, overland—so that the vessel might be boarded by the police immediately on her entering the port. This step having been taken, my connection with the matter came to an end. I have heard nothing more of it since that time.

II

The Statement of the Captain (1849)

I am requested by Sergeant Cuff to set in writing certain facts, concerning three men (believed to be Hindoos) who were passengers, last summer, in the ship BEWLEY CATSLE, bound for Bombay direct, under my command.

The Hindoos joined us at Plymouth. On the passage out I heard no complaint of their conduct. They were berthed in the forward part of the vessel. I had but few occasions myself of personally noticing them.

In the latter part of the voyage, we had the misfortune to be becalmed for three days and nights, off the coast of India. I have not got the ship's journal to refer to, and I cannot now call to mind

the latitude and longitude. As to our position, therefore, I am only able to state generally that the currents drifted us in towards the land, and that when the wind found us again, we reached our port in twenty-four hours afterwards.

The discipline of a ship (as all seafaring persons know) becomes relaxed in a long calm. The discipline of my ship became relaxed. Certain gentlemen among the passengers got some of the smaller boats lowered, and amused themselves by rowing about, and swimming, when the sun at evening time was cool enough to let them divert themselves in that way. The boats when done with ought to have been slung up again in their places. Instead of this they were left moored to the ship's side. What with the heat, and what with the vexation of the weather, neither officers nor men seemed to be in heart for their duty while the calm lasted.

On the third night, nothing unusual was heard or seen by the watch on deck. When the morning came, the smallest of the boats was missing—and the three Hindoos were next reported to be missing, too.

If these men had stolen the boat shortly after dark (which I have no doubt they did), we were near enough to the land to make it vain to send in pursuit of them, when the discovery was made in the morning. I have no doubt they got ashore, in that calm weather (making all due allowance for fatigue and clumsy rowing), before day-break.

On reaching our port I there learnt, for the first time, the reason these passengers had for seizing their opportunity of escaping from the ship. I could only make the same statement to the authorities which I have made here. They considered me to blame for allowing the discipline of the vessel to be relaxed. I have expressed my regret on this score to them, and to my owners.

Since that time, nothing has been heard to my knowledge of the three Hindoos. I have no more to add to what is here written.

III

The Statement of Mr. Murthwaite (1850)

(IN A LETTER TO MR. BRUFF)

Have you any recollection, my dear sir, of a semi-savage person whom you met out at dinner, in London, in the autumn of 'forty-eight? Permit me to remind you that the person's name was Murthwaite, and that you and he had a long conversation together after dinner. The talk related to an Indian Diamond, called the Moonstone, and to a conspiracy then in existence to get possession of the gem.

Since that time, I have been wandering in Central Asia. Thence I have drifted back to the scene of some of my past adventures in the north and north-west of India. About a fortnight since, I found myself in a certain district or province (but little known to Europeans) called Kattiawar.

Here an adventure befel me, in which (incredible as it may appear) you are personally interested.

In the wild regions of Kattiawar (and how wild they are, you will understand, when I tell you that even the husbandmen plough the land, armed to the teeth), the population is fanatically devoted to the old Hindoo religion—to the ancient worship of Bramah and Vishnu. The few Mahometan families, thinly scattered about the villages in the interior, are afraid to taste meat of

any kind. A Mahometan even suspected of killing that sacred animal, the cow, is, as a matter of course, put to death without mercy in these parts by the pious Hindoo neighbours who surround him. To strengthen the religious enthusiasm of the people, two of the most famous shrines of Hindoo pilgrimage are contained within the boundaries of Kattiawar. One of them is Dwarka, the birthplace of the god Krishna. The other is the sacred city of Somnauth—sacked, and destroyed as long since as the eleventh century, by the Mahometan conqueror, Mahmoud of Ghizni.

Finding myself, for the second time, in these romantic regions, I resolved not to leave Kattiawar, without looking once more on the magnificent desolation of Somnauth. At the place where I planned to do this, I was (as nearly as I could calculate it) some three days distant, journeying on foot, from the sacred city.

I had not been long on the road, before I noticed that other people—by twos and threes—appeared to be travelling in the same direction as myself.

To such of these as spoke to me, I gave myself out as a Hindoo-Boodhist, from a distant province, bound on a pilgrimage. It is needless to say that my dress was of the sort to carry out this description. Add, that I know the language as well as I know my own, and that I am lean enough and brown enough to make it no easy matter to detect my European origin—and you will understand that I passed muster with the people readily: not as one of themselves, but as a stranger from a distant part of their own country.

On the second day, the number of Hindoos travelling in my direction had increased to fifties and hundreds. On the third day, the throng had swollen to thousands; all slowly converging to one point—the city of Somnauth.

A trifling service which I was able to render to one of my fellow-pilgrims, during the third day's journey, proved the means of introducing me to certain Hindoos of the higher caste. From these men I learnt that the multitude was on its way to a great religious ceremony, which was to take place on a hill at a little distance from Somnauth. The ceremony was in honour of the god of the Moon; and it was to be held at night.

The crowd detained us as we drew near to the place of celebration. By the time we reached the hill the moon was high in the heaven. My Hindoo friends possessed some special privileges which enabled them to gain access to the shrine. They kindly allowed me to accompany them. When we arrived at the place, we found the shrine hidden from our view by a curtain hung between two magnificent trees. Beneath the trees a flat projection of rock jutted out, and formed a species of natural platform. Below this, I stood, in company with my Hindoo friends.

Looking back down the hill, the view presented the grandest spectacle of Nature and Man, in combination, that I have ever seen. The lower slopes of the eminence melted imperceptibly into a grassy plain, the place of the meeting of three rivers. On one side, the graceful winding of the waters stretched away, now visible, now hidden by trees, as far as the eye could see. On the other, the waveless ocean slept in the calm of the night. People this lovely scene with tens of thousands of human creatures, all dressed in white, stretching down the sides of the hill, overflowing into the plain, and fringing the nearer banks of the winding rivers. Light this halt of the pilgrims by the wild red flames of cressets and torches, streaming up at intervals from every part of the innumerable throng. Imagine the moonlight of the East, pouring in unclouded glory over all—and you will form some idea of the view that met me when I looked forth from the summit of the hill.

A strain of plaintive music, played on stringed instruments, and flutes, recalled my attention to the hidden shrine.

I turned, and saw on the rocky platform the figures of three men. In the central figure of the three I recognised the man to whom I had spoken in England, when the Indians appeared on the terrace at Lady Verinder's house. The other two who had been his companions on that occasion were no doubt his companions also on this.

One of the spectators, near whom I was standing, saw me start. In a whisper, he explained to me the apparition of the three figures on the platform of rock.

They were Brahmins (he said) who had forfeited their caste in the service of the god. The god had commanded that their purification should be the purification by pilgrimage. On that night, the three men were to part. In three separate directions, they were to set forth as pilgrims to the shrines of India. Never more were they to look on each other's faces. Never more were they to rest on their wanderings, from the day which witnessed their separation, to the day which witnessed their death.

As those words were whispered to me, the plaintive music ceased. The three men prostrated themselves on the rock, before the curtain which hid the shrine. They rose—they looked on one another—they embraced. Then they descended separately among the people. The people made way for them in dead silence. In three different directions I saw the crowd part, at one and the same moment. Slowly the grand white mass of the people closed together again. The track of the doomed men through the ranks of their fellow mortals was obliterated. We saw them no more.

A new strain of music, loud and jubilant, rose from the hidden shrine. The crowd around me shuddered, and pressed together.

The curtain between the trees was drawn aside, and the shrine was disclosed to view.

There, raised high on a throne—seated on his typical antelope, with his four arms stretching towards the four corners of the earth—there, soared above us, dark and awful in the mystic light of heaven, the god of the Moon. And there, in the forehead of the deity, gleamed the yellow Diamond, whose splendour had last shone on me in England, from the bosom of a woman's dress!

Yes! after the lapse of eight centuries, the Moonstone looks forth once more, over the walls of the sacred city in which its story first began. How it has found its way back to its wild native land—by what accident, or by what crime, the Indians regained possession of their sacred gem, may be in your knowledge, but is not in mine. You have lost sight of it in England, and (if I know anything of this people) you have lost sight of it for ever.

So the years pass, and repeat each other; so the same events revolve in the cycles of time. What will be the next adventures of the Moonstone? Who can tell?