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A SERIES OF SHORT STORIES

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III.

DR. JAQUET'S SECRET.

VI.

Mr. Doggett's home lay among a wilderness of houses bordering upon the unfashionable and unpicturesque neighborhood of the Old Kent road. He had a long stretch to walk from Notting hill before he reached his place by the chimney corner, but he forgot all sense of weariness in his self-absorption over the discovery he had just made.

Just as it had not occurred to Mr. Webber to connect Madam Jaquet's runaway husband with the eminent specialist, so it had never entered Doggett's mind to imagine that a relationship might exist between the great West End practitioner and the young clerk at the Universal with whom he had a bowing acquaintance. There was nothing in the circumstances of the case except the mere identity of name, to connect them together in anyone's mind, and an identity of name offers a very precarious foundation on which to erect a sensational hypothesis.

But Mr. Doggett had gleaned enough from Madam Jaquet's diary to know that she had recognized her husband in the Harley-street physician, and in this capacity had been in the habit of receiving him at her apartments in Cornwall road. He required an opportunity to adjust the focus of his mental vision to the facts he had discovered, and his long walk home provided him with the opportunity.

Theory after theory presented itself to his mind, by which the long separation that had occurred between husband and wife, and Madam Jaquet's sudden death, might be explained in a manner perfectly compatible with Dr. Jaquet's good faith, though the trained instinct of the detective, who was too sadly familiar with the seamy side of life, prompted him to a different conclusion. It was just this very tendency to think the worst of mankind that induced him to beat about for some probable explanation of the facts he was investigating that would accord with the great physician's innocence.

But though he turned the matter over this way and that, exhausting every possibility in turn, by the time that his feet were planted on the steps leading to the front door he had mentally determined in his own phraseology that Dr. Jaquet was "a bad lot." But this was a point which, he anticipated, a further acquaintance with Madam Jaquet's diaries would set at rest.

His daughter Jessie, in whose education he had taken a great pride, would soon enable him to decide the question—Jessie, who was a good linguist, as he proudly remembered, and who knew French and German like a native. Accordingly, when the door was opened by a bright-eyed, comely girl of 20, who threw her arms round his neck, and kissing him affectionately led him forward into the room—half sitting room and half kitchen—where his supper was spread waiting for him, he laid Madam Jaquet's diaries down on the table, and broached the matter that was on his mind without delay.

"Some French for you, my dear. You can begin and read it while I have my supper," the detective said, after he had embraced his wife, who sat in the chimney corner knitting.

"Not to-night, dad!" exclaimed Jessie.

"Well, not all of it to-night," replied Mr. Doggett, looking doubtfully at the four MS. volumes, which, if small and portable, were nevertheless bulky. "But, at any rate, we can make a beginning, Jessie."

There was a boiled leg of pickled pork and peas pudding, cold, a dish to which Mr. Doggett was particularly partial, and while the detective regaled himself on these dainties, Jessie began the story of Madam Jaquet's life, as told by herself, from the time of her husband's flight.

The narrative, which set forth its painful facts with artless pathos, proved so interesting that long after Doggett had finished his meal Jessie had grown so deeply fascinated that she read on and on, while her father sat smoking and her mother continued knitting, all of them unmindful of the flight of time. It was the small hours of the morning before Jessie had finished her task, and though wearied with the exercise she declared she was not in the least bit sleepy.

"That's what I call really exciting," said Jessie, as she laid the last volume down. "Reads like a novel, doesn't it dad?"

The diary had been commenced by Madam Jaquet after her arrival in England, on the day that she commenced her search for her missing husband. It began with a simple recital of the facts of her married life down to the eventful days of the *coup d' etat*, and the various conjectures discussed between herself and M. Benoit (her father) to account for Felix Jaquet's disappearance, including a narrative of her reasons for coming to England in quest of her husband. Then it went on to describe the search conducted by the firm of private inquiry agents in her behalf, and the more pathetic and heartrending struggles to find him which she conducted single-handed. But the passages that had the most interest for Mr. Doggett were contained in the later pages, that recounted Madame Jaquet's accidental recognition of Dr. Jaquet in the park, and of their subsequent interviews at Cornwall road.

Many passages in the earlier portion of the story were deeply affecting in the strains of tenderness and sadness with which the gentle-hearted lady had mourned the inexplicable riddle of her husband's absence. It was absolutely pitiful to read some sentences in which the writer expressed herself in alternate hope and fear, as her quest seemed approaching an end, or receded further into the distance. Her joy when they met at last, and when, as she declared, she found her darling all that she dared to hope, with an explanation ready that would prevent the son being ashamed of his father, was depicted in bright glowing colors. Thenceforward, though each day had its own little chronicle of Dr. Jaquet's daily visits, the entries grew shorter and shorter. It seemed as if the woman's heart was too full of love and joy over her restoration to her husband's society to find expression. The notes—such as they were—were mainly confined to the bare record of Dr. Jaquet's visits, her own pleasure in them, how she thought her husband looking, and the stage at which the negotiations for the disposal of the house in Harley street, preparatory to their return to Paris, had arrived.

There was not a sign of any flaw in her perfect trust in the husband of her youth. Just as through the long dark years that had followed their separation her self-communings exhibited a settled resolve not to face the possibility that her husband was faithless and had deserted her (save only in the reticence she observed to her son), so, after they had met, the suspicion that her husband might be playing her false, and was alluring her to rest with entire confidence in him, by specious promises that he never meant to fulfil, did not appear to have crossed her mind. To Doggett, however, who sat ruminating over the story after his daughter had locked the volumes up in his bureau, and mother and daughter had retired to rest, it seemed only too clear that Jaquet had simply been playing a part until the time came when it would be convenient to him to throw off the mask and expose his hand.

An affectionate husband, such as Madam Jaquet believed her husband to be—the detective argued—would have carried his wife to his own home straight away. What if she was delicate! There are invalid carriages to be had, and a man who had been separated from his wife by the chapter of accidents, as Madam Jaquet believed, would have had an invalid carriage round in an hour. It was only a trustful, loving woman who could be fooled by a plausible tongue as Dr. Jaquet had fooled his wife. What could be the motive? he asked himself, for this extraordinary procedure.

Doggett's common sense brushed aside the fond delusion to which the unfortunate woman had clung for the last 16 years of her life. Where Madam Jaquet had seen a hurried flight for dear life, Doggett saw a premeditated plan of escape, in which Madam Jaquet was not intended to share, although passports had been taken out in their joint names. Dr. Jaquet had fled with some woman, intending to keep the place of his retreat secret. Who was this woman? Where was she now? If she were alive, or if Dr. Jaquet had contracted a second alliance, Doggett could see that those daily visits to Cornwall road, and the long confabs by the couch of the invalid, indicated something like an orderly plan, devised to keep his wife in ignorance of the real truth, lest she should burst the bubble of his respectability, and expose him to the world. A divorce suit, or a suit for a restoration of conjugal rights, would be an awkward matter for the great West End physician, who, it might be supposed, had presented some other lady to society as his wife.

But Doggett was still far from fathoming, to his own satisfaction, Dr. Jaquet's motives for the deception he practised on his wife. In the nature of things a systematic course of deceit must come to an end some time or other. What purpose could Dr. Jaquet have had in view, unless he believed that his wife's death was inevitable, sooner or later, from the disease that she was laboring under? But that explanation could not be entertained in the face of Dr. Crosby's clear testimony. In the end, Doggett found himself shut up to the conclusion that Dr. Jaquet had decided, possibly from the first, to sweep from his path the only being who knew the secret of his life, and that his daily visits were a mere mask to cover his dark design.

The sudden cessation of these visits from the day of his wife's death grew black with significance. Why had he not kept up the farce a little longer? There was but one answer—Dr. Jaquet had not dared to put in a further appearance at Cornwall road, because he knew that his wife was dead, and that his appearance might lead to awkward questions; and he could not have known of her death unless she had died in his presence, or, less likely, unless he had left her in a dying state. The strict injunctions that he left behind him that madam was sleeping, and must not be disturbed, agreed with the theory that was slowly growing up in Doggett's mind. His caution to the maid servant that madam was not to be disturbed was in all probability a mere blind to cover his retreat, and give the date when it came to be discovered a natural appearance.

Having arrived thus far Doggett went to bed. The grey light of dawn was struggling against the darkness in the East, as he drew up his blind to look out. That never-ending roar of street traffic, which keeps London for ever an unquiet city, like the turbulent sea that will not rest, was beginning to acquire volume. There was time to snatch a few hours' sleep before he began to run his man to earth.

The detective rose and had breakfasted soon after 9, by which time his ideas were settled and his plans had assumed a definite shape.

Before the hour of noon had struck a friendly chat with a policeman going his rounds in Harley street had obtained for him all the information he could expect to learn from that quarter.

"Married?" said the policeman in answer to his inquiries, "I should think so. Very much married. You should see his wife. My eye, ain't she a spanker? Oh, dear no, not at all!

"Children, do you ask? Heaps on 'em; place reg'ler swarms wi' 'em."

"They tell me he is giving up his house," said Doggett musingly; "going back to his own country."

"Don't you believe that," replied the officer, "he's doing too well in this country to think of any other."

Doggett, who was satisfied with the result of his inquiries thus far, signaled a passing hansom, and then began a tour of estate-agent offices. "It's not much good I'm afraid," he said to himself reflectively, "but it is better to be on the safe side, and have clear proof that he stuffed that poor woman with all manner of lies." It was not the first time in his experience that he had been driven to the same expedient, and he had come provided with all the leading firms acting as agents, with properties to let and to sell, and though he grew weary with the monotonous answers he received to his question, "Whether Dr. Jaquet's house was in the market as reported," he persevered until he had exhausted the list. When he had completed this task, and run this particular falsehood to earth, he decided to set about tracing Dr. Jaquet's movements since his arrival in England.

This task proved to be easier than might have been expected. A copy of "The Notabilities of To-day," that trumpet of cotemporary fame, supplied all the information sought after, with a fulness of detail that left nothing to be desired.

Turning to the letter "J," Mr. Doggett soon discovered the name of the West End physician—JAQUET, FELIX.

Under this head he found a biography in brief of Dr. Jaquet, which, after describing his "blushing honors" and brilliant services to suffering humanity, informed the world that, "having had the good fortune to escape the horrors of the coup d' etat, he settled in London, having married Lucie St. Hillaire, daughter of Adolphe St. Hillaire, of the Opera Comique, at the Church of St. Faith, Cherwell-by-the-Sea, on the 5th of May, 1852."

"Ho! ho! so our friend is a bigamist," murmured Doggett softly to himself; "and why not a murderer, too?" The detective rapidly penciled down full particulars, mentally chuckling that Dr. Jaquet's ambition to shine among the upper ten thousand had left a clear and indisputable trail behind him, such as would forbid any difficulty arising if the question of identity arose hereafter.

This done, he turned his steps in the direction of the old Kent road, well satisfied with his day's work.

VII.

It was the third day after the detective had left Philippe Jaquet, and still he had sent no message and given no sign how he was succeeding in his quest.

Philippe's nerves, already strung to extreme tension, were threatening to collapse outright, although the task assigned to him of hunting for the missing volume of his mother's diary which the detective had carried away in his pocket, and the examination of her papers, found him in plenty of occupation.

The atmosphere of suspicion in which he was now living was contrary both to his mother's teaching—who had ever held before him a high moral ideal—and the whole habits of his life. He felt that it was not impossible that the entire bent of his character might receive a new direction, if the ghastly suspicions, which he perceived clearly were in Doggett's mind, came to be confirmed. His disposition was like his mother's in affectionateness and truthfulness; though, being a man, he was not so predisposed as his mother had been, to endure wrong patiently; still less so when the wrong had been aimed at that precious life. He found himself vowing the most undying hate, and girding his mind to the most implacable vengeance on the man who had wrecked her happiness, if such guilt were traced home to him.

But as he made search among his mother's papers, and discovered many indications of the fond affection that she had borne to her husband, and her absolute faith in him, which their long-continued separation did nothing to disturb, he felt his wrath rebuked. Could this man, he asked, so passionately loved, so implicitly trusted, by one of the noblest and purest of her sex, be the wretch of his suspicious fancies? It seemed so incredible that he began to find a mournful pleasure in weaving fanciful pictures of his father that would correspond with his mother's ideal, and which, if they served no other purpose, assisted to relieve the mental strain that was upon him. Images of masculine strength and devotion, of patriotic self-sacrifice and suffering were chasing each other through his brain, when later in the evening Mr. Doggett arrived and was shown into the room.

Philippe greeted the detective heartily.

"Now this long suspense is ended," he cried. "You have discovered something."

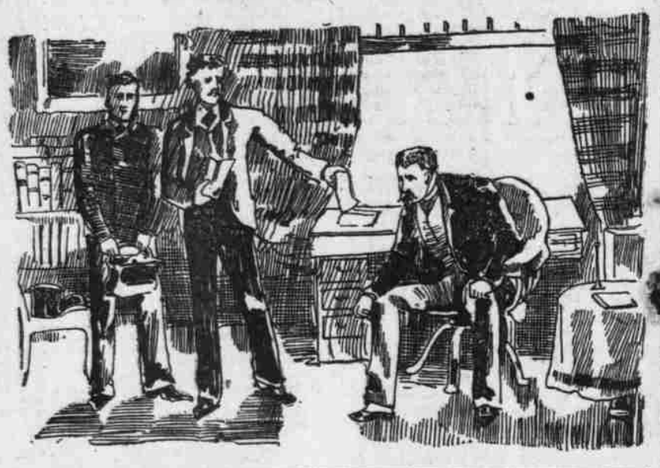
"Don't be too sanguine," replied the detective.

"'I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver,' but again I repeat, don't be too sanguine. First thing, however, you may open your mother's letter."

Philippe went to the cabinet and drew forth the letter with trembling hands.

He was strongly moved, and it was with eyes blinded with tears that he read the last message from the dead. Such words are almost sacramental. After he had mastered its contents, he spoke slowly, and only with a manifest effort contriving to control his emotion.

"I do not see that it will assist our inquiry much," he said; "but you shall hear. It is



written in French, of course, so I had better translate it for you."

"If you please," said Doggett, who, without the aid of Jessie, would have been puzzled to know what to do with the document if it had been handed to him in its original state.

The letter, which was dated in the early part of the year, and might be taken as representing both Madame Jaquet's mature thoughts and the embodiment of her latest decision, she had probably neglected to destroy, in consequence of her illness, which supervened upon the discovery of her husband. It read as follows:

My Dearest Child:

If those whose love is pure and strong are ever permitted to revisit the scenes of earth, I shall be with you when you read these lines, traced by a trembling hand that will be cold in death when you learn the last wishes of your mother.

You are 21 to-day. After much hesitation I have decided that you shall know the great trouble of my life, upon which my lips have kept silence so long. I have come to a determination not to destroy my papers, among which this secret lies hidden, but to leave you to discover all that I have not strength to say.

I had some idea of this in my mind when many years ago I began to write down an account of the mystery (so far as I could unravel it) of your poor papa's disappearance during those terrible December days of which we have often spoken together, and which are burnt into the memory of every true son of France.

But if I deemed it possible that you would let your mother's last words fall to the ground, and under some fanciful idea of avenging my wrongs, would continue to prosecute my search, I would destroy everything that could aid you in a design so abhorrent to all my feelings. You will understand, that I have left my memoranda as a trust; you have no option but to be the trustee of my wishes.

Why do I speak of my wrongs? I am not conscious of any. I have never doubted that some inscrutable fatality that he could not resist prevented your father making me the companion of his flight, and that the same fates have prevented our meeting again. To believe otherwise would kill me. In this faith I shall die, as I have lived. Only from his lips could I believe in his dishonor.

But I have often wondered whether my child would share my opinions.

You have not known your father, and cannot conceive how great, how wise, how brave, how noble he is. To you the story may seem susceptible of another interpretation. Do not entertain it. But if you must, and it should come to light that I have labored under a delusion (which I cannot for a moment believe), I charge you to forgive him. So strongly do I lay this command upon you—who have never grieved me by disobedience—that were it possible that my death were traced to your father's hand (how ridiculous!), I must still command you to forgive him. On no pretence must you venture to interfere to avenge what you think to be my wrongs.

Why do I write thus? Listen! Yesterday I had a dream. It was not an ordinary dream, for I was awake. I fell into a reverie, and then my senses seemed to be closed, and I saw you taking up my search with bitter, black thoughts working in your mind. I have sought your father for love's sake. You were seeking him in hate, and misery came of it; misery to you both. Now I, your mother, stand between the two who have had my whole heart, and I forbid it. You shall not injure one hair of his head.

You will obey me, my child, and on your obedience will rest the blessing of your mother, whose love neither time nor death can kill.

A thousand burning kisses I press upon your lips now, while I hold you to my breast in a last embrace.

If time proves my vision false, and you meet my Felix, tell him that your mother loved him to the last, and died in the faith that we should meet again in happiness.

May God and the Holy Mother and all His holy angels have you in their keeping until you are reunited with

Your mother,
CLAIRE.

Some moments passed in silence.

Philippe was incapable of speaking, and Doggett's mind was too busy considering his next step to care to break through the silence. The solemn hush of a great awe was left on the spirits of both men by that message from the dead.

It appeared to Doggett that a tremendous responsibility rested on his shoulders. Should he speak or be silent? It lay within his power to enforce obedience to the dead woman's commands. The diary that he had taken away, without Philippe's knowledge, contained the clue without which Philippe would seek to unravel the mystery in vain. He had but to keep up the deception by restoring the three volumes that would whet Philippe's curiosity, and withhold the fourth volume that could alone satisfy it, and Madame Jaquet's dying wishes would be observed.

Never had he been placed in a situation so perplexing. He was filled with bitter regret that he had arrested Philippe's movement at the commencement of the search, when he wished to open his mother's letter. Had the young man been allowed to take the course that nature and affection prompted, he might have been induced to abandon the quest, lest its pursuit should lay him open to the temptation to disregard the wishes of the dead, and Doggett would have been saved the dilemma that now confronted him. Was it possible now, at the eleventh hour, to persuade him to adopt this plan? It was worth making the attempt, the detective thought, and after a long silence he spoke.

"Your mother's wishes—commands, rather, I ought to say—will be respected, of course?"

"Why do you ask?" said Philippe, eyeing the detective keenly.

"Perhaps you will hear my views," said Doggett diffidently, noticing in the haggard expression that began to steal over Philippe's face the sign-manual of a keen mental struggle. "If that letter had been written to me, I should draw the conclusion that the vision of which my mother wrote was what the Scotch people call second sight. It is said that it is given to those who are about to die to obtain a glimpse into futurity. It was given to her, and though in her waking moments she did not believe that her husband was not all that was good and true, she saw you believing differently and seeking out your father to avenge her."

"Well!" cried Philippe suspiciously, as the detective paused.

"I would trust the vision, and keep faith with the dead by abandoning the search."

"I see," exclaimed Philippe, "you know something which you are keeping back."

"Keep to the letter," responded Doggett firmly. "Is it to be obeyed? I say it ought."

"My mother's wishes are sacred to me, but I must be the judge of my own actions," Phillippe replied. "She does not bid me forgive blindly, neither will I. Tell me what you have discovered."

"Better not," answered Doggett. "Your mother was wrong in her faith. Ask no more. Burn everything. Forget that you had a father, and cherish the image of that saint whom you have lost."

The counsel was kindly meant, but Phillippe was not in the mood to bear opposition. Some impulse was hurrying him on that refused to be stayed. Doggett argued and expostulated without effect, except to goad Phillippe into excitability. He was fully resolved to penetrate the hateful secret that the detective was endeavoring to keep back, and his resolution grew with the opposition, and a last bore everything before it, as the hurrying flood, checked by the barriers, gathers strength to bear down the resistance and sweep onward in its wild career.

"If you will know," said Doggett, at last, "you shall, but upon one condition."

"You can make a dozen, if you like," said Philippe, excitedly.

"No, one will do," said the detective, coolly. And then he added, quaintly, "One condition has a better chance of being kept."

"Your mother forbids you to injure one hair of your father's head. Consent."

After a further struggle, Philippe gave the required promise.

"Write it down, and sign it with your name."

Philippe complied.

Then Doggett produced from the capacious bag that he had brought with him a bundle of notes written on foolscap.

"These," he said, "are the proofs of the statement I have to make. When you have heard the statement, I will hand you the papers for your perusal."

"Go on," said Philippe, hoarsely; "I suspect it all."

"The earliest date at which your father's presence in England can be traced is the month of May, 1852. In that month he married Mlle. St. Hillaire, an actress of the Opera Comique, Paris. This lady, you will remember, was reported as missing during the coup d'etat, and Madam was asked whether it was possible that she was the companion of Dr. Jaquet's flight."

"I remember," said Phillippe, with a gloomy brow. "She declared that it was impossible."

"Exactly," said Doggett. "The passports taken out by Dr. Jacquet, in the names of himself and his wife, were employed to enable this lady to quit France under his protection. Their marriage took place in England here, shortly before he settled down in practice in Harley street. An accidental recognition in the park led your mother to invite Dr. Jaquet to visit her here. He came, as Madam's diary will show, expecting to meet a patient—a Mrs. Johnson. He found his wife, who recognized her husband in the Harley street physician. Your father was your mother's mysterious visitor, who continued his visits down to the day of her death."

"And then suddenly ceased them," replied Philippe. "Ah! the perfidious wretch. I see it all. Go on!"

"That is all," replied Doggett.

"But her death; how did he kill her?" Philippe exclaimed fiercely. "Tell me everything."

"I have no evidence that he did kill her. Remember what Dr. Crosby said. She died from exhaustion in her sleep."

"Pshaw!" cried Philippe. "That explanation might serve when we had nothing to guide us to a different conclusion, but it will not do now. Can you not see the whole villainous plot?

"What plot?" asked the detective cautiously.

"When he came here and discovered that his patient was my mother, he lied to her, and kept hope alive in her breast by promises as false as his heart is black; and when the time came to make good his word, or drop the mask of deceit, he took the life that his brutal abandonment had made worthless to her. Give me the proofs of which you spoke."

Doggett handed to Philippe the copious extracts from his mother's diary that Jessie had made under his directions, and when Philippe had finished their perusal, he gave him in turn the account of the operation that Dr. Jaquet had performed at St. George's with Madam Jaquet's indorsement, and the extract from "The Notabilities of To-day," containing particulars of Dr. Jaquet's history.

When Philippe had concluded reading them, he rose from his seat and flung up his arms in despair, and there went through the room an exceeding bitter cry—a cry of heart-broken sorrow and of baffled vengeance.

"Oh! mother, mother," he exclaimed, "what is this you have done? This villain must go free!"

And then he sank back into his chair, bowed his head and wept.

VIII.

The next afternoon Mr. Doggett directed his course once more to Cornwall road by appointment.

Philippe Jaquet, in the depth of his misery, when the whole meaning of the secret that had been so long kept from him burst on his mind with appalling distinctness, grew too prostrate to think. It was as if a hideous darkness had descended upon his spirit and blotted out the light utterly. The detective, after much difficulty, succeeded in calming him, and after obtaining a promise that he would take no step without consulting him, took his leave.

"Feel my hands," said Philippe, as Doggett was shown in the room, "they are like burning coals now, but I have myself under command. You will see. I want you to come with me."

"Where to?" asked the detective warily.

"To Harley street, of course," Philippe replied. "No, don't attempt to divert me from my purpose," he continued, as Mr. Doggett made as though he would speak. "Nothing can do that, but I want you to see that I respect my promise. I will not injure one hair of his head. Those were the words I think."

The detective, satisfied with the renewal of the promise, took the bag containing the papers, and set out with Philippe for Harley street.

As they came within sight of the house a Victoria drove past them rapidly. The occupants were Dr. Jaquet and the woman, for whose sake he had steeped himself in wrong and worked bitterest misery to his wife and first-born son.

A silent pressure on Philippe's arm, as the carriage drew up before the house and discharged its occupants, helped him to divine the identity of the pair who tripped lightly up the steps. A few paces more and he and Doggett were standing before the still open door.

"Dr. Jaquet sees no one at this hour," said the footman in reply to Philippe's request for an interview; but on receiving this response, he pushed past the footman.

"I must see Dr. Jaquet immediately," he said, "my business with him is one of life and death, and will not wait."

"Step this way," said Dr. Jaquet, who was at that moment ascending the staircase, and had been arrested in his progress by the commotion, as Philippe, closely followed by Doggett, forced his way into the hall. So saying, Dr. Jaquet led the way into his consulting room.

For the first time after the lapse of years, father and son stood face to face, while Doggett felt his heart thumping against the walls of his chest at the dramatic situation whose ending he could not foresee. Dr. Jaquet, smiling and debonnair as usual, was the first to speak.

"Your case is one of great urgency?" he said.

"Very great urgency, indeed," answered Philippe. "Look at me. Do you not know me?"

Dr. Jaquet turned a steady gaze on his inquisitor, and smiled significantly, as though a suspicion had crossed his mind that the young man had taken leave of his senses. He cast a second look at Doggett, and found his suspicions confirmed. His visitor (whose excitement, though repressed, was visible to the practised eye of the physician) was no doubt some young lunatic, and the elderly man who accompanied him was his keeper.

"Poor young man!" he said softly, with a commiserating air, "has he been long in this condition?"

"Don't prevaricate. Answer my questions, sir," cried Philippe hotly. "I am as sane as you are. Again, I ask, do you know me?"

"No, I never saw you before," was the response unhesitatingly given.

"You lie," cried Philippe, passionately, and he laughed a bitter strident laugh.

"This is not the place for language of that kind," said Dr. Jaquet, who remained sheathed in impenetrable armor, though the color that dyed his pallid skin, and the angry glitter in his eyes, showed that his composure was only maintained by the exercise of great self-restraint.

"Who am I?" returned Philippe, "I am you son, Philippe Jaquet."

Dr. Jaquet, who had remained standing since his visitors had ignored his invitation to be seated, fall back a step as if he had been struck a sudden blow. For a moment his self-possession seemed to have deserted him, but he quickly recovered his imperturbable manner.

"I do not know any person who has the right to call himself Philippe Jaquet."

"It is not a family name of the Jaquets," replied Philippe sarcastically. "I was named after my grandfather, M. Benoit, the avocat of Lille."

"That may be correct," said Dr. Jaquet with great sang froid, "but these particulars of your family history are of no interest to me."

"We will see about that," said Philippe, imitating his father's calm, though inwardly raging. "Now listen. I am here under a solemn pledge to my mother that not a hair of your head shall be injured. But you trespass on my patience too far. I mean to accomplish my errand; you can hear or refuse to listen. But another word of disclaimer of the truth of my story, and I shall hold myself free from my oath, and will call a policeman and give you in charge for the murder of his wife—Claire Jaquet."

Dr. Jaquet measured his visitor from head to foot, and sank slowly back into his chair, assuming an air of attention.

"I am at the mercy of a madman, or a couple of them—for there are two I see—so I must needs hear you; but do not make the story too long."

"What an out and out villain the chap is!" was Doggett's mental exclamation.

Philippe took the bag that Doggett had brought with him, and drawing forth the documents, he selected the certificate of his mother's marriage and his own birth, and spread them out on the table.

"You need not say whether you recognize them or not," he began. "My business is not to ask questions, but to convince you that everything is known and can be proved."

Dr. Jaquet scrutinized the documents with care and—collapsed!

He knew that the game of indifference and well-acted ignorance was over, and from this moment Philippe had the management of the interview in his own hands. The natural pallor of Dr. Jaquet's countenance deepened by several shades, and thick drops of perspiration collected on his brow. One by one Philippe placed each article of evidence, including extracts from his mother's diary, before him, and a formidable body of proof it grew under his hands.

"Into the question of my mother's death," he said, after he had broken down the guilty man's last line of defense, "I do not care to enter. Whether I go further into that question, beyond accusing you of her murder—which I do explicitly—depends upon your compliance with my conditions."

Dr. Jaquet sat in his chair humbled and crestfallen. As he made no reply, and remained buried in thought, it is doubtful if he had heard Philippe's terrible accusation.

"Shall I state the terms on which my forbearance depends?" Philippe asked after a pause.

Dr. Jaquet roused himself and made an assenting gesture.

"There is forgiveness for you, so far as legal proceedings are concerned, if the only justice possible now is done to my mother's memory. The woman who has usurped her place must taste the sorrow she has inflicted. She must quit the house in which her very presence is a crime, and abandon the name she has no right to wear. Let her remove herself to France. She takes her illegitimate offspring with her—you can make what provision you like for them—and you sign a confession of your crimes, which will be used against you if you see them or hold communication with them again.

"And if I refuse?" said Dr. Jaquet, with a return of his old manner.

"Then I am free from my oath," answered Philippe, "and you will have only yourself to blame when the facts that your own conscience testifies to are sworn to in open court."

"And how do I know that when I have been coerced into taking the course you insist upon, that you will not still pursue me with your malice?"

"Because I have given you my word," said Philippe, proudly drawing himself up to his full height, "and because I am the son of Claire Benoit."

And at that answer Dr. Jaquet shrank back in his chair, cowed and shivering beneath the resolute glance of his son, in whose eye he read no trace of pity.

"I must have time to think," he remarked.

Philippe would have refused to make any concession, but as he felt Doggett's touch on his arm, it exercised a humanizing influence.

"How long do you want?"

"Give me a week," was the reply.

"Too long; I will give you a day."

"Then call in four-and-twenty hours and you shall have my decision."

* * * * * * *

Madame Jaquet—to give Lucie St. Hillaire the title by which she was known in the West End society of which she was reckoned one of the ornaments—wondered what was keeping her husband, that he had not come upstairs to dress. She had heard the bell of the consulting room ring when Philippe and Mr. Doggett took their leave, and though more than an hour had elapsed since then, there was no sign of his appearance. A dinner party was arranged for that evening, her own toilet was completed, and only a few moments were left before the guests would begin to arrive.

She sailed down the broad staircase in her sweeping robes, which clung gracefully round her superb form, her diamond necklace flashing forth its tremulous light, as it rose and fell on the ivory whiteness of her breast, and passed into the consulting room.

Suddenly there rang through the house the piercing shriek of a horror-struck and terrified woman. The servants rushed into the room and found Dr. Jaquet lying prostrate on the floor, with their mistress in a dead swoon by his side. They raised her and carried her to a couch, while Hobson, the butler, bent down over the body of the physician. An odor of bitter almonds still hung round the dead man's mouth, and Hobson, rising with grave face, pronounced two words with significant emphasis.

Those two words were: Prussic acid.

* * * * * * *

The suicide of the great physician created an enormous sensation and provoked much speculation. None of the witnesses examined at the inquest could throw any light upon the matter. Dr. Jaquet was known to be in good health and affluent circumstances. He had not exhibited any signs of care. The clew to his inexplicable suicide was known only to three men—Philippe Jaquet, Mr. Doggett and Dr. Crosby—who sat in Philippe's sitting room in Cornwall road, gravely discussing the matter after the inquest had closed.

"Well, I have kept my oath," Philippe was saying. "I have not injured him. I only insisted that he should give up his guilty paramour who had usurped my mother's name. Less than that would have been less than was due to my mother's memory and her love."

"And Dr. Jaquet has kept his secret," said Doggett, who was disappointed that the pleasure of reading Dr. Jaquet's confession, to which he had looked forward, had been frustrated by the physician's untimely end.

"I am not so sure of that," said Dr. Crosby. "In the light of the facts you have been good enough to communicate I revoke my former opinion. I should say that some agent was employed to terminate Madame Jaquet's life."

"And that agent was chloroform," Philippe remarked.

"Quite impossible to say without a post mortem," was the abrupt reply.

Philippe frowned darkly at this suggestion and the subject dropped.

From the time that Philippe learnt the secret that overshadowed his mother's life, a subtle change began to creep over him which became more manifest as the days passed by. He became morose, silent, cynical, with much brooding over the dark fate of his parents. He was troubled, too, that that he had pressed his father so closely. He had kept the letter of his promise, but he was not satisfied that he had been true to its spirit.

But what troubled him most was the secret that Dr. Jaquet had carried with him. In the mazes of differing conjectures that were open to him, he lost all sure foothold. He was never able to rid himself of the feeling that the air he breathed in his rooms at Cornwall road was tainted with the ghostly memories of the by-gone crime.

But the secret of Madame Jaquet's death was buried in the grave of the suicide.

Philippe left England soon afterward, broken in health and hope, with mind and spirit diseased by exclusive meditation on the secret that he was never to fathom.

Whenever his name is mentioned in Mr. Webber's hearing, that gentleman always shakes his head sadly as he remarks, "Ah, he was a fine fellow, but spoiled by a burden that was too heavy for him. He is an illustration of the old saying: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes and their children's teeth are set on edge.'"

THE END.

NEXT WEEK:
"Caught in His Own Trap."

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THROUGH THE HOLES IN GROUND?

A Prominent Lawyer Tells How it May Easily be Effected.

RIGHTS OF WAY REVERT TO FARMERS

There was some speculation yesterday as to the cause of Mr. Franklin B. Gowen's visit to Pittsburg. One of the most frequent suppositions was that, before leaving, he would consult with certain manufacturers and local capitalists about reviving the route of the South Penn, if not to build a new line, then to see if a hold could not be got upon the old one. Mr. Gowen, however, was understood to deny this.

"I could tell you something on that point," said a prominent lawyer to a DISPATCH reporter yesterday; "but, like a good many other people, do not wish my name quoted, as I have some business connections which would make it undesirable that I should be interviewed. However, the question has arisen, what will become of the South Penn road? You have observed that an attempt is being made at Harrisburg to extend the time for the construction of that road for ten years yet. I have not seen the charter, but have been told that the time for building the line has expired, or is about to expire, and that by reason of its non-construction the charter will soon be about forfeitable for what the lawyers call non-user.

THE HOLES WORTH A GOOD BIT.

"Now this raises a very interesting question, to whom would this property which President Roberts, of the Pennsylvania line, designated as a 'lot of holes in the ground,' belong? The actual purchaser in the late dicker is kept in the shade. Ostensibly the Vanderbilts own it; the idea has been that the Pennsylvania Railroad were the real buyers. Mr. Carnegie has mentioned that the Pennsylvania Railroad already has appropriated $1,000,000, he infers, from its last annual report, for this purchase. The Pittsburg stockholders have got out of the enterprise the disappointment of failure and 60 per cent of the money they paid in. But they may not in the end turn out so badly as the buyers of their stock, supposing this charter has become liable to forfeiture on motion of the State authorities. An immense lot of grading has been done; millions of dollars worth of work has been put upon the line, and yet it is practically abandoned.

WILL THEY DEMAND IT.

"But the people who gave rights of way, the farmers through whose ground the line passes, and over whom eminent domain has been asserted, have a right unquestionably to claim back their own. The objects for which privileges were extorted from them are no longer to be carried out.

"Whoever bought the South Penn Railroad feels that so little claim to public sympathy can be made, that they have endeavored to get the extension of their charter in the disguise of an amendment to a copyright bill. This was detected some time ago, and the amendment is not yet smuggled through. Now, if it is not successful, and the charter is declared null and void, the buyers of the South Penn have a queer 'pig in the poke.'

"I venture to say that Mr. Gowen's visit is not wholly without knowledge on this point. Should the farmers get 'the holes in the ground', by way of reversion, they could afford to sell them very cheap. It would not take much of the 60 per cent which was paid to Pittsburgers to control them. At any rate, there is an interesting question here, and not a bit of doubt that if the State Legislature and officials do their duty the attempt of the big moneyed corporations to trample on the Constitution of the State would yet prove abortive.'"

River Men in Court.

Judge Acheson has awarded David A. McDonald $250 salvage for catching the steamboat Resolute while floating down stream. The suit of the owners of the J. P. Thorn against the Pennsylvania Natural Gas Company, for damages caused by an explosion, was argued yesterday. No decision was reached.

Wants One of His Children.

Colonel Church, of Columbus, who has gained some notoriety on account of the sensational divorce proceedings against him, was in the city yesterday. He refuted the statement credited to him that he was hot against Judge Pugh, but said he would try and get control of one of his children.

Somebody's Carelessness.

Venerable Jane S. McConoughy has entered suit against the Allegheny County and the East End Electric Light Company for $5,000. She stumbled over a lot of tools belonging to the company and broke her arm and collar bone.

Suit Against the A. O. U. W.

A. C. Little and wife yesterday entered suit against the A. O. U. W. to recover $2,000 on a life insurance policy held by George Hoffman, the deceased husband of the present Mrs. Little, who died in 1888.

They Do Not Want It.

Coal operators are expecting a slight rise in the river, but they say that they do not want it, because there is not enough coal in the river.

MONTE CARLO *and the pitiful sights that attract attention in the gambling hell are graphically described in to-morrow's DISPATCH.*

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