

Martin Hewitt, Investigator.

BY ARTHUR MORRISON.

VII.—THE AFFAIR OF THE TORTOISE.



VERY often Hewitt was tempted, by the fascination of some particularly odd case, to neglect his other affairs to follow up a matter that from a business point of view was of little or no value to him. As a rule, he had a sufficient regard for his own interests to resist such temptations, but in one curious case at least I believe he allowed it largely to influence him. It was certainly an extremely odd case—one of those affairs that, coming to light at intervals, but more often remaining unheard of by the general public, convince one that after all there is very little extravagance about Mr. R. L. Stevenson's bizarre imaginings of doings in London in his "New Arabian Nights." "There is nothing in this world that is at all possible," I have often heard Martin Hewitt say, "that has not happened or is not happening in London." Certainly he had opportunities of knowing.

The case I have referred to occurred some time before my own acquaintance with him began—in 1878, in fact. He had called one Monday morning at an office in regard to something connected with one of those uninteresting, though often difficult, cases which formed, perhaps, the bulk of his practice, when he was informed of a most mysterious murder that had taken place in another part of the same building on the previous Saturday afternoon. Owing to the circumstances of the case, only the vaguest account had appeared in the morning papers, and even this, as it chanced, Hewitt had not read.

The building was one of a new row in a partly rebuilt street near the National Gallery. The whole row had been built by a speculator for the purpose of letting out in flats, suites of chambers, and in one or two cases, on the ground floors, offices. The rooms had let very well, and to desirable tenants as a rule. The least satisfactory tenant, the proprietor reluctantly admitted, was a Mr. Rameau, a negro gentleman, single, who had three rooms on the top floor but one of the particular building that Hewitt was visiting. His rent was paid regularly, but his behaviour had produced complaints from other tenants. He got uproariously drunk, and screamed and howled in unknown tongues. He fell asleep on the staircase, and ladies were afraid to pass. He

bawled rough chaff down the stairs and along the corridors, at butcher boys and messengers, and played on errand boys brutal practical jokes that ended in police-court summonses. He once had a way of sliding down the balusters, shouting: "Ho! ho! ho! yah!" as he went, but as he was a big, heavy man, and the balusters had been built for different treatment, he had very soon and very firmly been requested to stop it. He had plenty of money, and spent it freely; but it was generally felt that there was too much of the light-hearted savage about him to fit him to live among quiet people.

How much longer the landlord would have stood this sort of thing, Hewitt's informant said, was a matter of conjecture, for on the Saturday afternoon in question the tenancy had come to a startling full-stop. Rameau had been murdered in his room, and the body had, in a most unaccountable fashion, been secretly removed from the premises.

The strongest possible suspicion pointed to a man who had been employed in shovelling and carrying coals, cleaning windows, and chopping wood for several of the buildings, and who had left that very Saturday. The crime had, in fact, been committed with this man's chopper, and the man himself had been heard, again and again, to threaten Rameau, who in his brutal fashion had made a butt of him. This man was a Frenchman, Victor Goujon by name, who had lost his employment as a watchmaker by reason of an injury to his right hand, which destroyed its steadiness, and so he had fallen upon evil days and odd jobs.

He was a little man, of no great strength, but extraordinarily excitable, and the coarse gibes and horseplay of the big negro drove him almost to madness. Rameau would often, after some more than ordinarily outrageous attack, contemptuously fling Goujon a shilling, which the little Frenchman, although wanting a shilling badly enough, would hurl back in his face, almost weeping with impotent rage. "Pig! *Canaille!*" he would scream. "Dirty pig of Africa! Take your sheelin' to vere you 'ave stole it! *Voleur!* Pig!"

There was a tortoise living in the basement, of which Goujon had made rather a pet, and the negro would sometimes use this animal as a missile, flinging it at the little



"PLINGING IT AT THE LITTLE FRENCHMAN'S HEAD."

Frenchman's head. On one such occasion the tortoise struck the wall so forcibly as to break its shell, and then Goujon seized a shovel and rushed at his tormentor with such blind fury that the latter made a bolt of it. These were but a few of the passages between Rameau and the fuel-porter, but they illustrate the state of feeling between them.

Goujon, after correspondence with a relative in France who offered him work, gave notice to leave, which expired on the day of the crime. At about three that afternoon a housemaid proceeding toward Rameau's rooms met Goujon as he was going away. Goujon bade her good-bye, and pointing in the direction of Rameau's rooms said, exultantly: "Dere shall be no more of the black pig for me; vit 'im I 'ave done for. Zut! I mock me of 'im! 'E vill never *tracasser* me no more!" And he went away.

The girl went to the outer door of Rameau's rooms, knocked, and got no reply. Concluding that the tenant was out, she was about to use her keys when she found that the door was unlocked. She passed through the lobby and into the sitting-room, and there fell in a dead faint at the sight that met her eyes. Rameau lay with his back across the sofa and his head drooping within an inch of the ground. On the head was a fearful gash, and below it was a pool of blood.

The girl must have lain unconscious for about ten minutes. When she came to her senses she dragged herself, terrified, from the room and up to the housekeeper's apartments, where, being an excitable and nervous creature, she only screamed "Murder!" and immediately fell in a fit of hysterics that lasted three-quarters of an hour. When at last she came to herself she told her story, and, the hall-porter having been summoned, Rameau's rooms were again approached.

The blood still lay on the floor, and the chopper, with which the crime had evidently been committed, rested

against the fender; but the body had vanished! A search was at once made, but no trace of it could be seen anywhere. It seemed impossible that it could have been carried out of the building, for the hall-porter must at once have noticed anybody leaving with so bulky a burden. Still, *in* the building it was not to be found.

When Hewitt was informed of these things on Monday, the police were, of course, still in possession of Rameau's rooms. Inspector Nettings, Hewitt was told, was in charge of the case, and as the inspector was an acquaintance of his, and was then in the rooms upstairs, Hewitt went up to see him.

Nettings was pleased to see Hewitt, and invited him to look round the rooms. "Perhaps you can spot something we have overlooked," he said. "Though it's not a case there can be much doubt about."

"You think it's Goujon, don't you?"

"Think? Well, rather. Look here. As soon as we got here on Saturday, we found this piece of paper and pin on the floor. We showed it to the housemaid, and then she remembered—she was too much upset to think of it before—that when she was in the room the paper was lying on the dead man's chest—pinned there, evidently. It must have dropped off when they removed the body. It's a case of half-mad revenge on Goujon's part, plainly. See it—you read French, don't you?"

The paper was a plain, large half-sheet of note-paper, on which a sentence in French was scrawled in red ink in a large, clumsy hand, thus:—

puni par un vengeur de la tortue.

"*Puni par un vengeur de la tortue,*" Hewitt repeated, musingly. "' Punished by an avenger of the tortoise.' That seems odd."

"Well, rather odd. But you understand the reference, of course. Have they told you about Rameau's treatment of Goujon's pet tortoise?"

"I think it was mentioned among his other pranks. But this is an extreme revenge for a thing of that sort, and a queer way of announcing it."

"Oh, he's mad—mad with Rameau's continual ragging and baiting," Nettings answered. "Anyway, this is a plain indication—plain as though he'd left his own signature. Besides, it's in his own language—French. And there's his chopper, too."

"Speaking of signatures," Hewitt remarked, "perhaps you have already compared this with other specimens of Goujon's writing?"

"I did think of it, but they don't seem to have a specimen to hand, and anyway, it doesn't seem very important. There's 'avenger of the tortoise' plain enough, in the man's own language, and that tells everything. Besides, handwritings are easily disguised."

"Have you got Goujon?"

"Well, no; we haven't. There seems to be some little difficulty about that. But I expect to have him by this time to-morrow. Here comes Mr. Styles, the landlord."

Mr. Styles was a thin, querulous, and withered-looking little man, who twitched his eyebrows as he spoke, and spoke in short, jerky phrases.

"No news, eh, inspector, eh? eh? Found out nothing else, eh? Terrible thing for my property—terrible. Who's your friend?"

Nettings introduced Hewitt.

"Shocking thing this,

eh, Mr. Hewitt? Terrible. Comes of having anything to do with these bloodthirsty foreigners, eh? New buildings and all—character ruined. No one come to live here now, eh? Tenants—noisy niggers—murdered by my own servants—terrible. You formed any opinion, eh?"

"I daresay I might if I went into the case."

"Yes, yes—same opinion as inspector's, eh? I mean an opinion of your own?" The old man scrutinized Hewitt's face sharply.

"If you'd like me to look into the matter——" Hewitt began.

"Eh? Oh, look into it! Well, I can't commission you, you know—matter for the police. Mischief's done. Police doing very well, I think—must be Goujon. But look about the place, certainly, if you like. If you see anything likely to serve *my* interests tell me, and—and—perhaps I'll employ you, eh, eh? Good afternoon."

The landlord vanished, and the inspector laughed. "Likes to see what he's buying, does Mr. Styles," he said.

Hewitt's first impulse was to walk out of the place at once. But his interest in the



"SHOCKING THING THIS, EH, MR. HEWITT?"

case had been roused, and he determined, at any rate, to examine the rooms, and this he did, very minutely. By the side of the lobby was a bath-room, and in this was fitted a tip-up wash-basin, which Hewitt inspected with particular attention. Then he called the housekeeper, and made inquiries about Rameau's clothes and linen. The housekeeper could give no idea of how many overcoats or how much linen he had had. He had all a negro's love of display, and was continually buying new clothes, which, indeed, were lying, hanging, littering, and choking up the bedroom in all directions. The housekeeper, however, on Hewitt's inquiring after such a garment in particular, did remember one heavy black ulster, which Rameau had very rarely worn—only in the coldest weather.

"After the body was discovered," Hewitt asked the housekeeper, "was any stranger observed about the place—whether carrying anything or not?"

"No, sir," the housekeeper replied. "There's been particular inquiries about that. Of course, after we knew what was wrong and the body was gone, nobody was seen, or he'd have been stopped. But the hall-porter says he's certain no stranger came or went for half an hour or more before that—the time about when the housemaid saw the body and fainted."

At this moment a clerk from the landlord's office arrived and handed Nettings a paper. "Here you are," said Nettings to Hewitt; "they've found a specimen of Goujon's handwriting at last, if you'd like to see it. I don't want it—I'm not a graphologist, and the case is clear enough for me, anyway."

Hewitt took the paper: "This," he said, "is a different sort of handwriting from that on the paper. The red ink note about the avenger of the tortoise is in a crude, large, clumsy, untaught style of writing. This is small, neat, and well formed—except that it is a trifle shaky, probably because of the hand injury."

"That's nothing," contended Nettings; "handwriting clues are worse than useless, as a rule. It's so easy to disguise and imitate writing; and besides, if Goujon is such a good penman as you seem to say, why, he could all the easier alter

his style. Say now yourself, can any fiddling question of handwriting get over this thing about 'avenging the tortoise'—practically a written confession? To say nothing of the chopper, and what he said to the housemaid as he left."

"Well," said Hewitt, "perhaps not; but we'll see. Meantime," turning to the landlord's clerk, "possibly you will be good enough to tell me one or two things. First, what was Goujon's character?"

"Excellent, as far as we know. We never had a complaint about him except for little matters of carelessness—leaving coal-scuttles on the staircases for people to fall over, losing shovels, and so on. He was certainly a bit careless, but, as far as we could see, quite a decent little fellow. One would never have thought him capable of committing murder for the sake of a tortoise, though he was rather fond of the animal."

"The tortoise is dead now, I understand?"

"Yes."

"Have you a lift in this building?"

"Only for coals and heavy parcels. Goujon used to work it, sometimes going up and down in it himself with coals, and so on; it goes into the basement."

"And are the coals kept under this building?"



"HEWITT TOOK THE PAPER."

"No. The store for the whole row is under the next two houses—the basements communicate."

"Do you know Rameau's other name?"

"César Rameau he signed in our agreement."

"Did he ever mention his relations?"

"No. That is to say, he did say something one day when he was very drunk; but, of course, it was all rot. Someone told him not to make such a row—he was a beastly tenant—and he said he was the best man in the place, and his brother was Prime Minister, and all sorts of things. Mere drunken rant. I never heard of his saying anything sensible about relations. We know nothing of his connections; he came here on a banker's reference."

"Thanks. I think that's all I want to ask. You notice," Hewitt proceeded, turning to Nettings, "the only ink in this place is scented and violet, and the only paper is tinted and scented too, with a monogram—characteristic of a negro with money. The paper that was pinned on Rameau's breast is in red ink on common and rather grubby paper, therefore it was written somewhere else and brought here. Inference, premeditation."

"Yes, yes. But are you an inch nearer, with all these speculations? Can you get nearer than I am now without them?"

"Well, perhaps not," Hewitt replied. "I don't profess, at this moment, to know the criminal—you do. I'll concede you that point for the present. But you don't offer an opinion as to who removed Rameau's body—which I think I know."

"Who was it, then?"

"Come, try and guess that yourself. It wasn't Goujon, I don't mind letting you know that. But it was a person quite within your knowledge of the case. You've mentioned the person's name more than once."

Nettings stared blankly. "I don't understand you in the least," he said. "But, of course, you mean that this mysterious person you speak of as having moved the body committed the murder?"

"No, I don't. Nobody could have been more innocent of that."

"Well," Nettings concluded, with resignation, "I'm afraid one of us is rather thick-headed. What will you do?"

"Interview the person who took away the body," Hewitt replied, with a smile.

"But, man alive, why? Why bother about the person if it isn't the criminal?"

"Never mind—never mind; probably the person will be a most valuable witness."

"Do you mean you think this person—whoever it is—saw the crime?"

"I think it very probable indeed."

"Well, I won't ask you any more. I shall get hold of Goujon—that's simple and direct enough for me. I prefer to deal with the heart of the case—the murder itself—when there's such clear evidence as I have."

"I shall look a little into that, too, perhaps," Hewitt said, "and if you like I'll tell you the first thing I shall do."

"What's that?"

"I shall have a good look at a map of the West Indies, and I advise you to do the same. Good morning."

Nettings stared down the corridor after Hewitt, and continued staring for nearly two minutes after he had disappeared. Then he said to the clerk, who had remained: "What was he talking about?"

"Don't know," replied the clerk. "Couldn't make head or tail of it."

"I don't believe there *is* a head to it," declared Nettings; "nor a tail either. He's kidding us."

Nettings was better than his word, for within two hours of his conversation with Hewitt, Goujon was captured and safe in a cab bound for Bow Street. He had been stopped at Newhaven in the morning on his way to Dieppe, and was brought back to London. But now Nettings met a check.

Late that afternoon he called on Hewitt to explain matters. "We've got Goujon," he said, gloomily, "but there's a difficulty. He's got two friends who can swear an *alibi*. Rameau was seen alive at half-past one on Saturday, and the girl found him dead about three. Now, Gonjou's two friends, it seems, were with him from one o'clock till four in the afternoon with the exception of five minutes when the girl saw him, and then he left them to take a key or something to the housekeeper before finally leaving. They were waiting on the landing below when Goujon spoke to the housemaid, heard him speaking, and had seen him go all the way up to the housekeeper's room and back, as they looked up the wide well of the staircase. They are men employed near the place, and seem to have good characters. But perhaps we shall find something unfavourable about them. They were drinking with Goujon, it seems, by way of 'seeing him off.'"

"Well," Hewitt said, "I scarcely think you need trouble to damage these men's characters. They are probably telling the

truth. Come, now, be plain. You've come here to get a hint as to whether my theory of the case helps you, haven't you?"

"Well, if you can give me a friendly hint, although, of course, I may be right after all. Still, I wish you'd explain a bit as to what you meant by looking at a map and all that mystery. Nice thing for me to be taking a lesson in my own business after all these years. But perhaps I deserve it."

"See how," quoth Hewitt, "you remember what map I told you to look at?"

"The West Indies."

"Right. Well, here you are." Hewitt reached an atlas from his bookshelf. "Now, look here: the biggest island of the lot on this map, barring Cuba, is Hayti. You know as well as I do that the western part of that island is peopled by the black republic of Hayti, and that the country is in a degenerate state of almost unexampled savagery, with a ridiculous show of civilization. There are revolutions all the time—the South American republics are peaceful and prosperous compared to Hayti. The state of the country is simply awful—read Sir Spenser St. John's book on it. President after President of the vilest sort forces his way to power, and commits the most horrible and blood-thirsty excesses, murdering his opponents by the hundred and seizing their property for himself and his satellites, who are usually as bad, if not worse than the President himself. Whole families—men, women, and children—are murdered at the instance of these ruffians, and, as a consequence, the most deadly feuds spring up, and the Presidents and their followers are always themselves in danger of reprisals from others. Perhaps the very worst of these Presidents in recent times has been the notorious Domingue, who was overthrown by an insurrection, as they all are sooner or later, and compelled to fly the country. Domingue and his nephews, one of whom was Chief Minister, while in power committed the cruellest bloodshed, and many members of the opposite party sought refuge in a small island lying just to the north of Hayti, but were sought out there and almost exterminated. Now, I will show you that island on the map. What is its name?"

"Tortuga."

"It is. 'Tortuga,' however, is only the old Spanish name—the Haytians speak French—Creole French. Here is a French atlas: now see the name of that island."

"La Tortue!"

"La Tortue it is—the tortoise. Tortuga

means the same thing in Spanish. But that island is always spoken of in Hayti as La Tortue. Now do you see the drift of that paper pinned to Rameau's breast!"

"Punished by an avenger of—or from—the tortoise or La Tortue—clear enough. It would seem that the dead man had something to do with the massacre there, and somebody from the island is avenging it. The thing's most extraordinary."

"And now listen. The name of Domingue's nephew, who was Chief Minister, was *Septimus Rameau*."

"And this was César Rameau—his brother, probably. I see. Well—this *is* a case."

"I think the relationship probable. Now you understand why I was inclined to doubt that Goujon was the man you wanted."

"Of course, of course. And now I suppose I must try to get a nigger—the chap who wrote that paper. I wish he hadn't been such an ignorant nigger. If he'd only have put the capitals to the words 'La Tortue,' I might have thought a little more about them, instead of taking it for granted that they meant that wretched tortoise in the basement of the house. Well, I've made a fool of a start, but I'll be after that nigger now."

"And I, as I said before," said Hewitt, "shall be after the person that carried off Rameau's body. I have had something else to do this afternoon, or I should have begun already."

"You said you thought he saw the crime. How did you judge that?"

Hewitt smiled. "I think I'll keep that little secret to myself for the present," he said. "You shall know soon."

"Very well," Nettings replied, with resignation. "I suppose I mustn't grumble if you don't tell me everything. I feel too great a fool altogether over this case to see any further than you show me." And Inspector Nettings left on his search; while Martin Hewitt, as soon as he was alone, laughed jocosely and slapped his thigh.

There was a cab-rank and shelter at the end of the street where Mr. Styles's building stood, and early that evening a man approached it and hailed the cabmen and the waterman. Anyone would have known the new-comer at once for a cabman taking a holiday. The brim of the hat, the bird's-eye neckerchief, the immense coat buttons, and more than all, the rolling walk and the wrinkled trousers, marked him out distinctly.

"Watcheer!" he exclaimed, affably, with the self-possessed nod only possible to



"I'M A-LOOKIN' FOR A BILKER."

cabbies and 'busmen. "I'm a-lookin' for a bilker. I'm told one o' the bloke's off this rank carried 'im last Saturday, and I want to know where he went. I ain't 'ad a chance o' gettin' 'is address yet. Took a cab just as it got dark, I'm told. Tallish chap, muffled up a lot, in a long black overcoat. Any of ye seen 'im?"

The cabbies looked at one another and shook their heads; it chanced that none of them had been on that particular rank at that time. But the waterman said, "'Old on—I bet 'e's the bloke wot old Bill Stammers took. Yorkey was fust on the rank, but the bloke wouldn't 'ave a 'ansom—wanted a four-wheeler; so old Bill took 'im. Biggish chap in a long black coat, collar up an' muffled thick; soft wideawake 'at, pulled over 'is eyes; and he was in a 'urry, too. Jumped in sharp as a weasel."

"Didn't see 'is face, did ye?"

"No—not a inch of it; too much muffled. Couldn't tell if he 'ad a face."

"Was his arm in a sling?"

"Aye, it looked so. Had it stuffed through the breast of his coat, like as though there might be a sling inside."

"That's 'im. Any of ye tell me where I might run across old Bill Stammers? He'll tell me where my precious bilker went to."

As to this there was plenty of information, and in five minutes Martin Hewitt, who had become an unoccupied cabman for the occasion, was on his way to find old Bill Stammers. That respectable old man gave him exact particulars as to the place in the East-end where he had driven his muffled fare on Saturday, and soon Hewitt had begun an eighteen or twenty hours' search beyond White-chapel.

At about three on Tuesday afternoon, as Nettings was in the act of leaving Bow Street Police Station, Hewitt drove up in a four-wheeler. Some prisoner appeared to be crouching low in the vehicle, but leaving him to take care of himself, Hewitt hurried into the station and shook Nettings by the hand.

"Well," he said, "have you got the murderer of Rameau yet?"

"No," Nettings growled. "Unless—well, Goujon's under remand still, and after all I've been thinking that he may know something—"

"Pooh, nonsense!" Hewitt answered. "You'd better let him go. Now, I *have* got somebody." Hewitt laughed and slapped the inspector's shoulder. "I've got the man who carried Rameau's body away!"

"The deuce you have! Where? Bring him in. We must have him—"

"All right, don't be in a hurry—he won't bolt." And Hewitt stepped out to the cab and produced his prisoner, who, pulling his hat further over his eyes, hurried furtively into the station. One hand was stowed in the breast of his long coat, and below the wide brim of his hat a small piece of white bandage could be seen; and as he lifted his face it was seen to be that of a negro.

"Inspector Nettings," Hewitt said, ceremoniously, "allow me to introduce MR. CÉSAR RAMEAU!"

Nettings gasped.



"WHAT! YOU?"

"What!" he at length ejaculated. "What! You—you're Rameau?"

The negro looked round nervously, and shrank further from the door.

"Yes," he said; "but please not so loud—please not loud. Zey may be near, and I'm 'fraid."

"You will certify, will you not," asked Hewitt, with malicious glee, "not only that you were not murdered last Saturday by Victor Goujon, but that, in fact, you were not murdered at all? Also that you carried your own body away in the usual fashion, on your own legs?"

"Yes, yes," responded Rameau, looking haggardly about; "but is not zis—zis room publique? I should not be seen."

"Nonsense," replied Hewitt, rather testily, "you exaggerate your danger and your own importance, and your enemies' abilities as well. You're safe enough."

"I suppose, then," Nettings remarked, slowly, like a man on whose mind something vast was beginning to dawn—"I suppose—why, hang it, you must have just got up while that fool of a girl was screaming and fainting upstairs, and walked out—they say there's nothing so hard as a nigger's skull, and yours has certainly made

a fool of me. But then *somebody* must have chopped you over the head—who was it?"

"My enemies—my great enemies; enemies politique. I am a great man"—this with a faint revival of vanity amid his fear—"a great man in my country. Zey have great secret club-'sieties to kill me—me and my frien's; and one enemy coming in my rooms does zis—one, two"—he indicated wrist and head—"wiz a choppah."

Rameau made the case plain to Nettings, so far as the actual circumstances of the assault on himself were concerned. A negro whom he had noticed near the place more than once during the previous day or two had attacked him suddenly in his rooms, dealing him two savage blows with a chopper. The first he had caught on his wrist, which was seriously damaged, as well as excruciatingly painful, but the second had taken effect on his head.

His assailant had evidently gone away then, leaving him for dead; but as a matter of fact he was only stunned by the shock, and had, thanks to the adamant thickness of the negro skull and the ill-direction of the chopper, only a very bad scalp wound, the bone being no more than grazed. He had lain insensible for some time, and must have come to his senses soon after the housemaid had left the room. Terrified at the knowledge that his enemies had found him out, his only thought was to get away and hide himself. He hastily washed and tied up his head, enveloped himself in the biggest coat he could find, and let himself down into the basement by the coal-lift, for fear of observation. He waited in the basement of one of the adjoining buildings till dark and then got away in a cab, with the idea of hiding himself in the East-end. He had had very little money with him on his flight, and it was by reason of this circumstance that Hewitt, when he found him, had prevailed on him to leave his hiding-place, since it would be impossible for him to touch any of the large sums of money in the keeping of his bank so long as he was supposed to be dead. With much difficulty, and the promise of ample police protection, he was at last convinced that it would be safe

to declare himself and get his property, and then run away and hide wherever he pleased.

Nettings and Hewitt strolled off together for a few minutes and chatted, leaving the wretched Rameau to cower in a corner among several policemen.



"NETTINGS AND HEWITT STROLLED OFF."

"Well, Mr. Hewitt," Nettings said, "this case has certainly been a shocking beating for me. I must have been as blind as a bat when I started on it. And yet I don't see that you had a deal to go on even now. What struck you first?"

"Well, in the beginning it seemed rather odd to me that the body should have been taken away—as I had been told it was, after the written paper had been pinned on it. Why should the murderer pin a label on the body of his victim if he meant carrying that body away? Who would read the label and learn of the nature of the revenge gratified? Plainly that indicated that the person who had carried away the body was *not* the person who had committed the murder. But as soon as I began to examine the place I saw the probability that there was no murder after all. There were any number of indications of this fact, and I can't understand your not observing them. First, although there was a

good deal of blood on the floor just below where the housemaid had seen Rameau lying, there was none between that place and the door. Now, if the body had been dragged, or even carried, to the door, blood must have become smeared about the floor, or at least there would have been drops; but there were none, and this seemed to hint that the corpse might have come to itself, sat up on the sofa, stanching the wound, and walked out. I reflected at once that Rameau was a full-blooded negro, and that a negro's head is very nearly invulnerable to anything short of bullets. Then, if the body had been dragged out—as such a heavy body must have been—almost of necessity the carpet and rugs would show signs of the fact, but there were no such signs. But beyond these

there was the fact that no long black overcoat was left with the other clothes, although the housekeeper distinctly remembered Rameau's possession of such a garment. I judged he would use some such thing to assist his disguise, which was why I asked her. *Why* he would want disguise was plain, as you shall see presently. There were no towels left in the bath-room—inference, used for bandages. Everything seemed to show that the only person responsible for Rameau's removal was Rameau himself. Why, then, had he gone away secretly and hurriedly, without making complaint, and why had he stayed away? What reason would he have for doing this if it had been Goujon that had attacked him? None. Goujon was going to France. Clearly, Rameau was afraid of another attack from some implacable enemy whom he was anxious to avoid—one against whom he feared legal complaint or defence would be useless. This brought me at once to the

paper found on the floor. If this were the work of Goujon and an open reference to his tortoise, why should he be at such pains to disguise his handwriting? He would have been already pointing himself out by the mere mention of the tortoise. And, if he could not avoid a shake in his natural, small handwriting, how could he have avoided it in a large, clumsy, slowly-drawn, assumed hand? No, the paper was not Goujon's."

"As to the writing on the paper," Nettings interposed, "I've told you how I made that mistake. I took the readiest explanation of the words, since they seemed so pat, and I wouldn't let anything else outweigh that. As to the other things—the evidences of Rameau's having gone off by himself—well, I don't usually miss such obvious things; but I never thought of the possibility of the *victim* going away on the quiet and not coming back, as though *he'd* done something wrong. Comes of starting with a set of fixed notions."

"Well," answered Hewitt, "I fancy you must have been rather 'out of form,' as they say—everybody has his stupid days, and you can't keep up to concert pitch for ever. To return to the case. The evidence of the chopper was very untrustworthy—especially when I had heard of Goujon's careless habits—losing shovels and leaving coal-scuttles on stairs. Nothing more likely than for the chopper to be left lying about, and a criminal who had calculated his chances would know the advantage to himself of using a weapon that belonged to the place, and leaving it behind, to divert suspicion. It is quite possible, by the way, that the man who attacked Rameau got away down the coal-lift and out by an adjoining basement, just as did Rameau himself; this, however, is mere conjecture. The would-be murderer had plainly prepared for the crime—witness the previous preparation of the paper declaring his revenge—an indication of his pride at having run his enemy to earth at such a distant place as this—although I expect he was only in England by chance, for Haytians are not a persistently energetic race. In regard to the use of small instead of capital letters in the words 'La Tortue' on the paper, I observed, in the beginning, that the first letter of the whole sentence—the p in 'puni'—was a small one. Clearly the writer was an illiterate man, and it was at once plain that he may have made the same mistake with ensuing words.

"On the whole, it was plain that everybody had begun with a too-ready disposition to assume that Goujon was guilty. Everybody insisted, too, that the body had been carried away—which was true, of course, although not in the sense intended—so I didn't trouble to contradict, or to say more than that I guessed who *had* carried the body off. And to tell you the truth, I was a little piqued at Mr. Styles's manner, and indisposed, interested in the case as I was, to give away my theories too freely.

"The rest of the job was not very difficult. I found out the cabman who had taken Rameau away—you can always get readier help from cabbies if you go as one of themselves, especially if you are after a bilker—and from him got a sufficiently near East-end direction to find Rameau after inquiries. I ventured, by the way, on a rather long shot. I described my man to the cabman as having an injured arm or wrist—and it turned out a correct guess. You see, a man making an attack with a chopper is pretty certain to make more than a single blow, and as there appeared to have been only a single wound on the head, it seemed probable that another had fallen somewhere else—almost certainly on the arm, as it would be raised to defend the head. At Limehouse I found he had had his head and wrist attended to at a local medico's, and a big nigger in a fright, with a long black coat, a broken head and a lame hand, is not so difficult to find in a small area. How I persuaded him up here you know already; I think I frightened him a little, too, by explaining how easily I had tracked him, and giving him a hint that others might do the same. He is in a great funk. He seems to have quite lost faith in England as a safe asylum."

The police failed to catch Rameau's assailant—chiefly because Rameau could not be got to give a proper description of him, nor to do anything except get out of the country in a hurry. In truth, he was glad to be quit of the matter with nothing worse than his broken head. Little Goujon made a wild storm about his arrest, and before he did go to France managed to extract £20 from Rameau by way of compensation, in spite of the absence of any strictly legal claim against his old tormentor. So that, on the whole, Goujon was about the only person who derived any particular profit from the tortoise mystery.